

THE RISE OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES. A NICE STORY OR A STRONG FUTURE?

PhD Candidate, Emanuel-Ionuț Zanoschi

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania

ABSTRACT

The current political scene is undergoing visible and often incomprehensible changes for the average person. The rise of new political forces is a topical issue, especially in the context of an ideological reconfiguration. Even if it is possible to play in a vast history, where ideological directions can be given, a specialist can observe that in several occasions the political parties go beyond their own ideological boundaries to attract more voters and retain power. There are a number of new political forces, built on the fight against corruption and the anti-system in several states of the European Union. They often do not have a clear ideology, consisting of a wide range of members who do not share the principles of a common ideology. Some emerged in response to the populist danger that seemed to grip the European Union ahead of the European Parliament elections on May 26, 2019. Is it a closed path or are we preparing for a new paradigm in shaping political ideologies? I will try to give an answer in this article by going on a case study in Romania, regarding the last configurations of political parties. Is there a need to have a clear ideology, doctrine or do the voters need to have a simple set of principles to support?

***Keywords:** political parties, ideology, power, doctrine, European Parliament*

INTRODUCTION

Political parties are those groups that assume political representation. They must choose a certain direction, often represented by a certain ideology, or a certain goal that will keep members together on the political scene. Also, a political party must come with a strategy against competition that will promote the interests of the group through lobbying and influencing activities.

Groups can be represented in similar ways, despite complications that groups can be perceived as a whole. The popular idea of representation is that someone who resembles me or my group in important matters will act like me or my group and therefore promote my or my group's interests automatically. It is a kind of representation that plays a vital role: real and potential creditors, which constitute the core of the "market", answer whether or not their interests will be defended within the formal structures of representative democracy like the state, and their interests may be defended either by the representatives of the parties who enjoy the support of (potential) creditors or by representatives with whom they identify, but who may not formally represent the interests of creditors. In exceptional cases,

creditors can be assured that their interests are granted political representation only if their agents or the representative with whom they identify themselves are members of the formal institutions of political representation. [1].

In addition to representing individuals in various ways, political representatives also represent the state. States, like other forms of association, depend on representation to function, but in order to function as states, they depend on a broader demand for legitimacy than other types of association: a distinctive statement is the same as representing all their citizens. Despite the fact that the history of representation shows that there is nothing democratic about the idea of representation, in our democratic age, we assume that in order to be legitimate, political representation must be democratic. In other words, legitimacy in modern representative democracies is derived from the periodic selection of representatives by all citizens in an open and fair electoral process. [2].

The political parties have a political agenda based on a certain ideology (although they are also supporters of a rather post-ideological era, parties or interest groups that do not belong to a certain political orientation but rather have common interests) that draw the organization's guidelines for action. In practice, however, it is observed that in power or in the face of decision-making situations, parties will not always make decisions based on ideological criteria but rather on the political logic of the moment. Whether or not ideological criteria should be respected in decision-making is a discussion that includes many scientific papers, but in this case we will use ideology as a way of coagulating certain political forces at a national or international levels.

But what is an ideology? Daniel Şandru, political scientist states that “In general, ideology outlines the socio-historical and political context that allows us to capture the photograph of an era; in particular directions, ideologies offer us the possibility to dismantle, up to its socio-political fibers, the axiological, attitudinal and behavioural fabric of a given society.” [3]. Thus, we need ideology to be able to explain what is happening around us, to better understand the mechanisms of society. The same author gives a definition considering several perspectives, categorizing ideology as "a system of ideas and beliefs outlined in any society, a system located at the level of the socio-political imaginary and which has the role of drawing a normative and action framework on the style of functionality of that society.” [3].

Miroiu states about ideologies that “they are generally modern appearances, intellectual-political progenitors of the historical stage in which people have become free enough and confident in their dignity and creativity to imagine that they can change society in ways unimaginable by their predecessors." [4]. Thus ideologies represented models of development through which mankind was able to go through history. The same author mentions the most important families of ideologies, among which she mentions Humanism, Rationalism, Secularism, Progressivism, Universalism or Pluralism. These, in turn, take many forms and

interpretations depending on the historical epochs in which they manifested (or are manifested even today, transformed by ideas over time) among which, the best known being Liberalism, Social -Democracy, Feminism, Christian-Democracy, Conservatism, Ecology and green ideologies in general, Libertarianism, Globalism, Multiculturalism, Anarchism, Populism, Communism, Far Right, Religious Fundamentalism.

Leon Baradat states in the preamble of his book on ideologies, that “Political ideologies are usually simply formulated and mass-oriented. They are materialistic, activist and often have no patience for delays.” [5] Thus, the author suggests that "Ideology and political philosophy are both theoretical conceptualizations of politics, but political philosophy is deeper and more introspective." There are therefore a number of differences between ideology and political philosophy, although the ideologies are for the most part based on philosophical concepts. Ideologies are directed towards action and towards the outside of man, the citizens of the world in which we live having to be capable of continuous change. If in the past things were much more difficult, the government being the prerogative of elites connected to various events through writing that was not known to many, today almost all citizens have the power to participate in the act of governing. Therefore, as the author points out, "The happiness of members of a society is often juxtaposed with the state of the world in which they live, so that world must be made to conform to the needs and conditions of people who subscribe to a particular ideology." [5]

All these categories have followers among specialists in political science. Thus, Habermas is of the opinion that “ideologies obstruct free dialogue and reasonable communication, because they are manipulative. Consequently, ideologies are forms of pseudocommunication, of subjugating communication in relation to certain interests. [6] Regardless of the ideology that a citizen may aspire to, he alone cannot influence many things in democracy. There are authors [7] who claim that ideological polarization does not influence political behaviour such as the total presence of the vote, but has an effect on how a vote can turn into more votes for a preferred candidate. Thus, since ancient times, the simple human being is taught to live in communities to increase the chances of survival. We are thus connected to a number of people, be they family, friends, co-workers or simply friends. All of these links can have an impact if used for a specific purpose.

A political party is, as defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica, "a group of people organized to acquire and exercise political power." [8] Political parties originated in the modern form in Europe and in the United States in the nineteenth century, along with the electoral and parliamentary systems, the development of which reflected the evolution of parties. The term "party" has since been applied to all organized groups seeking political power, either through democratic elections or through revolution.

In previous, pre-revolutionary, aristocratic and monarchical regimes, the political process took place in small circles in which factions, grouped around influential nobles or personalities, opposed each other. The establishment of parliamentary regimes and the emergence of early parties changed this situation. Groups formed around bankers, merchants, industrialists and businessmen were added to the groups formed around princes, dukes, counts or marquises. Regimes supported by nobles were succeeded by regimes supported by other elites. These parties formed on a rather narrow basis were later transformed to a greater or lesser extent, because in the nineteenth century mass parties appeared in European and American continents.

METHODOLOGY

The twentieth century saw the spread of political parties around the world. In developing countries, large modern political parties have sometimes relied on traditional relations, such as ethnic, tribal, or religious affiliations. Moreover, many political parties in developing countries are partly political, partly military. Some socialist and communist parties in Europe previously experienced the same trends.

Quoting Max Weber, Cristian Preda states of the modern party that "it is an association based on a free commitment of peoples giving leaders power and also giving militants the chance to pursue certain collective goals". [9] Also about parties, Antony Downs, cited by Preda, says that "a party is a team of people who seek to seize the government apparatus by acquiring positions as a result of elections held with a certain regularity." [9] So we notice that political parties are composed of people who want to influence society by acquiring decision-making positions in the administrative apparatus of the state.

There are a number of party features that make these organizations remain in the memory of voters. [9]

1. Lifespan. An important party is a party that goes beyond the founding moment and the leaders that laid its foundations and manages to last in time and will not melt back into the society. There have been many attempts over time with ephemeral names. A lot of new parties were created by opportunist leaders that saw the rise to power as the only motive to maintain the party. Such organizations were absorbed into larger parties or were simply disbanded after the leader or the leaders lost interest in that organization.

2. Local structure. There are regional or even local parties but this seems to be more of an exception to the rule. It is important for a party to capture as much of a territory as possible through a network of branches. As the organization develops, it needs to segment the electorate and to provide different messages to different areas of the society. A limited party could not compete in major elections and influence the policies on the national level.

3. The ambition of power. A party is characterized by the will to take control of power by participating in elections. After this approach, it becomes very important to maintain power. These are two separate directions in which the party must invest resources, human or material ones. Also, it must provide citizens with the right to vote an electoral program.

4. Popular support. The so-called party organization cannot come to power without popular support in the elections, a mass of supporters. In most cases, the organization itself depends on some support pillars, people with a real interest in politics. But those are not enough to sustain strong popular support in order to win large elections.

The training conditions imposed by states for a party may differ from country to country. In the national space of Romania, until three years ago, until 2017, it was quite difficult to set up a party, but the possibility of setting up a political party with only three founding members was adopted. Other states may have conditions regarding the number of founding members or the deposit of a minimum cash guarantee.

Political parties have an important role to play in innovation in the state leadership. In representative democracies, public policies that could be characterized as innovative or conservative are ultimately adopted by elected representatives of political parties. The political background represented by the conditions for public sector innovation is the way in which organizational actors such as political parties are structured and can incorporate innovative ideas. [10] Governments are increasingly using information and communication technologies (ICT). This phenomenon, labeled "e-government" or sometimes "e-governance", mainly refers to the intensive use of electronic tools and applications in public administration and the provision of government services. But the governments are formed by the parties that win the elections so their policies are directed substituted to the ideology of the parties.

Innovation is not just something that political parties can easily adopt in politics. Political parties are under constant pressure to renew their organizations, policy platforms and leadership in order to remain competitive in the electoral arena and to achieve other key objectives, such as influencing politics in general or shape the internal democracy of a state. "New parties, as well as changes and adaptations made to the organization and ideology of existing parties, can be conceived as innovations in themselves. [11] But this process is a long and expensive one so it has to be pursued constantly by the majority of the party members.

In recent years, whether in a European or national context, we have gone through a period of the emergence of new political forces. However, the new political parties can only succeed if a sufficient number of voters prefer the new party to the detriment of the stable parties. Zons [12] pointed out that

programmatic distinctiveness is more important to the success of niche citizens in the beginning, but their importance fades over time. Zons used a balanced perspective, but the conclusions could be reinterpreted, indicating that the programmatic distinction matters not only for instrumental reasons (to maximize congruence), but also for expressive reasons (as a signal of novelty).

In this sense, understanding the motives of new voters at the individual level can contribute to the theoretical integration of balance and protest-based approaches to the emergence of the party. Another motive that could underline the formation of new parties is the lack (or decrease) of the leadership of the old parties. They seem to be increasingly confronted with problems related to the lack of visionary leaders or who may remain in power for a longer period, beyond short periods of increased popularity. [13] More often we see that leaders can hardly keep one mandate and after that they lose a lot of the popularity that helped them to get to power.

That is the case in the Romanian context also. The political scene in the recent years is dominated by rather small leaders, considered by many just temporal ones. Also, the fear of some specialists in the field of political field was that the national politics will be contaminated by the populist movements that were gaining power in the neighboring regions, such as Poland or Hungary.

So the context of the 2019 European Parliament elections was a rather chaotic one. On the one side, there were the old political parties that were proposing a status quo, and on the other side, there were some new parties on the political scene, represented mainly by the USRPLUS Alliance, that were proposing a platform that emphasizes the rule of law and an anti-corruption policy.

It must be said that at the European level, the USRPLUS movement was included in the newly formed Renew group based on the ALDE group. Also, this time, over 50% of Europeans with the right to vote participated in the European elections, the highest percentage in the last 20 years. It is the first time that turnout has increased since the first direct elections in 1979. [14]

It was an important signal for the modern policy of the European Union. Populist forces failed to gain much ground, contrary to expectations. However, the predisposition to crises (the example of the Coronavirus crisis is the most eloquent) will put the Union's governance to the test in this years and will give direction to citizens' confidence in the European institutions in the years to come.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we can say that there are some defining elements for the existence of political parties, perhaps among the most important being the ideological orientation, longevity, local structure, ambition of power, and popular support. In addition to these things, the increasingly frequent crises we have been

facing lately are putting the structures of political parties to the test, favouring the development of extreme movements, be they left or right.

However, the latest European elections have brought hope to European voters. With one of the largest attendances so far, they have given a strong signal that European citizens are interested in the European Institutions and want a strong European Union capable of tackling internal and external threats. We will see, as the years go by, if it will be a construct that will last over time. My conclusion is that although other difficulties will arise over time, human and material resources will be found for new political movements to support democracy and governance in the interests of citizens across the European continent.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was co-funded by the European Social Fund, through Operational Programme Human Capital 2014-2020, project number POCU/380/6/13/123623, project title <<PhD Students and Postdoctoral Researchers Prepared for the Labour Market!>>

REFERENCES

- [1] Vieira, M. B., *Representation*. London: Polity, 2008
- [2] Dunn, J., *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy*. London: Atlantic Books, 2006
- [3] Sandru, D., *Ipostaze ale ideologiei în teoria politică*. Iasi: Polirom, 2014
- [4] Miroiu, M., *Ideologii politice actuale. Semnificații, evoluții și impact*. Iasi: Polirom, 2012
- [5] Baradat, L. *Ideologiile politice. Origini și impact*. Iasi: Polirom, 2012
- [6] Habermas, J., *The Lure of Technocracy*. London: Cambridge: Polity, 2015
- [7] Christakis, N. F., *Connected. Puterea surprinzătoare a rețelelor sociale și felul în care ne modelează viața*. Bucuresti: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2015
- [8] Britannica, E., *Enciclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from Enciclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-party>, accessed at September 3, 2020
- [9] Preda, C., *Introducere în știința politică*. Iasi: Polirom, 2019
- [10] Sørensen, E., "Political Innovations: Innovations in Political Institutions, Processes and Outputs.", *Public Management Review*, 2016
- [11] Bischoff, C. S., "Political parties and innovation.", *Public Management Review*, pp.74-89, 2016

[12] Zons, G., "How Programmatic Profiles of Niche Parties Affect Their Electoral Performance.", *West European Politics*, 39:6, pp.1205-1229, 2016

[13] Wuttke, A. "New political parties through the voters' eyes. ", *West European Politics*, pp. 1-27, 2019

[14] Parliament, E., *European Parliament*. Retrieved from European Parliament web site: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/ro/headlines/eu-affairs/20190523STO52402/alegerile-2019-cea-mai-mare-prezenta-la-urne-din-ultimii-20-de-ani> accessed at September 10, 2020