GENERATING DISSENT:

Party Cohesion and Voting Loyalty in Romania Following the Electoral Change

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Abstract

Romania constitutes the ideal setting to test the impact of institutional redesign on MPs' voting cohesion given its change of electoral logic. After 18 years of closed list PR the most recent parliamentary elections (November 2008) were organized under a new electoral system in which the single member districts (i.e. the focus on the candidates) are the crucial component. We compare the aggregate and individual variation in loyalty accross the two terms using a sample of 26 high-stake roll call votes. Our multivariate OLS models (for all the MPs and for the incumbents) include the parliamentary experience, party membership duration, parliamentary rank, party hopping instances, demotion and a number of socio-demographic controls. The most important finding refers to the virtual anihilation of allmost all the explanatory power of our model after the introduction of the new electoral system.

Introduction

A party-centered electoral system usually enhances high degrees of cohesion (Hix 2004) as the members of Parliament's (MPs) re-nomination and favorable positioning on the lists depend to a large extent on the benevolence of party leaders. Candidate-centered elections usually confer certain leeway beyond the party line. These two types of legislative behavior are usually compared on different cases (Hix and Noury 2008; Depauw and Martin 2009) as consolidated democracies rarely undergo radical changes of their electoral rules (Birch 2005). Whenever the latter occur, does the cohesion of the parliamentary party groups (PPGs) and MPs' voting behavior suffer modifications?

This is the empirical puzzle that our paper aims to solve. In this respect, Romania constitutes the ideal setting to look for a possible alteration of parliamentary party cohesion and voting behavior given the dramatic change of its electoral logic. After 18 years of closed list PR (i.e. one of the most party-centered systems), the most recent parliamentary elections (November 2008) were organized under a new electoral formula in which the single member districts (i.e. the focus on candidates) are the crucial and dominant component. Moreover, our case study answers the key question of transition duration by showing that one electoral cycle is enough to wipe out determinants of behavior even if there was no change in the (party) composition of Parliament. In this context, our paper aims to identify the determinants of MP loyalty towards their PPGs and the discrepancies between the two legislatures elected under different electoral systems (2004 and 2008). To this end, we investigate the determinants of MPs' individual voting behavior based on an original dataset containing the most salient (Giannetti and Laver 2009) 13 roll call votes in each of the 2004-2008 and 2008-2012 terms. As the unit of observation is the roll call vote per month, the study covers 26 months of effective plenary sessions between May 2007 and June 2010.

The voting in plenary sessions is traditionally studied using the Rice Index that accounts for the cohesion of the MPs from parliamentary party groups. While quantifying the cohesion, the index is limited to the PPG-level of analysis without being capable to provide insights of the individual voting. The latter is crucial to capture essential changes in the loyalty of the MPs. The institutional modifications transform the way in which individuals follow their interests. As PPGs are not unitary

actors facing structures of incentives, such mechanisms are hard to be traced through aggregate figures that could instead indicate spurious relationships (Kam 2009). Moreover, the cohesion measured at the level of PPG mask changes of loyalty over time. Consequently, we focus on the individual voting behavior of the Romanian MPs from the Chamber of Deputies to account for the variation in loyalty towards their PPGs. In doing so, we employ the average of their votes coded dichotomously as agreement or disagreement with the party. This study is the first attempt to account for individual variation in voting cohesion in one of the new parliaments from Central and Eastern Europe. Earlier research conducted on the Polish (Kistern 2006; Armeanu 2010) Czech (Noury and Mielcova 1997; Mielcova 2010), or the Russian and Ukrainian legislatures (Thames 2007) have used roll call votes to asses aggregate levels of party unity.

The paper starts with a general theoretical framework on party cohesion and voting loyalty from which we derive empirically testable hypotheses. The research design section briefly describes the change of the electoral system explaining its shift of focus from party to candidates, and presents the Chamber of Deputies and its composition (i.e. the PPGs). It also includes the variable conceptualization and operationalization, details of the roll call vote selection, and the multivariate models. The third section illustrates general trends of PPG cohesion and MP dissent in the 2004 and 2008 parliamentary terms. Next, we summarize the findings of our multivariate statistical analyses on the patterns of voting loyalty. Finally, the conclusions draw on the major implications of our study and elaborate further directions for research.

Explaining MPs' Voting Behavior

The efforts to understand parliamentary behavior can be subsumed exclusively or partially to three distinct theoretical models and their variations: the sociological (Kornberg 1967; Crowe 1986), the institutional (Cox 1987), and the preference-driven approach (Ozbudun 1970; Krehbiel 1993; 1999). The policy preference model claims to be the most parsimonious of all: one only needs to know the preferred stances of a legislator in order to predict her behavior. Institutional and cultural constraints do not apply, policy maximization is everything that matters (Krehbiel 1993). The institutional

model does not reject the importance of MPs' preferences but stresses the transformative effects of the institutions (e.g.: electoral systems, internal party rules, confidence motions or agenda setting rules) upon their realization (Cox 1997). The sociological model is different in the sense that it does not espouse rational-choice assumptions. Instead, it emphasizes the power of socialization upon voting cohesion (Davidson-Schmich 2008). Thus, with the passing of terms in office MPs come to value loyalty and party solidarity, and are more prone to respond positively to peer-pressure (Kornberg 1967; Kam 2009). What is implied is a gradual and largely unconscious process of norms' internalization by which the MPs end up sharing a conformist view of what makes a behavior appropriate, i.e. "the greater good of party unity" (Andeweg and Thomassen 2010: 3).

Additionally, lengthy parliamentary experience can act as an incentive for loyalty due to a more instrumentalist filter. This applies when more experienced MPs have had the opportunity to see their party loosing fiercely at polls because the voters perceived it as divided and faction-ridden (Longley and Hazan 1999: 5). Previous empirical findings have confirmed the existence of a positive influence of parliamentary experience on cohesion for some Western countries but not for others (Depauw 2003: 143; Kam 2009: 202-203). We thus hypothesize that:

H1: MPs with extensive parliamentary records toe the party line more frequently than the rest.

Moreover, because extremely high rates of turnover represent a constant in the Romanian legislative, with more than 55% newcomers each term (Chiru 2011), we also test for an additional, less demanding indicator of organizational socialization, namely the MP's length of party membership. Following our previous reasoning, extended membership records should foster party loyalty, even in the absence of parliamentary role experience. The variable captures also the instances of affiliation shortly before elections, which can speak about opportunistic behaviors of career politicians that abandon sinking parties. They might later on show the same volatile tendencies with respect to toeing their new party's line.

H2: Longer party membership of the MPs enhances voting loyalty.

The distribution of office perks (e.g. ministerial portfolios, committee assignments etc.) is alongside reselection/re-nomination the most important positive selective incentive party leaders have at their disposal to ensure high levels of cohesion (Bowler et al 1999: 10). In turn, office-seeking MPs have reasons to please party leaders to enhance their chances of further career advancement (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Cox and McCubbins, 1993). The link between loyalty and advancement is visible especially in the Westminster parliamentary systems. One party holds the monopoly over most offices, while policy influence and the capacity to distribute resources are achieved only through appointment in a ministerial position (Kam 2009). In a system marked by more power dispersion, such as the Romanian semi-presidentialism where coalition governments are the rule (Elgie and Moestrup 2008) a parliamentary office can still be perceived as a reasonable proxy for the politician's chances of advancement in both public and party office. Stefan (2009: 30-31) showed that after mid-90s, having a parliamentary career became almost a precondition for recruitment in a ministerial portfolio, only one third of the ministers lacking legislative experience prior to their appointment.

H3: High MPs' prospects for advancement favor voting loyalty.

The most extreme form of parliamentary dissent is changing the party group. In Romania party switching is frequent: more than 10% of the MPs defect in each post-communist legislature with a peak of 24% in the 2004-2008 term (Chiru 2011). Party switching is generally explained by three main motivations: seeking ideological compatibility, the desire for office and/or pork for constituents, and looking for electoral advantage, i.e. an easier re-election (Heller and Mershon 2009). It is not justifiable to assume that switchers are previous rebels who have systematically dissented from their party line. This would be for sure the case only for those MPs whose policy preferences were significantly different from those of their former party, i.e., a "sincere dissenter". The other two categories of defectors (the instrumental oriented ones) might include almost with the same probability, conformist, low-profile

politicians or just occasional, strategic dissenters that want to signal their intentions to future party bosses. In Romania, parties have not developed strong programmatic orientations (Pop-Eleches 1999; Gherghina 2008; Gherghina and Chiru 2010), and MPs are not known for their attachment to particular policy stances. This ideological fuzziness (van Biezen 2003; Millard 2004; Enyedi and Toka 2007; Spirova 2007; Tavits 2008) makes highly unlikely the switching for policy compatibility. On these grounds, it remains an empirical question whether switchers will engage in dissent or not. By taking into account the strategic signaling idea, we hypothesize that:

H4: MPs who switch parties are less loyal than the rest.

We control for the effect of age as previous research has shown that older MPs are more prone to dissent. Their prospects of career advancement are much diminished compared to their younger colleagues (Kam 2009: 199). The professional background of the MP is another control variable expecting those representatives who have held previously political or administrative jobs to be more prone to toe the party line than those who are newcomers to politics. The last control variable is context-specific, as personal wealth plays a significant role in Romanian politics and list composition (Gherghina and Chiru 2010). Thus, in the context of meager levels of party subsidies, and reduced rates of fee-paying members (Kopecký 2001; Lewis 2001; Szczerbiak 2001; Smilov and Toplak 2007; Gherghina et al 2011) the parties chose to promote extensively well-off candidates that could finance their campaigns both for the national (Stefan 2004; Protsyk and Matichescu 2011) and European (Gherghina and Chiru 2010) elections. Once elected these politicians might feel entitled to more autonomy vis-à-vis the party line than others.

These relationships are tested for the entire pool of MPs who voted in the two surveyed parliamentary terms. Moreover, we are interested in the behavior of MPs with continuous presence in Parliament in 2004 and 2008. In their case, both voting loyalty and change of loyalty between the terms provide useful insights about their interaction with the PPGs. Consequently, we build two supplementary models specific to the incumbent MPs. In addition to the specified variables, we test whether demotion (i.e. the downwards mobility in parliamentary rank in the second term

analyzed) decreases loyalty (Kam 2009: 160). Given the fact that the pool of offices is somewhat limited by coalition agreements we do not expect a strong effect:

H5: Demoted MPs dissent more than the rest.

For the two models referring to the incumbent MPs, we also control for their belonging to government or opposition party as all the PPGs were part of the government at least once in the analyzed period.

Research Design

Our analysis focuses on the Chamber of Deputies as it is the primary arena of legislative debates. Most legislation is first discussed by Deputies and then passed to the Senators. At the same time, this Chamber is twice as large as the Senate thus giving parties higher incentives to control their MPs, or higher stakes in the floor-crossing. Moreover, due to deficient institutional management, senators are frequently absent from the roll-call votes not because they do not want to toe the party line or do not care about the respective bills, but because their standing committees have meetings scheduled at the same time (*IPP Report* 2010: 28). Our analysis includes all the Deputies present in the plenary sessions when the roll call votes were cast. Appendix 1 illustrates only small differences between our universe of cases and the entire amount of MPs. In other words, absentees do not cause a distortion in the data.

A New Electoral System

The electoral system introduced in Romania for the 2008 legislative elections changed the focus of selection from party – the previous system was a closed list PR – to candidate. The major reform was the introduction of single-member districts (SMDs) for all the parliamentary seats. In doing so, the system envisages three layers: the district, the county, and the national level. The latter two are the legacy of the previous electoral system and they appear exclusively in the seats redistribution phases. The counties correspond to the territorial administrative divisions of Romania and include more districts depending on the population. Candidates compete in districts and only those receiving 50% plus 1 of the votes are directly elected.

For the rest, the distribution of mandates happens in two stages. The first is the county redistribution and refers to the amount of votes obtained by the party in each county. The second stage redistributes the remaining seats and accounts for the national vote shares of the parties. The introduction of SMDs did produce some modification in the recruitment patterns, i.e. putting a premium on local roots (residence, local experience and party career) and thus decreasing the number of "carpetbaggers". Also the parties chose to delegate much of the campaigning costs, favoring well-to-do candidates (Chiru 2010). Given the importance of these personal resources some there are premises for the MPs elected under this system to feel entitled to more autonomy compared with their colleagues anonymously elected on party lists in the previous terms. Such an independent behavior is be tolerated by parties as long as it maximizes the vote shares obtained by these candidates (Carey 2003: 201). Moreover, the district connection can create a basis for "legitimate dissent" – i.e. claiming that constituents' interest would be hurt by toeing the party line, and generally for a discourse much more oriented towards individual accountability (Carey and Reynolds 2007).

The Romanian PPGs

The two largest Romanian political parties present in the contemporary legislature changed their names several times as a result of splits, mergers, or electoral strategic reasoning. To avoid confusion and to ensure consistency throughout the text, we use their current names for every reference even if at the moment of certain actions the party operated under a different label. For example, the Democratic Liberal Party (PDL) was constituted only at the beginning of 2008 following the merger between the Democratic Party (PD) and a faction leaving the National Liberal Party (PNL). We refer to PDL as being represented in the entire 2004 Parliament although until a certain moment its name was PD and its Deputies were either part of PD or PNL.

The Social Democratic Party (PSD) is the largest Romanian party in the post-communist period, winning the popular vote in four out of six elections. PSD is one of the two successors of the Romanian Communist Party and the direct continuator of the Iliescu-wing of the National Salvation Front (FSN) – the neo-communist umbrella organization that took over the control of the country after Ceausescu's breakdown

(Pop-Eleches 1999). After the 1991 FSN National Convention, when Petre Roman became president of the Front, the supporters of the country's President, Ion Iliescu left FSN to form a new party, FDSN (later called PDSR and PSD). The party governed Romania until 1996 and again alone between 2000 and 2004. Their last presence in power happened in a coalition with PDL that lasted only one year (2009). PSD won the most recent three elections with a similar electoral support: around 35%. Starting 2000, PSD ran in an electoral coalition with a minor party – the Conservative Party (PC) formerly called the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR). We consider their group as being homogenous although they are allocated specific number of seats after elections (Chiru and Ciobanu 2009: 198).

PDL (formerly called PD) is the other direct successor of the FSN. The party was present in all post-communist parliaments and participated in government in three occasions: in 1996-2000 together with the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), in 2005-2007 in coalition with PNL and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), and since the 2008 elections, first together with PSD and after 2009 in a coalition with UDMR. The party shifted its ideological orientation in 2005: following a decade-long affiliation with the Socialist International it has become a member of the European People's Party.

The National Liberal Party (PNL) is the only historical party revived in 1990 that managed to achieve the status of major political force, and survive as a parliamentary party for two decades. PNL governed as part of the CDR in 1996-2000, and then again in 2004-2008 (with PDL and UDMR until 2007, and then as a minority government with URMR).

UDMR is – as indicated by its name – an ethnic party which reunites different ideological visions and organizations of the Hungarian minority. Despite its declared pluralism, UDMR is affiliated with the European People's Party. The Alliance has been present in all the post-communist parliaments and in all governments formed since 1996.

Roll Call Votes Selection

The usual problem of roll call votes is that they are not a random selection of votes (Carrubba et al. 2004; Carruba et al. 2008). This is not the case in the Romanian Parliament where every issue is automatically voted upon and no selection bias occurs when referring to this type of votes. However, the challenge consists of selecting representative sets of votes from the whole universe of issues from the yearly bulk of legislation. At the same time, some votes are more important than others. Our selection controls for their saliency to be able to treat them equally. In this respect, we adopted three measures. First, similarly to Mainwaring and Linan (1997) we eliminated all the votes that registered unanimity or a very large majority (over 90%) as they do not reflect a divisive dimension. The latter provides the ideal setting to test for MPs loyalty. Second, we selected votes with similar attendance rates as this may significantly influence the cohesion (Carey 2002; Thames 2007) or loyalty. Third, our selection is characterized by equilibrium between the votes approving and rejecting policy proposals (mostly belonging to the government). The share of these votes is proportional to all the votes on the parliamentary agenda. We have also incorporated a broad spectrum of topics (see Appendix 2). We did not include organic laws that require absolute majority, laws under second reading, or EU-derived legislation (a very high degree of opinion convergence for the latter). Consequently, our analysis includes 26 votes on ordinary laws (one per month), picked evenly (13 and 13) from the 2004 and 2008 parliamentary terms. Usually, there are no more than 30 roll call votes per month as many votes cannot take place due to the low rate of presence – the Romanian legislation stipulates a minimum quorum to take decisions. More than half of the roll call votes register unanimities or very large majorities. The first vote selected dates from May 2007 and the most recent from June 22, 2010. We accounted for the last 13 months from the 2004 term as May 2007 was the first month in which votes were recorded electronically in the Chamber of Deputies and made publicly available.

Variable Operationalization and Method

The dependent variable of this analysis is the loyalty of MPs behavior. Its value is used as such for two statistical models, whereas a third uses the difference in individual loyalty across the two legislatures (see below). Each vote is dichotomously coded as

loyalty (1) whenever the MP votes like the majority of her colleagues from the PPG or dissent (0) in all other instances. Similarly to the Rice index, the issue of abstentions (Hix et al. 2005) pops up. Aware that abstentions are mild defections, we code them in terms of loyalty (if the MP abstains and most of the PPG abstains) or dissent (if the MP abstains when the PPG has an opinion). Wrapping up, each MP has a sequence of 0 and 1 depending on the votes she casts. We calculate the average of these votes on a 0-1 scale where 0 means total dissent and 1 perfect loyalty. As a result, each MP has an average at the end of the examined period in the parliamentary term and that constitutes the level of its loyalty.[1] The change of loyalty is calculated solely for incumbents and represents the difference between the level of loyalty in the 2004 and the 2008 terms.

The parliamentary experience (H1) is conceptualized as the time spent in Parliament measured as the total number of months spent in the legislature from the beginning of the post-communist period. The length of party membership (H2) is measured in a similar manner the reference point being the enrollment in the political party. For prospects for advancement (H3) we use the position MPs occupied in Parliament. This variable is measured on an ordinal Likert scale with six values that varies from simple member in less than three committees to leader or vice-leader of the PPG. If MPs occupy high positions, then she is more likely to be further advanced to a governmental portfolio. Party switchers (H4) are considered all those MPs who change their partisan affiliation (Desposato 2006) either by becoming independents or joining a different PPG group. The analytical nuances introduced by Kreuzer and Pettai (2003) are useful in explaining what other cases are considered as party switches. If MPs change their political affiliations as a result of splits, mergers, or following the emergence of a new PPG, then they are considered switchers. This variable is a dummy in which all the party switchers are coded as 1. The loyalty of MPs is always calculated relative to the PPG to which they belong; for MPs becoming independent we account only those months in which they belong to a PPG. In the comparisons between PPGs, the floor-crossing MPs are assigned to the party from which they defected.

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[1] This average is not weighed with attendance both for theoretical and empirical reasons. On the one hand, we do not want to attach meaning to absenteeism and any weighing implicitly does so. On the other hand, there is little amount of variation in terms of presence between the MPs.

The control variables are age at the moment of elections, professional background, and wealth on an ordinal Likert scale with six values ranging from modest (1) to extremely rich (6). The professional background is also measured on an ordinal scale with 7 categories in which one end is represented by the professional politician (1) and the other by the show business and similar occupations (7). The occupation categories are usually nominal but the order in which we set them allows them to be considered ordinal as they range from occupations dealing with politics to the furthest possible from politics.

We use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and we employ a model for each parliamentary term. None of the OLS assumptions is violated including here the independence of cases. Although there are 88 MPs present both in 2004 and 2008, the values of most of their individual features are independent (with the exception of experience in Parliament, length of party membership, and age). The model can be summarized as follows with $\beta 5$- $\beta 7$ as controls:

Voting Loyalty = constant + β1 Parliamentary Experience + β2 Length of Party Membership + β3 Position in Parliament + β4 Floor-Crossing + β5 Age + β6 Profession + β7 Wealth + μ. (1)

Two supplementary models are used for the MP incumbents in the attempt to explain their loyalty and its change. One main effect is tested (demotion) and one more control (government party) is added. Demotion is calculated as the difference between the position occupied in 2004 and that in 2008, whereas the belonging to a government party is coded as a dummy with opposition MPs being coded as (0). The two models can be summarized as follows:

Voting Loyalty = constant + β1 Parliamentary Experience + β2 Length of Party Membership + β3 Position in Parliament + β4 Floor-Crossing + β6 Demotion + β7 Government Party +β5 Age + β6 Profession + β7 Wealth + μ. (2)

Change of Loyalty = constant + β1 Parliamentary Experience + β2 Length of Party Membership + β3 Position in Parliament + β4 Floor-Crossing + β6 Demotion + β7 Government Party +β5 Age + β6 Profession + β7 Wealth + μ. (3)

From Party Cohesion to Voting Loyalty

Figure 1 graphically depicts the evolution of the average cohesion of the parliamentary groups represented in the 2004 and 2008 legislatures.[2] The rates of the cohesion are measured within the parliamentary groups for individual votes and their averages are represented in a longitudinal plot. Both terms are characterized by high levels of cohesion, most of the times above 0.8. There are isolated instances in which the cohesion goes beyond that value and even fewer situations in which there is a dramatic drop such as the vote from May 2009 about the provision of medical assistance when PNL and UDMR had their groups almost evenly divided.

Figure 1: The Evolution of Average Cohesion in the Parliamentary Terms (Rice Index)
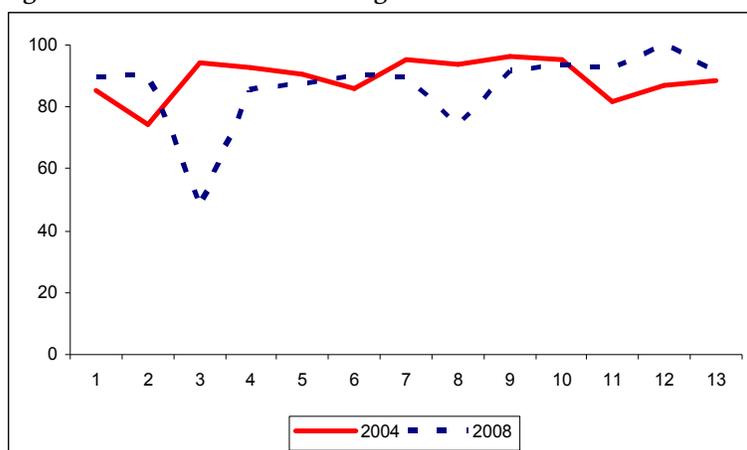
Overall, there is slightly more cohesion in the 2004 legislature compared to 2008. Such a situation is counterintuitive at first glance as all the 2004 roll call were registered when a minority government was in place and its success in passing legislation was based on dissent from the opposition parties. However, there is an explanation for this situation. The first 11 months from the 2008 term in office were characterized by a large government coalition (approximately 70% of the seats in parliament). In this context of a comfortable majority, there is no credible threat to the passing of legislation. Consequently, the government-supporting PPGs are expected to have a looser control

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[2] The Greater Romania Party (PRM) had MPs in the 2004 legislature, but not in 2008. One reason to exclude it from the analysis is the absence of continuity. A second reason is the low number of MPs in the sample (7): it is underrepresented due to the numerous absences of its Deputies from the plenary sessions. Finally, all but one of their MPs changed the PPG to which they belonged by the moment of our analysis. Thus, although they belonged to PRM in 2004, by 2007 they were either independents or affiliated to other PPGs.

over their MPs, and thus the dissent should increase (Kam 2009: 71). Moreover, in 2007 the Social-Democrats although formally in the opposition often supported the government coalition and in 9 of the 13 surveyed roll call votes they did so in an explicit manner.

Although the average cohesion is quite high, there are a few relevant differences both between the PPGs and within the same PPG in different terms. Table 1 includes the averages for each PPG in the two electoral terms and the standard deviations. The most cohesive parties are those leading the coalition governments - PNL in 2004 and PDL in 2008. When getting into opposition, the cohesion of PNL decreases from 0.99 (0.01 standard deviation) to 0.81 (0.25 standard deviation). Similarly, PDL increases from a cohesion of 0.89 (0.09 standard deviation) when it was in the opposition to 0.97 (0.04 standard deviation when it got into government). UDMR follows a similar trend with less dissent when in government (an average of 0.87) than in the opposition (0.84, much larger standard deviation). PSD+PC is unique in that the voting behavior of its MPs is indifferent to the status of the party (the values of the standard deviations are comparable). However, this observation appears to be valid only at aggregate level as belonging to the government party seems to make no difference at individual level (see footnote 4). The explanation for this apparently awkward situation is the behavior of PSD+PC group as a whole and of its Deputies in both terms. As mentioned, it supported PNL in 2004 while in opposition, whereas in 2008 it was in government for nine months - period corresponding to approximately half of all the surveyed roll call votes. UDMR can also represent a source of distortion at individual level as it is known for its discipline in terms of presence and cohesion (table 1) and joined the coalition government towards the end of the analyzed period in 2008.

Table 1: A Cross-Party Perspective of Voting Cohesion in the Romanian Parliament (averages)

Party	2004-2008		2008-2012	
	Average	Standard deviation	Average	Standard deviation
PSD	83	11	82	15
PDL	89	9	97	4
PNL	99	2	81	25
UDMR	87	12	84	27
General	89	6	86	12

Notes: The number of MPs differs across parties and across votes within the party. PSD: 91<N<111; PDL: 44<N<104; PNL: 55<N<64; UDMR: 17<N<21.

Apart from the government/ opposition status, there is a general tendency of loosening cohesion after the change of the electoral system in 2008. Figure 2 reveals that three out of four PPGs have higher longitudinal oscillations of their cohesiveness in 2008 compared to 2004. Even the main government party from 2008 (PDL) is less cohesive than its counterpart from 2004 (PNL). The empirical evidence of the Romanian case indicates that an electoral system cultivating a mixture of personal and party votes (applied in 2008) corresponds to lower unity compared to the system based primarily on party votes. Such a situation is consistent with Depauw and Martin's (2009) reasoning according to which political parties operating in an electoral system providing less incentive for personal votes are likely to display more unified legislative voting.

**Figure 2: The Evolution of PPG Cohesion in the 2004 and 2008 terms (Rice Index)**
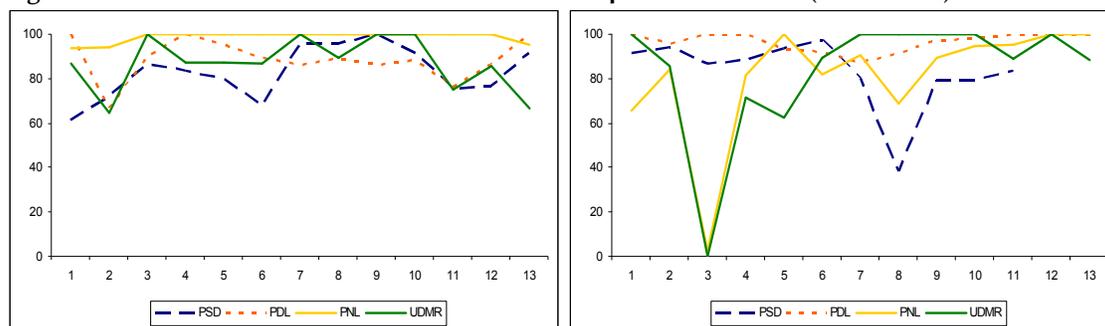
Note: On May 5. 2010 (vote 12) no PSD MP voted as the entire PPG left the room to boycott the vote.

These figures allow two major observations. On the one hand, the mean cohesion of the Romanian PPGs is quite high, but still 10% below that of the legislatives from established democracies (Sieberer 2006, 161). On the other hand, following the electoral system change, there is a general decrease of cohesion from 89 to 86%. Figure 2 illustrates more dissent in three out of four PPGs, the presence in government being a factor that increases the cohesion. Given this general picture, we investigate the distribution of loyalty among MPs irrespective of their belonging to PPGs. Figure 3 clusters the MPs in four categories corresponding to the extent to which they cast votes in line with their party. More than two thirds of the MPs in both terms in office do not deviate at all from the opinion of their PPGs. In empirical terms, this situation reduces the amount of variation to be explained. At the same time, 19% of the MPs in

2004 and 26% in 2008 follow the party line in more than three quarters of their votes (the "high" category).

Such cohesive attitudes are consistent with the general trends displayed above. Moreover, this distribution reveals that dissenters are not constantly the same. The proportion of those voting regularly against the party line is very small. The cohesion appears to be distributed evenly throughout the entire surveyed period. In this respect, we have checked whether the attitudes of the MPs from this category altered in the eve of elections. We expected a change of behavior given the candidate nominations for future elections. Those MPs certain of their renomination are likely to display higher cohesion around elections, whereas the Deputies no longer among the candidates for the future elections to display less cohesion. Accordingly, we divided the MPs in two categories (renominated vs. non-renominated for 2004 and incumbents vs. newcomers in 2008) and accounted for two different periods of time: 13 months vs. the last six months before elections for 2004 and last six months of the surveyed period in 2008. The empirical evidence finds no support for our expectations and illustrates an almost equal distribution during the examined votes. Overall, the average of cohesion stays approximately the same in the six and 13 months (it is slightly higher in the latter) and the renominated/incumbent MPs are slightly less loyal than the rest of the MPs.

Figure 3: Levels of MP Loyalty in the 2004 and 2008 Parliamentary Terms (percentages)
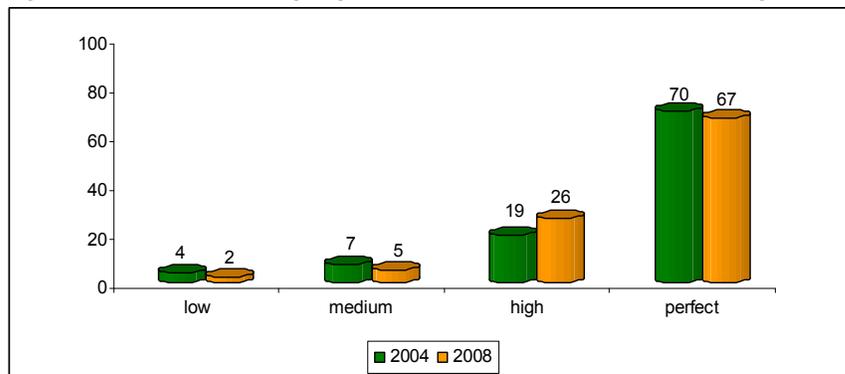
Notes: low = <50%; medium = 50.1%-75%; high=75.1%-99%, perfect = 100%.
N= 609

In terms of loyalty there are minor differences between the distributions of MPs in the two investigated legislatures. The most visible refers to the percentage of 7% from the "high" loyalty category. Compared to 2004, in 2008 there are slightly fewer MPs who follow their party in every single vote. However, the percentage of rebels and

occasional dissenters (the low and medium categories) also decreases in 2008. Thus, the small decrease in perfect loyalty is counterbalanced by a tendency of the MPs in 2008 – compared to 2004 – to reduce the instances in which they cast votes against their party.

Only a very small percentage (4 and 2%) of MPs vote similarly to their party colleagues in less than half of the situations. The leaders of dissent are included in table 2 next to the absolute number of votes cast against their party and the percentage of such votes from the total number. The percentage is sensitive to the presence of the MPs in the plenary sessions. Thus, although the first MP in the table voted seven times against the PSD+PC party, his percentage is 70% as he voted 12 times. The last two MPs in the table have only four votes against the same PPG, but that represents two thirds of their votes as they were present only six times in the plenary sessions. At a glance it can be observed that the rebels belong to two PPGs – PSD+PC and PNL. Given the PNL's high cohesion in the 2004 legislature, the presence of one liberal MP in this table comes as a surprise. Oancea is one of the few MPs who dissented at vote in that legislature, such an attitude culminating in a definitive abandonment of the party and enrollment in 2008 in PDL. Such a situation points to one of the two explanations for the organized dissent of these MPs – a problematic sense of belonging to the PPG. This is usually reflected in party switching within the same term in office. Neculai Rebengiuc and Teodor Nițulescu are in a similar position with the former switching from PNL to PDL (as most of the liberal defectors did in the two terms) and the latter returning to PSD+PC after an initial exit and a period of independence.

Table 2: MPs Voting the Most against their Parties

Name	Party	2004		2008	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Marian-Florian Săniuță	PSD+PC			7	70%
Mircea Dușa	PSD+PC	6	50%		
Viorel Oancea	PNL	5	56%		
Neculai Rebengiuc	PNL			5	42%
Radu Costin Vasilică	PSD+PC			5	50%
Teodor Nițulescu	PSD+PC	4	67%		
Mădălin-Ștefan Voicu	PSD+PC			4	67%

A second explanation regards the MPs' certainty of future re-election into Parliament fueled by two interconnected mechanisms. On the one hand, there are MPs with a personal pool of supporters. For example, Mircea Dușa is the only Romanian Deputy

elected in the Harghita constituency where the population consists of almost 85% ethnic Hungarians who traditionally cast their votes for UDMR. Marian-Florian Săniuță ruled the organization of PSD Prahova for six years until 2009 when he decided to become independent aware of his strong constituency support. Mădălin-Ștefan Voicu is in a similar position, being the representative of the Roma minority in PSD+PC. Following the 2004 internal primaries for the selection of candidates (i.e. the only organized by the social-democrats), PSD+PC removed Voicu from the list of candidates as he did not win the support of members. The bonds between the party and the MP strengthened again in 2008 when he was nominated as candidate for the legislative elections in a different constituency than the one in which he ran for the primaries. On the other hand, there are MPs who can afford to be more autonomous because they are supported by very influential local organizations. Radu Costin Vasilică is an illustrative case in this sense, especially because of the backup he has from the PSD Argeș county branch. Summing up, the dissent of the Romanian MPs does not originate in their willingness to defend constituency interests or in the pursuit of public policy preferences. Instead, they appear to be the direct result of a political identity crisis and of certainty regarding their legislative future.

The Multivariate Analyses

Table 3 includes the multivariate statistical analyses seeking to explain the voting behavior of the Romanian MPs in 2004 and 2008.[3] Both models perform poorly accounting for 4 and 7% of the variation in MPs' voting loyalty.[4] The model for the term preceding the electoral change not only explains more of the variation, but also finds empirical support for most of the hypothesized relationships. In this respect, the hypothesis according to which representatives with more experience in Parliament are more likely to be loyal to their PPGs finds weak support, but is statistically significant

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[3] We have checked for multicollinearity and the results indicate that it is not present. The biggest correlation coefficients are observed in the case of professional background and experience in Parliament for 2004 (0.44, significant at 0.01) and the length of party membership and experience in Parliament for 2008 (0.45, significant at 0.01).

[4] The initial models included also the belonging to the government party, the length of a certain position occupied in Parliament, and the level of involvement in the party (central, territorial, and national). As none of them provided substantial contributions to the explanatory power (low coefficients and artificial increase of R^2 as a function of the number of tested variables), we present the most parsimonious models.

(at the 0.1 level). To interpret this effect: one full term as MP increases the representative's discipline by 12 and a half percentage points. The length of party membership has a smaller but still positive effect on loyalty[5] and the explanation resides in the bonds established between MPs and their party (i.e. socialization). There is a similar empirical support for the fourth hypothesis mentioning that those MPs who abandon the PPG on the lists of which they were elected are less loyal. What is certain (precisely because of the very small size of this effect) is that most of the switchers did not dissent constantly from their party line, as one would have expected if their subsequent switching was motivated by ideological distance from the initial party.

Table 3: The Effects of Individual Features on Voting Loyalty in the Two Legislatures

	2004	2008
Experience in Parliament	0.13*	-0.03
Length of Party Membership	0.10	-0.07
Position in Parliament	-0.14**	0.03
Floor-Crossing	-0.10*	-0.14**
Age	-0.10	-0.02
Profession	0.12*	0.07
Wealth	-0.10	0.03
R^2	0.07	0.04
N	277	311

Notes: Reported coefficients are standardized.
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.5$, * $p < 0.1$.

However, the most significant effect goes against our expectations with MPs occupying lower positions within the legislature being more loyal to their PPGs than their colleagues from higher positions: one category switch in the parliamentary rank, for example from being secretary in a committee to chairing the committee brings a small decrease in loyalty (-0.14**). Such a behavior could be explained through the presence of a large mass of backbenchers (58% incumbents that do not hold any office), many of whom would show loyalty in the hope of promotion. In this case, the logic of advancement that prevents dissent functions with high parliamentary office as reference points, i.e. MPs already holding important office do not look for further promotion to the executive.

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[5] We have tested also for the position occupied in the party to identify whether the activity at local, territorial or national level makes a difference in enhancing loyalty. The coefficient of such a variable and the interaction effect between length of membership and position occupied in the party – none reported in the parsimonious model from table 3 – indicate no impact of the position.

Among the control variables only the professional background proved statistically significant. The further away MPs are from classic politicians, the more likely they are to be loyal to their PPGs. Career politicians have more connections with MPs from other parties due to their similar pre- and post-communist trajectories. Thus, they could engage more in logrolling from final roll-call votes. Younger representatives are more loyal compared to their older colleagues. Two possible explanations are at work in their case. First, most of them are newcomers and thus more eager to get promoted upon demonstrating their loyalty. Such a behavior would make much sense if young Romanian MPs would be aware of the fact that if promotion does not happen early in the parliamentary career, the chances of further advancement are much more diminished (Kam 2009). Second, the young MPs have a long record of membership in the party youth organizations[6] and the strong bonds established with the parties are partially prolonged on the legislative arena. Finally, wealth has a negative effect on loyalty with richer MPs defecting more than their colleagues. This supports our hypothesis as in the Romanian context personal wealth translates in more autonomy vis-à-vis the party organization (both when it comes to re-nominations and campaign financing) for the reasons exposed previously.

Following the change of the electoral system, the amount of explained variation of loyalty decreases from 7 to 4%. With the exception of the change of PPG affiliation, all variables lose their explanatory potential and most of them change their direction. The experience in Parliament, the position held by the MPs in the legislature, age, and wealth have almost no effect on voting loyalty. In a context of extensive change of party affiliation of the elected MPs (especially after the dissolution of the grand coalition PDL-PSD), it is not surprising that floor-crossing has the strongest impact on the voting behavior. At the same time, its value and statistical significance increases compared to the previous term. In fact, this is the only variables for which we find in 2008 empirical support for the hypothesized relationships. The length of party membership goes against our theoretical rationale, whereas the rest of coefficients point to an absence of the relationship.

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[6] We have controlled for the interaction effect between age and length of party membership without any significant effect on the voting loyalty. We have also controlled for 'age squared' following Kam's (2009) hypothesis that young MPs are more loyal while those that reach the final part of their life become more disciplined due to socialization.

The differences between the two parliamentary terms are visible also at party level. Table 4 includes the statistical analyses for each PPG in the two parliamentary terms. Two general observations can be made. On the one hand, with the exception of PDL, the 2004 models explain better voting loyalty than the ones in 2008. For example, for PSD+PC and PNL the differences are remarkable between the potential of the model before and after the change of the electoral system. On the other hand, this party level analysis reveals the triggering mechanism behind one key variable in the general models from table 3. The general impact of floor-crossing heavily loads on the records of PNL's Deputies. This is strengthened by absence of out-switching from the PDL for 2004 and UDMR in both terms. PNL suffered losses of MPs in both parliamentary terms. In 2007, the separation from PDL resulted in significant migrations of MPs. The number of Deputies in our sample correctly points to this process: the initial algorithm for distribution of seats within the Truth and Justice Alliance (Alianta DA) was 1.3 (PNL) to 1 (PDL). Our sample contains 68 MPs belonging to PNL and 58 to PDL being representative for the entire population of the 2004 legislature (see Appendix 1). This process is complemented by a few MPs who enrolled in PNL in 2004 and 2008 mostly elected under the PSD+PC label. Similarly, the surprising effect of holding party office on voting behavior is mostly due to the strong relationship that happens within UDMR where MPs with positions are less loyal than the usual committee members. Conversely, within the PNL group the experience in Parliament is not a stronger predictor of loyalty. For the UDMR one observes a strong effect in the reversed direction, generated by the fact that the core group of veteran MPs dissent from time to time, compared to the perfect loyalty of the rest.

Table 4: The Explanatory Models for Cross-Party Comparisons

	PSD+PC		PDL		PNL		UDMR	
	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008
Experience in Parliament	0.20*	0.11	0.30*	-0.19*	-0.01	0.16	-0.52	-0.49
Length of Party Membership	0.09	0.01	-0.10	0.09	0.11	-0.11	0.10	0. 31
Position in Parliament	-0.20**	0.02	-0.13	0.16**	-0.05	-0.03	0.58*	-0.11
Floor-Crossing	-0.10	0.01	-	0.07	-0.34***	-0.29**	-	-
Age	-0.12	-0.10	-0.01	-0.26**	0.04	0.06	-0.37	-0.03
Profession	0.21**	0.17	0.24	-0.07	-0.21	0.06	0.03	0.15
Wealth	-0.14	-0.05	-0.15	0.01	-0.03	0.06	-0.18	0.04
R^2	0.12	0.03	0.11	0.14	0.18	0.09	0.38	0.29
N	127	107	58	110	68	66	20	21

Notes: Reported coefficients are standardized.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.5$, * $p < 0.1$.

A comparison of the 2004 and 2008 models for each party indicates a few variables maintaining their sign and strength. Apart from the already mentioned example of MPs migration flows from and to PNL, the experience in Parliament for the UDMR Deputies and the professional background for PSD+PC MPs are the other two instances of variables behaving similarly in the two models. There are much more cases in which variables significantly change their strength and direction. For example, the position in Parliament reverses direction in all PPGs but PNL. In the case of PSD+PC and PDL, it has a positive impact in 2004 that is dramatically altered in 2008 to a negative relationship – almost inexistent for the former PPG – that is statistically significant for PDL. The contrary happens with UDMR where the initial negative impact does not find a correspondence in 2008 (a positive, much weaker effect).

Summing up, the multivariate analyses lead to a conclusion hidden by the similarity of the aggregate cohesion levels described in the previous section. The determinants of MPs' voting loyalty have different effects in the legislative terms preceding and following the change of the electoral system. The main explanation of this process is that the candidate centered approach used in 2008 dramatically altered the structure of incentives faced by MPs and the examined individual features lead to a different behavior. Consequently, the MPs voting loyalty is not triggered by the same factors as in 2004. Most of our hypotheses find empirical support in 2004, but only one does the same in 2008. This is the floor-crossing, a process that met a significantly growth following the elections held in single-member districts.

In order to understand better the puzzle created by the heterogeneity of explanations for 2004 and 2008, we investigate the behavior of the MPs who were present in both parliamentary terms. According to model (2) presented in the research design section, we introduce two new independent variables: the demotion (i.e. losing one position in parliamentary rank) and the affiliation to a government party. While it makes sense to speak about demotion only for incumbent MPs, the ruling status of the PPG is also expected to produce significant results as all the incumbent MPs had the chance to experience at least one alternation government/opposition.[7] Moreover, as we speak about incumbents, we empirically test the model (3) that has the change of voting loyalty as dependent variable.

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[7] Each PPG represented in both legislatures was at least temporarily in government.

The Loyalty of Incumbent MPs

The analysis in this sub-section focuses on the 88 MPs that took part in the plenary sessions of both Parliaments. In reality, their number is slightly higher, but the absolute absentees were excluded from the sample. The distribution of incumbents across PPGs is quite proportional to the number of their total MPs in 2008: 44 for PSD+PC, 19 for PDL, 16 for PNL, and 9 for UDMR.[8] Overall, the determinants of incumbents' voting loyalty follow the trend identified for the entire legislature in the model for 2004. When comparing this analysis with its corresponding 2008 model from table 2, the analysis of incumbents clarifies the picture much better.

The statistical model (table 5) does a better job in explaining their loyalty compared to the broader pool of Deputies. There is weak empirical support for three hypothesized relationships including the one of occupied positions where incumbents with responsibilities in committees or within the PPG are more loyal than their colleagues. The socialization in Parliament through experience and the length of party membership have a positive impact on the voting loyalty. The control variables have a similar effect with that illustrated in table 2: younger MPs, the representatives that have a professional background far from politics, and the less wealthy Deputies are more loyal than the rest.

Table 5: The OLS Models for Incumbents in 2008

	MP loyalty	MP change of loyalty
Experience in Parliament	0.11	0.10
Length of Party Membership	0.14	-0.03
Position in Parliament	-0.07	0.19
Floor-Crossing	0.03	0.06
Demotion	0.07	-0.34**
Belonging to the Government Party	0.22*	-0.24**
Age	-0.24*	0.21*
Profession	0.20	-0.16
Wealth	-0.13	-0.18
R^2	0.13	0.22
N		88

Notes: Reported coefficients are standardized.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.5$, * $p < 0.1$.

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[8] PDL has a smaller percentage of incumbents mostly due to its high electoral volatility in the 2008 elections (i.e. a relevant increase of its popular support).

The only variable that considerably diverges from the previous observations refers to the MPs crossing the floor. Those incumbents who switch the party appear as loyal as the rest. The demotion variable has a weak effect on the loyalty in the opposite direction than specified by H5. Thus, MPs with higher loss in rank are more loyal than the rest. The most important predictor, significantly influencing the voting loyalty, is the MP's status with respect to the ruling coalition.

The explanatory model for the change of voting loyalty reveals that the length of party membership and the floor-crossing have little if any effect. The incumbent MPs with more experience in Parliament or occupying a higher position in the internal legislative structures change their loyalty more that the rest (a stronger impact of the occupied position). Among the control variables, older MPs, professional politicians, and less wealthy Deputies have a higher tendency than their colleagues to change their loyalty. The most important predictors are the demotion and the belonging to a government party. The MPs losing their initial rank change their degree of loyalty much more than their colleagues. Conversely to the previous findings, MPs in the opposition display significantly more changes in their loyalty than those representatives belonging to government party.

Conclusions

The PPG cohesion in the Romanian legislature displays little variation in the two terms before and after the reform of the electoral system. What these aggregate measures fail to capture are the oscillations of the MPs' voting behavior. This paper argued that the shift from party to candidate centered approaches generates incentives for dissent. This reasoning is built on the only major difference emerging between the two legislatures, all other factors – ranging from the PPG composition of the legislature to the distribution of MPs' age and profession (not reported in the paper) – being constant. This expectation is not entirely met when scrutinizing the general categories of loyalty (figure 3) where there are more highly loyal Deputies in 2008 compared to 2004. As this is a rough approximation, our multivariate analyses delve into the individual level mechanisms and illustrate how socialization (both in Parliament and in the political party), holding a parliamentary office, and party hopping impact the 2004 MPs' levels of loyalty. Relevant to the key point of this paper is that only the

explanation of the party switching predicts some variation in loyalty for 2008 and does so with a greater impact than in the previous term. Even the control variables do not explain much in 2008 although they performed reasonably in the 2004 analysis. These results become more relevant if we consider that more than 20% of the MPs elected in 2008 were elected in legislatures prior to 2004. Overall, the explanatory model loses strength both at general and PPG-level from 2004 to 2008 indicating a different structure of determinants for voting cohesion. Such a conclusion is strengthened by our analysis focusing on the incumbents, where demotion explains only the change of loyalty, not also its levels from 2008.

Our findings bear two major implications. First, at theoretical level, they highlight the relevance of socialization in the process of enhancing further loyalty. We illustrate how the length of involvement within party activities can represent a source of loyalty even in contexts where the influence of endogenous factors (experience and position in Parliament) is diminished such as in the 2008 setting. Second, in empirical terms the results reveal a behavioral pattern which is, after the institutional re-design, much less predictable. Moreover, there is a correspondence between the volatile belonging to a PPG (i.e. the decision to cross the floor) and loyalty. The receiving party, where the in-switching happens, should be aware about the limited ability and desire of such MPs to toe the party line.

The political and socio-demographic variables included in our analysis provide limited explanations of the MPs' loyalty. Although most of our hypotheses found empirical support, this is weak and the linear models produce reduced estimates. One possible solution is to employ non-linear estimations (e.g.: conditional logit/choice model). A second option is to account for other variables such as the ideological preferences of the MPs, their levels of constituency service (following the compartmentalization thesis), or their electoral vulnerability. Further studies could also incorporate qualitative data, i.e. surveys with parliamentary elites to identify whether veteran MPs and, more important, party whips did perceive a change or not in individual loyalty following the electoral system modification. Moreover, as the public opinion seems to appreciate more independence from the MPs (one of the objective of the PR abolishment in Romania), it would be also relevant to examine whether and how the dissent contributes to more individual accountability.

Appendix 1: The Percentage of MPs in the analysis and in the Romanian Parliament

	Analysis		Parliament	
	2004	2008	2004	2008
PSD+PC	44.3	34.9	41.91	35.9
PDL	21.6	35.6	15.1[9]	36.6
PNL	24.3	21.5	20.6	20.5
UDMR	7.1	7.1	7.1	6.9

Note: the percentage of MPs for the legislature is calculated without the seats for national minorities.

Appendix 2: The Selected Roll Call Votes

Legislature	Proposal no.	Topic	Initiated	Voted
2004	355/2007	Status of heroes of the 1989 Revolution	May 7, 2007	May 29, 2007
	73/2007	Money for pensioners' train tickets	Feb 19, 2007	Jun 26, 2007
	971/2006	Increase transport tariffs	Dec 18, 2006	Sep 11, 2007
	535/2007	Financial regulations	Sep 9, 2007	Oct 9, 2007
	508/2007	Remuneration for artists	Jun 27, 2007	Nov 6, 2007
	415/2007	Churches for the Romanian Diaspora	May 28, 2007	Dec 11, 2007
	14/2008	Legislation on blood donation	Feb 4, 2008	Feb 26, 2008
	855/207	Public institutions' financial assets	Dec 10, 2007	Mar 11, 2008
	58/2008	Public officers salaries (in ministers)	Feb 25, 2008	Apr 15, 2008
	34/2008	Measures against contract delays	Feb 13, 2008	May 6, 2008
	842/2007	Salaries for personnel in education	Dec 3, 2007	Jun 18, 2008
	903/2007	Justice reforms and property rights	Dec 12, 2007	Sep 30, 2008
	130/2008	Financial facilities to pensioners	Mar 12, 2008	Oct 15, 2008
2008	84/2008	Physical education and sport	Mar 3, 2008	Feb 29, 2009
	466/2008	Change of the Education Law	Sep 3, 2008	Mar 3, 2009
	601/2008	Capital of state owned companies	Oct 8, 2008	Apr 15, 2009
	213/2009	Budget reforms	Mar 30, 2009	May 12, 2009
	257/2009	Medical assistance in permanent centers	May 6, 2009	Jun 10, 2009
	179/2009	Health system reform	Mar 9, 2009	Sep 8, 2009
	432/2009	Accumulation of pensions and salaries	Sep 21, 2009	Oct 27. 2009
	582/2009	Sponsoring young skilled sportsmen	Nov 4, 2009	Dec 15, 2009
	595/2009	Professional formation in MAI[10]	Nov 16, 2009	Feb 9, 2010
	383/2009	The rights of service providers	Sep 7, 2009	Mar 23, 2010
	462/2009	Modification of one article in the public pension system	Sep 28, 2009	Apr 13, 2010
	483/2009	Modification of Law 244/2002	Oct 10, 2009	May 12, 2010
	370/2010	The government ability to issue decrees	Jun 2, 2010	Jun 22, 2010

Source: Website of the Chamber of Deputies, www.cdep.ro.

[9] This is the percentage from the beginning of the term in office. Following migrations from PNL, the percentage got somewhere around 22%.
[10] Ministry of Internal Affairs.

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