**An Update on The Ideological Institutionalization of the Romanian Party System (2012 – 2020)**

The present article aims to continue the longitudinal study of ideological competition in Romania by analysing electoral results in 2012, 2016 and 2020 to assess if further steps have been taken on the path of ideological institutionalization, with considerable attention given to the disappearance of some of the hallmark political parties representing the conservatory political family and the electoral success of new anti-system parties with no ties to previously existing political parties.

The paper continues the work of Sergiu Gherghina and George Jiglău (2011) who presented a thorough study of the volatility of political representation in Romania and revealed an “apparent paradox” brought by the tension between the decrease in number of political competitors, the small number of new entries in the Romanian party system and the ongoing ideological clarification among political parties, deviating from the predicted sharp ideological differences between competitors. My aim is to bring continuity to their research and test the present-day validity of their conclusion stating that the liberal party manifested the highest degree of institutionalization among all political families in Romania.

The study is strongly influenced by the tradition in compared political science set off by Duverger (1954), Sartori (1976) and And Lijphart (1999) in the study of political parties and party systems, weighing the number of parties in a political system, their ideological alignment, and relations between political competitors.

**The theoretical and conceptual framework**

Maurice Duverger (Duverger, 1973, p. 203) was one of the first authors to give a definition to the concept party system, pointing out that a number of features are determined by the ”forms and ways in which political parties coexist” and Giovanni Sartori (2012, p. 44) captured the relational dimension, noting that ”the party system is precisely the system of interactions resulting from competition between parties”. Sartori is also the first author to differentiate between the systems of moderate pluralism, in which competition “takes place” at the center, between stable parties, which is the norm for most consolidated democracies, and polarized pluralist systems, marked by the influence of centrifugal forces and where cabinets are unstable.

There is a relative consensus on the authorship of sociological explanations for the emergence of the Western European party system in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the most widely accepted theory belonging to Stein and Rokkan, who attribute the phenomenon to heterogeneity of interests and social groups (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). According to them, the number and relative strength of the various parties in European countries was the result of two historical developments: a national revolution that led to the emergence of the modern and secular nation-state, and the industrial revolution. Within this process of modernization, the elites engaged in the process of building a single, centralized bureaucratic apparatus and a standardized national culture encountered the resistance of two groups: the members of the territorial peripheries, who opposed centralization, and the Catholic Church, which saw its property threatened, along with the risk of losing its influence on the state and on society, whose instruction it was mainly concerned with.

Sartori's typology of party systems starts from the rules for counting parties and for their actual counting, introducing a rule to determine whether small parties are relevant, namely that their relevance is determined by their coalition or blackmail potential, and another to determines the direction of the competition, to the left or to the right, establishing that the relevant parties are those according to which the direction will be established (Sartori, Parties and party systems, 2012). Sartori's notable contribution lies in the divisions he proposes for the category of multiparty systems. Sartori's typology includes: one-party systems, where practically only one party governs, whether it is non-competitive systems or a system where one party consistently wins more than 50% of the seats, limiting the possibilities of asserting small parties; multi-party systems, grouped into limited pluralism systems, with three to five prominent parties, and polarized pluralism systems, with six to eight parties; but also the category of atomized systems, for which the addition of a new party does not produce significant differences for the competition patterns.

Sartori's most important contribution was the refinement of the multiparty category. By observing the relationships that are established between parties in systems where no party can govern alone, Sartori was able to identify the two sub-categories of moderate and polarized pluralism: competition in moderate pluralism is similar to that in two-party or two-pole systems , acting under the impulse of centripetal forces, and competition in polarized pluralism is centrifugal, although the center is occupied. Given that the parties on both sides of the political spectrum cannot govern together given the ideological distance between them, there is practically only one possible governing configuration. Sartori introduces here into the discussion over the role of anti-system parties positioned at the extremes of the political spectrum, which through their positioning attract parties and voters towards them.

Wolinetz (2006) notes two original contributions to the updating of Sartori's typology, that of Siaroff (2000) and that of Mair (1996, 2002), the first for the effort to disaggregate the category "multiparty" into several subcategories (moderate multipartyism with one dominant party, moderate multi-partyism with two dominant parties, moderate multi-partyism with balance between the main parties, extreme multi-partyism with one dominant party, extreme multi-partyism with two dominant parties and extreme multi-partyism with balance between parties) (Siaroff, 2000) and the second for introducing the variable regarding the competition over the right to form government while distinguishing between the sub-categories that can populate moderate pluralism, identifying closed forms of government - in which the forms of government are familiar or always alternate the same parties or groups of parties - or open forms of government - where there is partial alternation in government.

The study of the phenomenon of change at the level of party systems begins with the need to clarify what constitutes a party system and when we can affirm with certainty that the parties under study really form a system. Mair (Party System Change, 2006, pp. 63-73) observes that there are two traditions that dominate research in this field, one "traditionally comparativist", whose exponents are Maurice Duverger and Giovanni Sartori, which assumes that the party system suffers only small changes over time, where the appearance of new manifestations at the level of a system also implies its reclassification into a new category, and another one, which it is solidary with, which avoids the use of variables with continuous numerical values to describe and define the party system.

Mainwaring and Torcal equate "consolidation" in Giovanni Sartori's 1976 study of parties and party systems (Sartori, Partide si sisteme de partide, 2012) with "institutionalization," but reject three aspects of Sartori's conceptualization: the dichotomy between consolidated systems and non-systems, which they choose to study as a continuous process; the restrictive threshold for what constitutes a party system; and the marginalization as non-systems of those not concerned with institutionalization (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006).

Peter Mair (Party System Change, 2006) argues, for example, that the transformations undergone by the party system "at the periphery" are unimportant, and the attention should be directed to the changes happening at the level of the core, and the core belongs to the structure of the competition for control over the executive. In his view, defining the party system begins with understanding how government power is contested, and the parties that matter are those involved in executive power or impacting competition, hence the party system changes when the structure of competition changes. For Mair, before making any statements about a supposed party system, its degree of "systemicity" must be established, i.e. to what extent it has gone through the stages of institutionalization. To state that the party system has changed, one must first observe the change in the structure of the competition, verifiable by at least one of the following conditions: the pattern of alternation in government has changed; alternatives to governance prove stable or consistent over time or involve innovative formulas; or there is a notable change among governing actors, ie access to governance is open to a wide range of diverse actors or is limited to a narrow set of established parties. (Party System Change, 2006, pp. 65-66). So, to establish that the change has occurred, one must observe a dominant order prior to the competition, and the importance of the change will be determined by how stable or recognizable/consecrated the previous pattern was.

Mair also observes that the phenomenon of the change of party systems can have two meanings, that of institutionalization, on the one hand, and that of deinstitutionalization, on the other hand, of the transformation from an "underdeveloped" system, marked by " destructured" interactions. In this way, change at the level of party systems can be included as an independent variable in research and can provide new information about the effects it produces on the parties that make up the system, or on voters.

Mainwaring and Torcal define institutionalization as a process by which a practice or organization becomes well established and established, if not universally accepted, in which actors develop expectations, orientations and behaviors, based on the premise that this practice or organization will endure into the foreseeable future (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006, p. 206). For them, a high level of institutionalization of party systems is associated with four manifestations present in the analysis space: the considerable stability of competition patterns between parties; political parties have strong roots in society and citizens have strong attachments to the parties they vote for; citizens recognize the legitimacy of parties and perceive them as necessary in democratic politics, even if they express sceptical positions towards certain parties or towards parties in general; and parties are not subordinated to one or more ambitious leaders. In contrast, party systems where there is a low degree of institutionalization are, for Mainwaring and Torcal, "fluid and weakly institutionalized". While criticizing the ease with which Sartori frames weakly institutionalized systems as non-systems and excludes them from his studies, Mainwaring and Torcal integrate the conclusions of other authors who note that long periods are possible in which the running of electoral competitions does not lead to greater institutionalization of the system of parties and even that there is no clear trend towards greater institutionalization in less developed states, concluding that this is not necessarily a linear or teleological process (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006, p. 206).

Steven B. Wolinetz (2006) on the other hand, is among the prescriptivists who believe that the study of party systems must also provide information about the quality of democracy in the respective states. He therefore denounces that the most common classification of the party system, the one based on the number of parties, excluding those with a single party, i.e. systems with two or more parties, is questionable because most calculation methods minimize the weight of small parties in the total value of the score and, at the same time, because they do not express anything in relation to the quality of democracy. For him, the institutionalization or consecration, respectively the rooting of the party system, is not so much related to the way the parties relate, as to their ability to obtain sustainable support and to structure the electorate (Wolinetz, 2006, p. 53). This stance places him in opposition to Sartori (2012), who believed that not all parties should be counted, but only those with coalition potential and blackmail potential.

**Research Design: Operationalization, Data, and Method**

Like Gherghina and Jiglău (2011), I operationalize institutionalization as low electoral volatility and lack of fragmentation. I will be referring to both political parties and party families which represent an intermediate level between political parties and party systems and, in fact, a smaller party system. A main difference from Gherghina and Jiglău’s study, I introduce one more political family in the present study, the anti-system family. Specifically considering that their study does not focus on left-right placement on the political continuum, the electoral shares of these parties were simply too large to ignore. Also, under different labels, some leaning more left while others more to the right, these parties have entered Parliament by challenging the status-quo and it is interesting to observe what happened over the three legislative elections of 2012, 2016 and 2020. Specific to the anti-system movement, they are hard to pin down on any spatial model of ideological analysis.

For this study I too have used the mathematical formula proposed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) for the calculation of the effective number of parties which is computed by the following formula:

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where n is the number of parties with at least one seat and pi2 the square of each party's proportion of all votes or seats.

For clarity, simplicity, and consistency with the study of the six legislative elections between 1990 and 2008, but also because there are no notable differences between the results obtained by political parties running for seats in the two chambers of the Romanian Parliament, I account only for the results obtained by parties in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies. Also, I will only be referring to parties that were successful in passing the electoral threshold of 5% and winning seats.

Table 1 includes the electoral results taken into consideration in the analysis.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1: The Electoral Results Aggregated for Each Ideological Family** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Year** | **Conservatism** | | | | **Social-democracy** | | | **Liberalism** | | | **Anti-system** | | |
| **Party** | **Seats** | | **%Seats** | **Party** | **Seats** | **%Seats** | **Party** | **Seats** | **%Seats** | **Party** | **Seats** | **%Seats** |
| **2012** | PDL | 52 | | 19.05 | PSD | 150 | 54.95 | PNL | 100 | 36.63 | PPDD | 47 | 11.41 |
| FC | 1 | | 0.37 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PNȚCD | 3 | | 1.10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| UNPR | 10 | | 3.66 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PC | 13 | | 4.76 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Total** | **79** | | **28.94** | **Total** | **150** | **54.95** | **Total** | **100** | **36.63** | **Total** | **47** | **11.41** |
| **2016** | PMP | 18 | 5.47 | | PSD | 154 | 46.81 | PNL | 69 | 20.97 | USR | 30 | 9.12 |
|  |  |  | |  |  |  | ALDE | 20 | 6.08 |  |  |  |
|  | **Total** | **18** | **5.47** | | **Total** | **154** | **46.81** | **Total** | **89** | **27.05** | **Total** | **30** | **9.12** |
| **2020** |  |  |  | | PSD | 110 | 33.33 | PNL | 93 | 28.18 | USRPLUS | 55 | 15.80 |
|  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  | AUR | 33 | 9.48 |
|  | **Total** | **0** | **0.00** | | **Total** | **110** | **31.61** | **Total** | **93** | **26.72** | **Total** | **88** | **25.28** |

**How institutionalized are the Romanian Party Families?**

In the field of compared politics, variables related to electoral competition are, to this day, some of the most used and contested instruments to measure political party and political system institutionalization. Competition is the dependent variable connected to the number, size and strength of the elected parties. Some of the assumptions that have haunted political science thinking are that institutionalization is a one-way street and that institutionalized party systems share similar traits. The more fragmented the political system, the more parties enter Parliament, the harder it is for solid majorities to be created to support efficient government, leafing to executive instability. Therefore, most compared politics studies start off by giving a picture of the fragmentation characterizing the political system. Starting off with the classification of two party or multi-party systems proposed by Duverger (1954), scholars have tried to give more and more in-depth analyses of their case studies by interpreting the quantifications of the number of competing parties and distribution of sizes. One such measure is the Laakso-Taagepera Effective Number of Parties (ENP) .

Casal Bertoa (2022) finds that Romanian party institutionalization has actually taken a downturn, with negative scores growing constantly over the last elections since 2007, when the political party system was at its highest level of institutionalization, to the present day, when it is actually comparable to the values of 1999-2000. There are no significant changes from the previous legislative elections in what concerns the number of new parties which was similar to that in elections before 2000, ranging between 3- in 2012, 5- in 2016, and 4 in 2020. Bertoa (2022) also offers an interesting take on the electoral performance of anti-system parties. Counting the Partidul România Mare (PRM) as an anti-system party, and not as a social-democrat party as Gherghină and Jiglău do, and the Union Save Romania as an anti-system party solely in the 2016 election, and not in the 2020 one once again, he offers the image of a decrease in the anti-system movement’s energy, which had it’s highest peak in 2000, and its lowest in 2008.

In this section I will attempt an explanation of the results obtained after calculating the electoral volatility and effective number of parties within each ideological family in Romania. More than a general description of the observed trends, I will try to contextualize them for each round of elections, offering insight into the main political events since 2008. Table 1 includes the electoral results taken into consideration in the analysis.

Figure 1 illustrates the levels of electoral volatility for each of the analysed ideological families. Some of the most evident findings. Discrepancy between electoral volatility levels has become smaller with each electoral cycle. After being the most volatile ideological family between 1990 and 2008, the conservatives gradually gained fewer and fewer votes, to the point of not passing the electoral threshold. Results obtained by the social-democrats and the liberals seem to partially explain this dissolution, both due to official mergers with the conservative parties, as well as due to a general shift towards a more conservative discourse shared by both liberals and social-democrats. Continuing the “tradition” of the first two decades of democratic elections, the social-democrats and the liberals measure similar levels of electoral volatility, generally in inverse proportion. The liberals show more volatility than the social-democrats, with a peak in 2016, following the numerous mergers the party underwent. In 2020 they registered one of the lowest records of volatility, proving that they were, in fact, able to preserve many of the votes of 2016. While the social-democrats showed the highest volatility in 2012, when they were the big winners of the USL alliance, the volatility scores of 2016 and 2020 were relatively constant. In ensemble, these trends demonstrate that large coalitions or alliances, regardless of their orientation, can still capture large shares of the electorate. If it is safe to say that tendency first observed by Gherghina and Jiglău (2011) for the two main ideological families to measure oscillating volatility scores with each legislative election and to replace each other as the capturers of the free votes, the story is different for the fading conservatory movement and the anti-system parties that have replaced them as the third political family. Though only three electoral competitions constitute the basis for very limited conclusions regarding a general tendency, findings regarding the category of the anti-system family, introduced with this study, encourage further investigations. Interestingly, we notice that the anti-system parties and the social-democratic ones show co-varying electoral volatility trends while the first have relatively similar electoral volatility scores with each round of elections. However, the year 2020 brings encouraging results, with one of the smallest effective number of parties and lowest volatility rates in the elections taking place after the fall of communism, indicating that stabilization is a future possibility. .

Source: Compiled on the basis of the electoral results from Table 1 and the formula used by (Birch, 2001)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Table 2 presents the effective number of parties for each ideological family, calculated for 2012, 2016 and 2020 by reference to the number of seats gained in Parliament.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2. The Effective Number of Parties for Each Ideological family** | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Conservatism** | | **Social-democracy** | | **Liberalism** | | **Anti-system** | |
| **Year** | **Party** | **ENPP** | **Party** | **ENPP** | **Party** | **ENPP** | **Party** | **ENPP** |
| **2012** | PDL | 0.43 | PSD | 1.00 | PNL | 1.00 | PPDD | 1.00 |
|  | FC | 0.00 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | PNȚCD | 0.00 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | UNPR | 0.02 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | PC | 0.03 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **Total** | **2.09** | **Total** | **1.00** | **Total** | **1.00** | **Total** | **1.00** |
| **2016** | PMP | 1.00 | PSD | 1.00 | PNL | 0.60 | USR | 1.00 |
|  |  |  |  |  | ALDE | 0.05 |  |  |
|  | **Total** | **1.00** | **Total** | **1.00** | **Total** | **1.53** | **Total** | **1.00** |
| **2020** |  |  | PSD | 1.00 | PNL | 1.00 | USRPLUS | 0.39 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | AUR | 0.14 |
|  | **Total** | **0.00** | **Total** | **1.00** | **Total** | **1.00** | **Total** | **1.88** |

We can easily notice that the social-democrats are the only family to have entered electoral competitions with only one representative in each of the three examined elections. The liberals and the anti-system families are in a similar position, with the exception of the 2016 elections, for the liberals, and the 2020 elections for the anti-system group. The conservatives offer a very different picture, starting off with the highest degree of fragmentation in 2012, their number drops to just one party in 2016, ending by not entering any competitors in the 2020 elections.

**The conservatives**

The effective number of parties within the conservative family continuously dropped over the last three legislative lections to the point of absolute dissolution of the group in 2020. The phenomenon is explainable through the numerous mergers and splinters. Alianța România Dreaptă (ARD), created around PDL, the strongest party within the family, and including also PNȚCD and FC, in 2012, lost the elections to the stronger USL alliance. By 2016, Forța Civică (FC)had merged with, and PDL later merged with PNL. Due to strong negative public feelings towards the leader of UNPR, party president Gabriel Oprea, the party merged with PMP, a splinter of the old PDL, a party whose main public figure was former President of Romania, Traian Băsescu. If, in 2012 the conservative family was successful in gaining over 28% of the vote share, by 2016 it barely made it past the national threshold of 5%, a “success”it could not replicate in 2020.

**The Social-Democrats**

The positioning of the social-democrats in the Romanian political arena changed dramatically since the earlier elections. Once the most fragmented political family, they are now the only ones to constantly enter just one competitor in the elections. Secondly, once the most privileged party regarding voter volatility, their participation in elections as part of the Uniunea Social-Liberală (USL) alliance opened a new chapter. USL, the Social-Liberal Union, was the main candidate in the local and parliamentary elections of 2012, an alliance officially created to compete against the presidential and governing party, Partidul Democrat-Liberal (PDL), the Democrat-Liberal Party, in February 2011. USL consisted of PSD, the Social-Democrat Party, and Alianța de Centru Dreapta, the Center-Right Alliance, comprising PNL, The National Liberal Party and the Conservatory Party. By July 2012, after the local elections, but before the general parliamentary elections, the alliance was also joined by the Uniunea Națională pentru Progresul României, a political party created by a former PSD member and which had previously supported two PDL cabinets known as Boc 2 and Ungureanu, by the names of the Prime-ministers. The aim of the USL alliance, according to the establishment protocol in 2011, was to run in the next local, parliamentary and presidential elections, but its dissolution came after just two years, officially because of tensions regarding fiscal policy and constitutional reform, unofficially because the leaders of the main parties, PSD and PNL could not reach an agreement regarding the nomination of their common candidate for the presidential elections. From an ideological standpoint, the alliance shocked the hard-line supporters, given that the main political parties were long-time opponents, representing the left and the right of the Romanian political spectrum. Electorally, it proved to be a big success, but results in the next elections proved that by weakening the ideological framework, both the liberals and the social-democrats opened the door to catch-all partyism and the simpler transfer of votes through electoralist discourse that it entails.

The social-democrats are the absolute winners of all the three rounds of elections analysed in terms of number of seats obtained. With its position consolidated as dominant party, but also due to the significant drop in parliamentary parties, the PSD enters a minimal winning coalition with ALDE in 2016, a decision that would cost them later when, due to transfers orchestrated by the liberals, they lost cabinet.

It is safe to state that over these last years, the social-democrats have entrenched their position as the most stable political family.

**The Liberals**

A quick look at the liberal’s history shows that the high pace of splits and mergers until 2008[[2]](#footnote-2) was replaced by a slower one. The only significant merger was between the Partidul National Liberal (PNL) and PDL, motivated by the strong network of local party structures of the latter, while the only notable split, also from PNL, was that of former Prime-minister Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, who later established Partidul Liberal Reformator, 2014, which merged with Partidul Conservator in 2015 to form Alianța Liberalilor și Democraților (ALDE). It is worth mentioning that the name of the party was designed to generate the acronym homonymous to the European Party of The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). PNL had been a member of this European organisation until 2014, but joined the European People’s Party Group (EPP) that same year and the reference that PNL is a member of EPP was removed from the party’s statute.

The liberal family continues to be one of the most stable and supple, with only one party for two of the elections accounted for, and 1.5 in 2016, when ALDE successfully passed the threshold. The liberals register the highest volatility score in all the accounted elections for all accounted parties. in 2016, when they only received less than half of the mandates they had won as part of the USL alliance. For context, the general poor result is explainable not just through voter disappointment after the liberals joined an alliance with long time opposant, PSD, but also by the apparition of the Union Save Romania, the first anti-system party appealing to the liberals’ electorate.

**The Anti-system parties**

The names and the numbers of the parties representing this family continue to change, along with their fibre. Partidul Poporului-Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD) claimed it had no ideological orientation, as did Union Save Romania (USR) in its early days in Parliament, while Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor (AUR) present an agenda which is a strong reminder of Partidul România Mare, with a mix of left-leaning economic measures, an anti-capitalist discourse and strong xenophobic values. Neither of the three parties did not have a previous parliamentary history. Both PP-DD and USR claimed that they emerged as a response to public discontent with the old parties. The former, informally led by TV host Dan Diaconescu, had its first congress shortly after mass protests against the cabinet of Emil Boc, and after the 2012 elections it was, actually, the third force in parliament. However, after Dan Diaconescu received a prison sentence for extortion, the party started a rapid process of dissolution and finally merged with UNPR in 2015.

USR is the only one of the three parties included in the party family that has already passed through two consecutive elections and, notably, actually succeeded to improve its electoral result, almost doubling its score. Between 2016 and 2020, USR modified its statute, claiming a center-right ideology and merged with former Prime-minister Dacian Cioloș’s party, Partidul Libertate, Unitate și Solidaritate, PLUS, a non-parliamentary party. Like PP-DD, USR attempted to gain momentum by presenting itself as the direct output of the protests of 2015 against the Ponta cabinet and continued to play the part of “the voice of the street” by participating in protests against the social-democratic cabinet and organizing protests and boycotts in Parliament.[[3]](#footnote-3) USR was a strong militant for the expulsion of the Romanian ALDE party from the European group with the same name as a condition to join it after the 2019 elections.

AUR is the only extremist party of the three anti-system organizations within this family. Like most organizations of this sort, once in parliament its discourse has become more tempered and one of the most outspoken figures of the group was actually dismissed formally from the political party. The party has yet to join a European group. Though it is targeting a group which has not, yet, formally been established, that of the suveranists, the anti-hungarian discourse it practices in Romania places it in strong opposition to one of the key figures of this group, Viktor Orban of FIDESZ.

**Conclusions**

The results indicate that the social-democrats and the liberals have the highest degree of institutionalization among the four ideological families under study. They show the smallest effective number of parties but are confronted with high, oscillating volatility rates. The liberal electorate is relatively stable and the PNL succeeded in securing comparable numbers of votes over the last elections, while the social-democrats seem to have been directly impacted by the apparition of the anti-system parties. Their evolution is also strongly correlated, whenever one loses, the other one wins votes. While the PNL lost votes with the apparition of the USR, PSD lost votes due to the apparition of AUR. Finally, it is too early to speak of institutionalization within the anti-system family. As opposed to the mergers that led to the consolidation of the liberal and social-democratic families, the anti-system family is expected to remain fragmented or to follow the same path of the conservatives, through shifts towards a more mainstream discourse.

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1. In order to calculate volatility scores, given the numerous situations where electoral candidates joined coalitions or alliances, which made it impossible to determine the percentage of votes received by each political party, I used an approximation of their electoral share by referring to the percentage of seats in Parliament. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Four splits and nine mergers (Gherghină & Jiglău, 2011, p. 86) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Their placement as members of the anti-system party after the 2020 elections is debatable, considering USR was already member of Parliament and even joined government, but the decision is justified by their campaign targeting the “old corrupt elite”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)