THE ROMANIAN PARTY SYSTEM AND THE CATCH-ALL PARTY PHENOMENON

Steven D. Roper University of Missouri, Columbia

Political parties play an important role in the development of linkages between the government and the individual, the elite and the rank-and-file. Moreover, parties help to shape the broader political system. In this way, parties are an essential component of the nation-state. Parties provide a forum for the conflict and compromise that is expected during the development and maintenance of a nation-state (Rokkan, 1970: pp. 120-138).

While parties act as a force upon the state, there are also pressures that are placed upon the party. If indeed Downs is correct and a party is a "team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election," then parties respond to changes within the electorate in order to maximize their opportunity to win office (1957: p. 25). This is the logic behind Kirchheimer's theory of the "catch-all" party.

According to Kirchheimer (1966), the mobilizing capabilities of mass parties has diminished in Western Europe due to decreasing party loyalty. Following World War II, parties began to transform themselves into catch-all parties in order to achieve the integrative ability of the old mass parties. Kirchheimer argues that a catch-all party is typified by an interest in "issues which are scarcely liable to meet resistance in the community" and "attracting a maximum of voters" (p. 186; p. 193). He concludes, therefore, that a catch-all party can only appear at a time of "deideologization." Kirchheimer's theory accords well with the prior research of Downs (1957) and Duverger (1962); however, is this theory of the catch-all party applicable to non-Western party systems? This article shall analyze the catch-all party phenomenon in Eastern Europe.

Specifically, this article shall examine whether umbrella organizations, such as the Democratic Convention in Romania, assist mass-based parties in their transformation into catch-all, broad-based parties. This is an important question for two reasons. First, by exploring the nature of party transformation in Romania, we will come to better understand the process of nation-building in that country. The transition from a one-party dominant system to a multi-party system affects the process of nation-

building.

Second, this research allows us to investigate the appropriateness of Western European concepts in an Eastern European context. Some might argue that a discussion of catch-all parties in Eastern Europe is premature in the process of party development in that region. There is no doubt that the development of stable party systems in Eastern Europe will take decades, if not generations. However, individuals such as Roskin (1993) have already argued that Eastern European countries such as the former Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and even Bulgaria have developed catchall parties. Therefore, this article attempts to provide a theoretical basis for the discussion of catch-all parties in Eastern Europe, and more specifically Romania, by creating a typology of parties. This article shall first examine the different types of parties in Romania using a 2 x 2 research design and then assess whether the Democratic Convention facilitates the development of catch-all parties.

Typology of Parties

The development of this typology of parties does not take into consideration a whole host of issues which are fundamental to the development of a stable party system. I have not, for example, specifically addressed the issue of how electoral laws impact the development of party systems. The typology presented here addresses a fundamental question: How can we classify parties so as to draw useful distinctions between them? On the issue of electoral laws, I would argue that catch-all parties can be found in either winner-take-all systems or proportional representation systems. The United States and Germany would be obvious examples.

The typology advanced here is an extension of the party research of Duverger (1962) and Lipset and Rokkan (1967). It is based on whether the party membership is either open or closed and whether the party competition is regional or national. These specific characteristics were selected because they are important elements of the catch-all party. The membership and competition characteristics of a party fundamentally determine whether it can evolve into a catch-all party. Moreover, these particular party characteristics were selected because they are important elements of party nation-building. If parties are to facilitate the process of nation-building, then they must be open and national in their orientation; these parties must develop cross-cutting cleavages that unite disparate groups.

The discussion of an open or closed party membership reflects

Duverger's concept of the cadre and mass party. According to Duverger (1962), the mass party assists the individual party member by providing a political education. Duverger argues, therefore, that a mass party attempts to integrate a large portion of the national population by allowing itself to be permeated by its membership. The mass party relies on a financial and campaign organizational structure in order to recruit members and nominate candidates for public office. Although Duverger considered the mass party to be a socialist phenomenon, I will use the term more broadly.

Thus a major difference between the mass party and the catch-all party is that a catch-all party does not attempt to instill the masses with "intellectual or moral encadrement," and furthermore, unlike a mass party, the catch-all party "downgrad[es] ... the role of the individual party member" (Kirchheimer, 1966: p. 190). The catch-all does not rely on an educated membership base, nor does it seek to define a specific political task for the party. Instead, the catch-all party focuses on the competitive forces within the electorate.

In contrast, a cadre party is a selective party which attempts to maximize the quality of its membership instead of its size. Because this party is determined by the quality of its membership, it is generally unable to mount a successful national campaign (Duverger, 1962). Therefore, cadre parties are most successful at the regional level where organizational skills are not a premium. Since the cadre party is usually decentralized, the personal qualities of its membership provide the financial and campaign bases for the party.

One of the important characteristics of a cadre party is the uniqueness of its membership. The members of a cadre party share some attribute which binds them and replaces the need for an extensive party organization. One of the best examples of a cadre party is an ethnically-based party. In these parties, membership is open only to those individuals who share the ethnic identity; as a consequence, cadre parties have a closed membership.

The other dimension of this typology is whether the party competition is regional or national. Here I use the "territorial-functional dimension" proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). This dimension is based on the Parsonian paradigm of societal interchanges. According to Lipset and Rokkan, regional oppositions to the national elites are established within the periphery. These oppositions would include those individuals and groups that are culturally threatened by the actions of the state. Thus, regional parties that feel threatened by the state would

constitute what I term "territorial" parties. These territorial parties are generally successful at the regional level. Cadre parties are similar to territorial parties in their competition characteristics - the difference between the two involves membership characteristics. Generally, territorial parties have a membership that is open to all individuals who live within

the region while cadre parties do not.

Lipset and Rokkan also address the ideological opposition parties. Unlike mass parties, these ideological parties maintain strict forms of communication among the membership and attempt to promote national goals that coincide with group interests.² In contrast to the cadre and territorial parties, ideological parties are national in scope with a membership focused upon a specific issue or group of issues. These ideological parties are able to form a national organization because of the commitment of their membership and the fact that the ideological component of the party transcends strictly regional interests.

Discussion of the Typology

FIGURE 1

MEMBERSHIP

	_	OPEN_	CLOSED
COMPE- TITION	REGIONAL	Territorial	Cadre
	NATIONAL	Mass	Ideological

As Figure 1 illustrates, territorial parties are composed of an open membership within the region. These parties are concerned with issues that affect a highly concentrated membership. An example of this type of party would be the Christian Socialist Union in Germany. Although this party put forward a national candidate in 1980, it generally concentrates on regional issues of interest to Bavaria.³ Territorial parties can have a membership that is dispersed throughout the country; however, the bulk of the member-

ship is concentrated within a specific geographic region, and therefore territorial parties are rarely able to mount a successful national campaign.

Cadre parties are noted as having a closed and selective membership that is concentrated in specific regions of a country. Although these parties might attempt to mount a national campaign, they will generally be unsuccessful. Cadre parties enjoy the greatest amount of success on the regional level. An example of a cadre party is Bulgaria's Movement for Rights and Freedoms. This ethnic Turkish party has a selective membership and a recruitment pattern which is characterized as closed because its ethnic composition restricts its membership. The party is strongest in the Rodopi and Ludogorie regions of Bulgaria because of the high concentration of ethnic Turks in these regions. Although the Movement for Rights and Freedoms won twenty-four seats in the 1992 Bulgarian national elections, it is essentially an ethnic party with a limited national appear (Perry, 1992).4

Mass parties have an open membership and compete on the national level. These parties have a national campaign structure and attempt to draw membership throughout the country. Duverger (1962) argues that the French Socialist Party and the German Social Democratic Party were examples of mass parties. Kirchheimer states that these mass parties were a feature of Western European politics up until the end of World War II. Indeed, he argues that it is the mass parties that are best able to transform themselves into catch-all parties.

Finally, there are ideological parties that have a selective membership but attempt to affect politics on the national level. It is precisely because these parties are ideologically motivated that their membership base is selective. An example of an ideological party would include the Greens in Germany. This party has a specific ideology which limits its appeal nationally; however, the Greens have had a significant impact on

national politics in Germany (Conradt, 1989).

Like all typologies, there are certain cases that do not fit into any one category. This typology of parties represents an ideal type; however, this typology more broadly defines parties than in the previous literature (Duverger, 1962; Downs, 1957). While this typology is applicable to numerous cases in Western European politics, the real test is how well it fares in describing a party system outside of Western Europe. What follows is an application of this typology to a case study of Romania.

Typology of Romanian Parties

As stated earlier, the development of stable party systems in Eastern Europe will take generations. The elections between 1990 and 1994 in Eastern Europe were the beginning of this process and therefore any conclusions that we draw at this time must be tentative. Roskin captures the transitory nature of Eastern European party systems when he writes that "with the collapse of Communist regimes in 1989, competitive elections were thrust on most countries of the region in 1990. Instead of patiently building party strength and gradually obtaining electoral success and parliamentary seats, Eastern European parties had to suddenly contest elections with little practice, organization, or political skill" (1993: p. 48). Ultimately, Roskin concludes that the parties of Eastern Europe have failed to provide the social basis upon which to build the society. As we shall see, Roskin's criticism of East European parties is also true in the case of Romania because one of the problems in Romania is that some popular parties do not exhibit nation-building characteristics.

During the national election in September 1992, over one hundred parties competed for seats in the Romanian Parliament. It would be a very formidable task to attempt to classify all the parties in the Romanian party system; therefore, this typology will examine eight of the more prominent parties in Romania.⁵ The classification of these parties is based on the electoral returns from both the 1990 and 1992 national elections and

survey research.

As illustrated in Figure 2, every type of party is represented in the Romanian party system. Both the German Democratic Forum of Romania and the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania are examples of cadre parties. These parties have recruitment patterns that are characterized as closed, and these parties are concentrated in specific regions of Romania. They have an ethnic composition that restricts membership and both parties are strongest in the Transylvania region.

Although the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania is concentrated in a certain area of Romania, it still garners a significant portion of the national vote. In the 1990 national election, for example, this party won just over seven percent of the seats in Parliament (Bejan, 1991: p. 118.) This is not to say, however, that the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania is a national party. During both the 1990 and 1992 national elections, this party did not field its own presidential candidate. During the 1990 election for the Senate, it fielded candidates in only sixteen of the

possible forty-one electoral districts, and twenty-seven of its twenty-nine seats in the Assembly of Deputies were from the Transylvania region (Combes and Berindei, 1991: pp. 122-23).6 In the 1992 election, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania won seats in the House of Deputies in only ten of the forty-two electoral districts (Monitorul Oficial al României, 1992: pp. 5-10).7

FIGURE 2

MEMBERSHIP

	OPEN	CLOSED
REGIONAL COMPETITION	(Territorial) Party of Romanian National Unity	(Cadre) German Democratic Forum of Romania; Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania
NATIONAL	(Mass) Civic Alliance Party; Democratic National Salvation Front; National Peasant Party-Christian Democratic; National Salvation Front	(Ideological) Romanian Ecological Party

During both the 1990 and 1992 national elections, the German Democratic Forum of Romania failed to win a single outright seat (Monitorul Oficial al României, 1992).8 This party received less than one percent of the total vote during the 1990 national election (Combes and Berindei, 1991: p. 76). During the 1992 election, the German Democratic Forum of Romania fielded candidates in only fourteen electoral districts. While these parties have had some success during the 1990 and 1992

elections, particularly the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, they

have not attempted to mount a national campaign.

As discussed earlier, a territorial party has an open membership and is active on the regional level. The Party of Romanian National Unity is an example of a territorial party. This party was reformulated between the 1990 and 1992 national elections by Radu Ceontea as the political wing of the Romanian Cradle, a patriotic cultural organization.9 During the 1992 national election, the Party of Romanian National Unity's candidate for president was Gheorghe Funar, the mayor of Clui. Even though this party is considered a nationalist party, its recruitment patterns are open to all Romanians, and in the 1992 election, the Party of Romanian National Unity was able to obtain thirty seats in the House of Deputies. However, the majority of its seats came from the Transylvania region, especially from Cluj and Mures. This party won seats in the House of Deputies in only twenty of the electoral districts in Romania (Monitorul Oficial al României, 1992). Because of the party's poor showing in Moldova and in the South, Gallagher refers to the Party of Romanian National Unity as "still a regional phenomenon" (1992: p. 18).

One of the more prominent of the ideological parties in Romania is the Romanian Ecological Party. This ideological party has a selective membership but attempts to affect politics on the national level. Much like the Greens in Germany, the Romanian Ecological Party is composed of a self-selecting membership which focuses on environmental issues. To that end, the party has fielded candidates whose platform is based on environmental issues and has met with some national electoral success. In the 1990 national election, it garnered a total of nine seats in Parliament (Combes and Berindei, 1991: pp. 76-77). This is an impressive result when one considers that this figure was the seventh highest seat total among all parties in Romania (Bejan, 1991: p. 118). In the 1992 national election, the Romanian Ecological Party was a member of the Democratic Convention

and is the only ecological party represented in the Parliament.

The remaining four parties that I review fall into the category of mass parties with open membership and competition on the national level. However, unlike catch-all parties, these mass parties still rely on developing a substantial membership base. In addition, these parties have not totally dispensed with their "ideological baggage." In Romania, all four mass parties did quite well in the national election. In the 1992 elections, the Democratic National Salvation Front¹⁰ won sixty-one percent of the second-ballot presidential vote and a total of one hundred, sixty-six seats in

Parliament (Shafir, 1992a: p. 2). The National Salvation Front also did quite well, winning sixty-one seats in Parliament. This result is somewhat surprising when one considers that these two parties had split only six months prior to the election (Ionescu, 1992).

One could argue that the pre-1992 National Salvation Front, which encompassed the Democratic National Salvation Front and the current National Salvation Front, was indeed a catch-all party. In the 1990 national election, the National Salvation Front won sixty-six percent of the seats in Parliament and eighty-five of the presidential vote (Bejan, 1991). At that time, this party was a broad coalition of former communists, pensioners, rural and factory workers (Musetescu, 1991: p. 138). Because of its position following the 1989 revolution, the National Salvation Front did not consider increasing party membership a primary goal. Rather, the party's goal was to capitalize on its popularity after the revolution. It was not until after the 1990 national election that tensions began to build among the membership and that members and ultimately voters as well began to turn away from the party.

The National Salvation Front was transformed from a catch-all party into two different mass parties, each attempting to create its own image and membership base. There is an interesting parallel between the 1990 National Salvation Front and the 1989 Polish Solidarity movement. Solidarity won a substantial number of seats in the semi-free elections of 1989. Soon after the election, however, Solidarity began to splinter into numerous successor parties. Perhaps these events tell us something about the transitory nature of catch-all parties in Eastern Europe, or perhaps these event simply point out the general volatility of coalitions.

The presidential candidate of the Civic Alliance Party and the National Peasants Party-Christian Democratic received approximately thirty-one percent of the second-ballot presidential vote in the 1992 national election. Furthermore, these parties under the Democratic Convention label won sixteen percent of the parliamentary seats (Monitorul Oficial al României, 1992). 11 The National Peasants Party-Christian Democratic won seats in thirty electoral districts whereas the Civic Alliance Party, a newly formed opposition party, won seats in thirteen electoral districts. However, these seats were distributed throughout the various regions of Romania.

The Romanian Party System and the Democratic Convention

This typology of Romanian parties is important because it illustrates some of the forces generally shaping Eastern European and Romanian party development. If Kirchheimer is correct and only major parties can become successful catch-all parties, then there are a number of parties in Romania that might be able to transform themselves into catch-all parties and thereby acquire an even larger share of the electoral vote. This potential makes the Democratic Convention worthy of examination. Can an umbrella organization such as the Democratic Convention successfully transform mass parties into catch-all parties?

The Democratic Convention is a group of approximately thirteen opposition parties and political organizations. It includes mass, ethnic, and ideological parties such as the Civic Alliance Party, the National Peasants Party-Christian Democratic, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, and the Romanian Ecological Party. The Democratic Convention was formed by these parties in the autumn of 1991 in order to successfully compete in the local elections of February and March, 1992. This organization was able to win the mayoral elections in some of Romania's most important cities - Bucharest, Constanta, Brasov, and Sibiu (Shafir, 1992b). The Democratic Convention continued throughout the spring and summer of 1992 in order to present a united front against the Democratic National Salvation Front in the September national elections. Thus, this organization fulfills Kirchheimer's first requirement of a catch-all party, namely the nomination of candidates for office. But by grouping these different types of parties, does an organization like the Democratic Convention actually undermine their attempt at becoming catch-all parties?

According to Kirchheimer (1966), neither ideological nor cadre parties are able to transform themselves into catch-all parties - only mass parties have this potential. Therefore, Democratic Convention parties such as the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania and the Romanian Ecological Party will never transform themselves into catch-all parties although they do have an important effect on the mass parties of the Democratic Convention. The inclusion of cadre and ideological parties in the Democratic Convention allows mass parties to avoid having to develop a broad, catch-all party program. Instead, mass parties such as the National Peasants Party-Christian Democratic rely on the ideological and cadre parties to provide necessary program and electoral support. In the 1992 election, the mass parties of the Democratic Convention never had to

directly address the issue of the environment because of the inclusion of the Romanian Ecological Party in the Democratic Convention.¹²

In addition, the inclusion of the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania also meant that the mass parties never had to deal directly with the issue of minority representation and rights. This is a problem because, as Kirchheimer (1956) notes, the catch-all party is expected to contribute general programs in the creation of domestic policy. The ideological and cadre parties prevent the mass parties from contributing general programs and hence from developing into catch-all parties.

While the inclusion of ideological and cadre parties has a detrimental effect on the transformation of the mass parties of the Democratic Convention, the evidence also indicates that some of the mass parties themselves may actually be inhibiting the transformation of other mass parties. Shafir argues that during the 1992 election, the Democratic Convention did not emphasize "matters of policy and program" and was considered "out of touch with the country's burning problems" (1992a: pp. 3-4). The Democratic Convention's problem during the national election was the emphasis on ideological issues rather than policy issues.

Vosganian argues that the Democratic Convention emphasized ideological issues because of the dominance of the historic parties of Romania within the Democratic Convention. He maintains that parties such as the National Peasants Party-Christian Democratic had "a tendency towards the ideological aspects of their policy" (1992: p. 9).¹³ Neumann (1993) states that the problem with the historic mass parties of the Democratic Convention was that these parties were dominated by elderly politicians who maintained outdated ideological and political views which failed to attract the younger generation.

By having to rely on an electoral alliance, these mass parties will eventually have to rely on a parliamentary alliance with the other parties of the Democratic Convention. Duverger argues that electoral alliances are much easier to maintain than parliamentary alliances (1962: pp. 331-33); Roskin (1993) holds that the electoral alliances that emerged in Eastern Europe over the past three years have already begun to dissolve. The difficulty of preserving electoral alliances in the case of the National Salvation Front and Poland's Solidarity have been noted. And the preservation of alliances becomes even more important and difficult as parties enter parliament.

As a parliamentary alliance, the Democratic Convention may prove unable to unite in policy-making, an important consideration for voters. If

the parties of the Democratic Convention are seen as unable to carry out the demands of government, voters might well turn to the Democratic National Salvation Front or the National Salvation Front. Thus, instead of providing more stability to the political system, the Democratic Convention might ultimately prove an instrument of instability. At this time, it is unclear what will become of the Democratic Convention and how it will affect party development. It is possible that the Democratic Convention will help transform Romanian opposition parties into broad-based political organizations. It is equally possible that the Democratic Convention might fail to facilitate the transformation of mass parties into catch-all parties. Ironically, the grouping of democratic parties might actually provide an impetus for the development and dominance of "neo-communist" parties.

NOTES

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1. There are, of course, parties that are not primarily concerned with winning elections. These parties often have a specific interest which they are trying to promote.

Historically, many of the third parties in the United States have fallen into this category.

2. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) do not consider ideological and mass parties to be

polar extremes.

3. It should be noted that while the Christian Socialist Union is a regional party, it is affiliated with the Christian Democratic Union. These two parties have formed an electoral and parliamentary alliance. For example, in 1980, the Christian Socialist Union President Franz-Josef Strauss was the CDU/CSU candidate for Chancellor.

4. Although an ethnic party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms in 1992 became part of an informal coalition with the Union of Democratic Forces. However, because of possible anti-Turkish nationalism in Bulgaria, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms was not

allowed to have any cabinet positions in the government.

5. I determined these eight parties based on their showing in the 1990 and 1992

national elections and survey research.

6. There is not an accepted method by which to calculate the number of seats by region. For example, the Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Surveys makes a distinction between the regions of Transylvania and Crisana while the Group for Social Dialogue makes no distinction. The number of seats reported here reflects the calculations made by the Group for Social Dialogue.

7. The name of the Romanian lower house changed from the Assembly of Deputies

in 1990 to the House of Deputies in 1992.

8. The Romanian constitution stipulates that minority parties, such as the German Democratic Forum of Romania, shall receive one seat in the House of Deputies (Constitutia României, 1991).

9. An earlier version of the Party of Romanian National Unity, the Party of Romanian National Unity of Transylvania, was a member of the coalition known as the Alliance for a United Romania (Combes and Berindei, 1991: p. 99). This coalition won a total of eleven seats in parliament during the 1990 election.

10. At the Democratic National Salvation Front National Conference in July 1993, the

party changed its name to the Party of Social Democracy of Romania.

11. Research conducted by the Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Surveys indicates that if the election had been held in December 1993, these parties would have

received twenty-three percent of the seats in Parliament (Sandor, 1994: p. 13).

12. I interviewed opposition party leaders in July of 1992. They indicated that the opposition parties of the Democratic Convention did not have to develop a systematic environmental program because of the inclusion of the Romanian Ecological Party in the Democratic Convention.

13. Because of the ideological component of the historic parties of the Democratic Convention, Mungiu (1992) argues that modern parties, such as the Civic Alliance Party, have

become an important political alternative.

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