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PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE POLITICAL BEHAVIOR. COGNITION, EMOTIONS AND VOTE IN ROMANIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to present several psychological aspects of the Romanian Presidential elections. In this context, this article creates the nexus between the normative perspectives and the empirical reality from the Romanian electoral system. Thus, at the theoretical level the article stresses the importance of the classical theories of the political behavior for understanding the current electoral realities. Although we have identified several constraints of the theoretical models, in practice we could emphasize the idea of a mix model based on both psychological and economic dimensions. In the case of the Romanian Presidential elections we have to notice that political status, protest vote and ideological vote create premises for voter turnout ($R^2 = 0.645$, $p > 0.01$). Moreover we have observed significant differences between first and second round of elections. These empirical findings cover, partially, the behavioral model based on the “hot cognition”.

Keywords: political behavior, political cognition, Romanian Presidential Elections, protest vote, political apathy, political status.

1. Reflections on the political behavior

This section aims to present, in a comprehensive manner, the main theoretical directions for understanding the electoral behavior. In this meaning, electoral behavior could be defined in terms of political decision or political action based on personal beliefs. Starting from this statement, we have to stress that in political action, as in other social actions, personal beliefs facilitate the process of political evaluation (diagnosis) and social or political therapies (prognosis). Thus, from a cognitive approach, personal beliefs could be considered a kind of mental „short-cut” (Houghton, 2009, p. 106). Electoral process implies a high level of personal reflection, in which the mental context is extremely relevant for personal and political option (Van Dijk, 2001). For political psychology social and political behavior could be analyzed from several perspectives: “individuals build their political ideas around their personal circumstances and interests, and when we talk about political interests we mean two sorts of things: Material interests – money, promotion, taxes, security; Ideal interests – political values and ideals, such as a sense of justice and freedom, religious beliefs, or a left–right political position. We should not underestimate the importance of ideal interests and values in trying to understand what people think about politics, and why they act the way they do” (Newton, van Deth, 2010, p. 172). Beyond these perspectives related to human interest, political behavior is reduced to “all political activities of citizens as well as the attitudes and orientations relevant for these activities” (Newton, van Deth, 2010, p. 184).

Starting to 1950’s political behavior is defined from two different perspectives: i. a model based on the structure and dynamics of the personal cognitive process; ii. an approach based on the social interaction between individuals, social groups and macro-social system

(Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1968). The sociological perspective developed by Lazarsfeld in *The people's choice* is completed by the cultural approach promoted by Almond and Verba. Personal beliefs should be influenced by the social and political culture and proximal social environment. The participative model theorized by Almond and Verba in the early of 1960-1970's demonstrates, through quantitative analyses, the dependency between electoral behavior and cultural variables (Verba & Nie, 1976). Although is very difficult to identify, in social practice, a genuine cultural model, in Western societies we identify the prevalence of the participative behavior in public life (Almond & Verba, 1996, p. 35-64).

In correlation with the cultural paradigm of the political behavior we integrate the geographical perspective. However in the electoral process we can observe the distribution of the votes which depends on the geographical area. Social cleavages are placed in connection with geographical cleavages. Thus, electoral geography could generate a valid exploratory framework for explaining different patterns of the political behavior. Social and geographical proximity is a good measure for testing if electoral behavior could be influenced through contagion. Moreover, the theory of cleavages introduced by Rokkan demonstrates different types of interactions between social, economic, geographical or ideological cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Bartolini & Mair, 1990). In the field of the empirical research, statistical data confirm a strong positive correlation between sociological or religious variables in shaping political beliefs, electoral preferences and vote decision.

At the theoretical level, for a better understanding of the political behavior, researchers have proposed the reunion of the three main academic fields: sociological field, psychological perspective and rational choice theory (Antunes, 2010, p. 146). From the sociological point of view we have to stress that personal beliefs are determined by the social factors. "There is a familiar adage in American folklore to the effect that a person is only what he thinks he is, an adage which reflects the typically American notion of unlimited opportunity, the tendency toward self-betterment, etc. Now we find that the reverse of the adage is true: a person thinks, politically, as he is, socially. Social characteristics determine political preference" (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968, p. 69) Social differentiation and geographical proximity are the main vectors for shaping political attitudes and behaviors. Antunes proposed an analytical framework, for analyzing political behavior, based on several elements as: political homogeneity of social groups, activation, reinforcement and conversion, social transmission of political choices, perception and political differentiation, democratic practice and theory, and social cleavages (Antunes, 2010, p. 148-153). In this respect, political and electoral behavior could be explained through the type of political regime and the level of personal alienation from the public space (Epstein, 2001).

In the field of the sociological perspective applied to political behavior we can integrate several quantitative models which stress the importance of the social proximity in modeling political behavior and electoral attitude. Thus, through Markov models, researchers have demonstrated that political attitudes are shaped by the social environment and the external influence of the political leadership. People who lived in the same social environment are more preferred to choose the same individual or collective political actor. People who are placed in different social and cultural environments aren't influenced by the proximity. Thus, we can underline the importance of the political socialization in creating premises for political attitudes and electoral options (Rowden, Lloyd & Gilbert, 2014).

The sociological perspective is completed by the psychological approach which has introduced the role played by emotion, perception and personality in politics (Campbell, Miller & Stokes, 1960). The key-concept around which is crystallized the psychological analysis is represented by the *political partisanship*. Researchers observed a strong process of political identity between citizens and their preferred political candidate. Political

partisanship is based on the emotional sphere of the citizens. "People ask themselves two questions when deciding which party to support: What kinds of social groups come to mind as I think about Democrats, Republicans, and Independents? Which assemblage of groups (if any) best describes me?" (Green, Palmquist & Schickler, 2002, p. 8). This type of model based on emotional responses and affectivity regarding political actors and political leadership is represented by the *Michigan model*. In USA the low rates of electoral volatility in legislative and presidential elections are explained through the Michigan model. This type of electoral isomorphism is described, through structural equations, when we observe the tendency to conserve the same actor in political position (Rowden, Lloyd & Gilbert, 2014).

Beyond the Michigan model, in the early of 1960's researchers have developed a new analytical framework based on the economic utility and rational decision. In this respect, in academic literature we have to underline the role played by the theory of rational choice in explaining electoral behavior. The theory of rational choice introduced by Downs and Arrow has several principles: "(1) all decisions — those that are made by voters and political parties — are rational, guided by self interest and enforced in accordance with the principle of maximization of action's utility; (2) the democratic political system implies a level of consistency that supports predictions about the consequences of decisions made by voters and political parties, their agents — voters, parties and government — are responsible and trustworthy, which makes it possible to make predictions about the consequences that result from different choices, and (3) the democratic system assumes — despite the consistency stated in the previous point — a level of uncertainty, sufficiently important to allow different options" (Antunes, 2010, p. 158). These theoretical perspectives reduce political decision to the rules of the free market. Political space is quite similar to the free market. In this field, we can insert the interaction between supply and demands in terms of public policies. Both citizens and political actors represent the political demand and political supply. Political actors could satisfy citizens' demands through public policies. In this economic logic, the interaction between demand and supply is represented by the vote. Moreover, the model stresses the role played by the rational actor in choosing the best supply which confer maximum of the political utility. Downs explain the role played by the free market in the political life: "our main thesis is that parties in democratic politics are analogous to entrepreneurs in a profit-seeking economy. So as, to attain their private ends, they formulate whatever policies they believe will gain the most votes, just as entrepreneurs produce whatever products they believe will gain the most profits for the same reason. In order to examine the implications of this thesis, we have assumed that citizens behave rationally in politics. This premise is itself a second major hypothesis" (Downs, 1957, p. 295-296).

Despite the major role played by this model in the theory of political behavior, in practice several researchers have observed a lot of empirical constraints. It's very difficult to identify a rational actor, which will vote a political actor without any social or emotional determinants. Moreover, the empirical studies of the democratic election among 1990-2010 demonstrate the role played by the emotional trigger in generating political decisions. Thus, the perspectives of the „hot cognition" or the „mental short-cut" could generate new strategies and theories for understanding social and political behavior.

2. Beyond the classical theories. Toward the cognitive psychology

If the rational choice has several constraints in political decision, the psych-sociological model could be a reasonable strategy for interpreting different patterns of political behavior, inclusively the electoral attitude and decision. In this field, public opinion and mass-media are seen as the main vectors for shaping beliefs and attitudes (Dalton, 2000, p. 923-924). "First, the formal organization of elections sets the occasion for overt voting behavior. The election situation provides an array of discriminative stimuli to the voters,

signaling that the specific behavior of casting a vote may be performed. Such an array of antecedent variables may include mediated stimuli presented to the voter via mass media (e.g., campaign news, policy debates, political interviews, opinion polls, background information on candidates and parties, etc.), as well as more proximal stimuli (e.g., political discussions with others, neighborhood campaign activities, political signs for specific candidates, etc.)” (Visser, 1996, p. 25). All these stimuli are dependents on the political culture. In parochial or subject culture it’s quite impossible to identify salience stimuli which could shape human beliefs or action. Rather, only in democratic societies, based on participative culture, political stimuli are transferred in salience stimuli which generate a psychological arousal. This arousal is seen as the main impulse for decision-making, rather this is a rational (cortical response) than an emotional (limbic system activation) response.

In this section we intend to create the correlation between social cognition and political sophistication starting from several theoretical directions specific to cognitive psychology and neurosciences. Social cognition is defined, in terms of the theory of mind, as: “the capacity to appreciate that another individual has a mind like one’s own. The essence of the phenomenon lies in the more conventional cognitive mechanisms that make these kinds of inferences possible, but social cognition should properly be seen as the emergent property of the system when these more fundamental cognitive processes are applied explicitly to social contexts. There is an implicit sense that individuals of those species that have this capacity are especially sensitive to social contexts, and that this context brings into play a specialized suite of cognitive mechanisms not normally used in more mundane physical world contexts” (Dunbar, 2011, p.25).

This conceptual definition creates the relationship between mental processes based on capacity to compute information with the social interaction. In terms of the cognitive psychology, cognition refers to the ability of computing information from environment and generating mental or behavioral responses. In this respect, sociologists and psychologists developed the behavioral equation based on stimulus- organism- response. This complex equation could be decrypted through several new empirical findings from neuropsychology and neurosciences. Thus, researchers have demonstrated a positive correlation between brain anatomy and responses to different political stimuli. In this respect, empirical findings show two different ways of generating brain responses when individuals are exposed to different stimuli. Thus, for conservative persons, neuroimaging techniques demonstrated an activation of the limbic system, represented by the cerebral amygdale, cerebral nuclei, thalamus and hypothalamus. This system is responsible for neurological responses based on the reaction *run or fight*. Thus, the acceleration of the heart rate, associated to an increased level of dopamine and epinephrine, demonstrated the emotional response. If conservative citizens develop emotional responses in political field, than liberals have rational responses when they are place in competition (go-no go games). For these persons, researchers have observed a high level of activation of the prefrontal lobe, which is responsible to rational cognition (Amodio et.al., 2007, p. 1246-1247). Moreover, in the field of political neurosciences researchers are interested in developing a kind of „mental map” for explaining different political behaviors in different political contexts (Kanai et.al., 2011, p. 677-680). This fact is already available when we discuss about the influence of the physiology under the social behavior (Elster, 2013, p. 247-260).

In addition to all these perspectives from neuropsychology, when we speak about electoral decision we introduce in equation the concept of political cognition or political sophistication. From the cognitive point of view “sophistication is a matter of cognition. The most elementary cognitions - of individual, tangible objects - are the bits of memory, the words in the grammar of thought. More complex cognitions link more elementary ones in

much the same way as phrases or sentences link words. Cognitive psychology speaks of associations, social psychology of beliefs and attitudes” (Luskin, 1987, p 857-860).

Political cognition implies a high level of emotional responses. In this context, in electoral process citizens could develop emotional responses or “hot cognition”. Using both IAT (Implicit Attitude Test) and EEG (electroencephalography) researchers demonstrated that in political field individuals develop emotional and implicit responses. “In addition, they demonstrated that the activation of consistent responses and the inhibition of inconsistent responses were stronger in the case of participants with more polarized attitudes and with more sophisticated political ideas. These studies strongly suggest that there may be important differences across individuals in spontaneous responses toward political matters” (Arcuri et.al. 2008, p. 372). Related to „hot cognition”, implicit attitudes and latent preferences are predictors for electoral behavior (Arcuri et.al., 2008, p. 382-383). In the field of this emotional sphere we can insert attitudes as political alienation, political apathy, lack of political trust and dissatisfaction or lack of social and economic utility (Epstein, 2001).

All these sociological and psychological dimensions are catalyzed by the “mental context” (Van Dijk 2006, p. 163) and the structure of the social group. Social stratification and social groups are vectors which could shape the intensity of the electoral and political attitudes and behavior (Elff, 2007, p. 297-308).

Synthesizing, political attitudes and electoral behavior are the product of the psychological responses to different social and political salient stimuli, filtered by the symbolical or social interaction within the social groups.

3. Research data, methods and algorithms

In accord to the theoretical framework, this study aims to test the psychological dimension of the electoral behavior in Romanian Presidential Elections. Parliamentary elections are characterized by a high level of economic interest (sociotropic and egotropic vote, based on the citizens’ perception of the economic performance). Related to this assumption, the Presidential elections could follow, partially, the Michigan model of emotional responses. The empirical research is focused on the temporal series between 2000-2016, taking into consideration the following electoral cycles: 2000-2004- elections have been won by the President Ion Iliescu; 2004-2009- election have been won by the President Traian Băsescu; in the electoral cycle 2009-2014 President Traian Băsescu was re-elected; and in the electoral cycle 2014-2019 elections have been won by the current President Klaus Werner Iohannis.

The research objectives are: i. to identify psychological aspects (emotions or cognitions) which shape electoral behavior in Presidential Elections; ii. to measure the impact of the political status in political behavior; iii. to explain the dynamics to the vote through psycho-sociological factors. In this context, the main hypotheses of the paper are:

H1: The level of protest vote (blank and null votes) is related to political apathy and political absenteeism.

H2: Political apathy characterizes the political elections in which the current President is re-elected.

Research data were collected from the electoral cycles 2000-2016, in a temporal series, significant for the end of the transition to democracy period. In this context, we use the following variables:

| Variables | Symbol | Units of measurement | Type of variables | Source of the variables: |
|---------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Voter Turnout | λ_t | % presence to the vote | Dependent (Effects) | Iațu (coord.), <i>Electoral Atlas of</i> |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|---|---------------------|---|
| | | | | <i>Romania (1990-2009)</i> |
| | | | | http://www.roaep.ro/ |
| Political Absenteeism | λ_a | % absence to the vote | Dependent (Effects) | Iașu (coord.), <i>Electoral Atlas of Romania (1990-2009)</i> |
| | | | | http://www.roaep.ro/ |
| Protest vote | γ | % blank and null votes | Independent | Iașu (coord.), <i>Electoral Atlas of Romania (1990-2009)</i> |
| | | | | http://www.roaep.ro/ |
| Political Status | φ | Dummy variable with two dimensions: current President new elected President | Independent | http://www.roaep.ro/ |
| Ideological vote | ϕ | % votes allocated to left/ right traditional ideologies (social-democracy, liberalism, conservatism and left/right extreme) | Independent | www.insse.ro/ http://www.roaep.ro/ |

Table 1: Research variables. Values, measures and typology

For testing the associations between variables we propose the following set of equations:

$$\lambda_t = \alpha + \beta_1\gamma + \beta_2\varphi + u_{ij}, \text{ where } u_{ij}, \text{ is a coefficient for residuals}$$

$$\lambda_a = \alpha + \beta_1\gamma + \beta_2\varphi + u_{ij},$$

$$\lambda_t + \lambda_a = 100, \text{ and } \lambda_a = 100 - \lambda_t$$

$$\lambda_t = \alpha + \beta_1\gamma + \beta_2\phi + u_{ij},$$

$$\lambda_t = \alpha + \beta_1\varphi + \beta_2\phi + u_{ij},$$

$$\lambda_a = \alpha + \beta_1\gamma + \beta_2\phi + u_{ij},$$

$$\lambda_a = \alpha + \beta_1\varphi + \beta_2\phi + u_{ij},$$

$$\lambda_t = \alpha + \beta_1\lambda_a + \beta_2\gamma + \beta_3\varphi + \beta_4\phi + u_{ij}$$

In terms of the statistical regression we measure, for all these equations the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the size of the effect in terms of Cohen measure (Cohen- d). Let be Y, an equation of regression (in our case λ_t and λ_a), the parameters of the equation (α, β) derives from the system:

$$\begin{cases} n\alpha + \beta \sum_{i=1}^n xi = \sum_{i=1}^n yi \\ \alpha \sum_{i=1}^n xi + \beta \sum_{i=1}^n xi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n xiyi \end{cases}$$

where are xi-values of the independent variable and yi are values for dependent variable, we can estimate the determination coefficient (R^2) between dependent and independent variables:

$$R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum(y_i - Y)^2}{\sum(y_i - \bar{y})^2}$$

Also, the Cohen-d is:

$$d = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu}{\sigma}, \text{ and } d = \frac{\bar{x} - \mu}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})^2}{N}}}, \text{ where } \bar{x} - \text{ is the mean of sample, } \mu - \text{ is the mean of the population}$$

and σ - is the standard deviation of the variable.

4. Political apathy and ideological vote in presidential elections

At the empirical level we observed a positive, but weak, relationship between the protest vote and political status. In this respect, $R^2 = 0.155$, $p > 0.05$. Protest vote is not strongly related to the change of the political status in the case of the Presidential elections. We can observe that citizens are not, globally, interested in political change. This fact is evident in the re-election of the President Traian Băsescu, in the second round of the Presidential Elections from 2009.

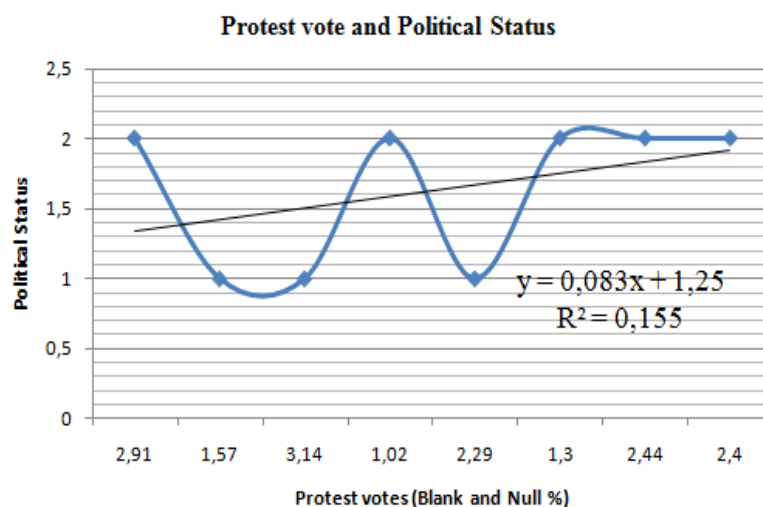


Figure 1: The regression equation between Protest vote and Political Status

Although in the dynamics of the electoral process we cannot observe positive associations between political apathy (measured in terms of the Protest vote), in a deep statistical analysis we can observe several differences between first and second round of the Presidential Elections. Thus, in the first case, the correlation between protest vote and the changing of the political status is middle to strong positive ($R^2 = 0.59$, $p > 0.05$). In this respect, we can underline the fact that when we have the same person re-elected in the Presidential position the level of the blank and null votes is quite constant (2,29%-3.14%). Regarding to the voter turnout we can observe symmetrical levels of the electoral presence to the presidential vote (58.51% in the first round in 2004 and 54, 37% in the first round in 2008). If the political candidate is the current President we have to observe the symmetry between voter turnout within the electoral rounds and a low rate of the protest vote. Thus, the first round of the Presidential elections conserves both the same level of political absenteeism and political apathy. Moreover, the second round of the elections generates changes in the political system. Except the turnout of 2009, the second round of elections generates new elected Presidents: Ion Iliescu won the election in 2000 after the presidency of Emil Constantinescu (1996-2000); Traian Băsescu won the second round of the election in 2004, generating the ideological cleavage with the post-communist candidates; Klaus Werner Iohannis won the second round of the elections in 2014.

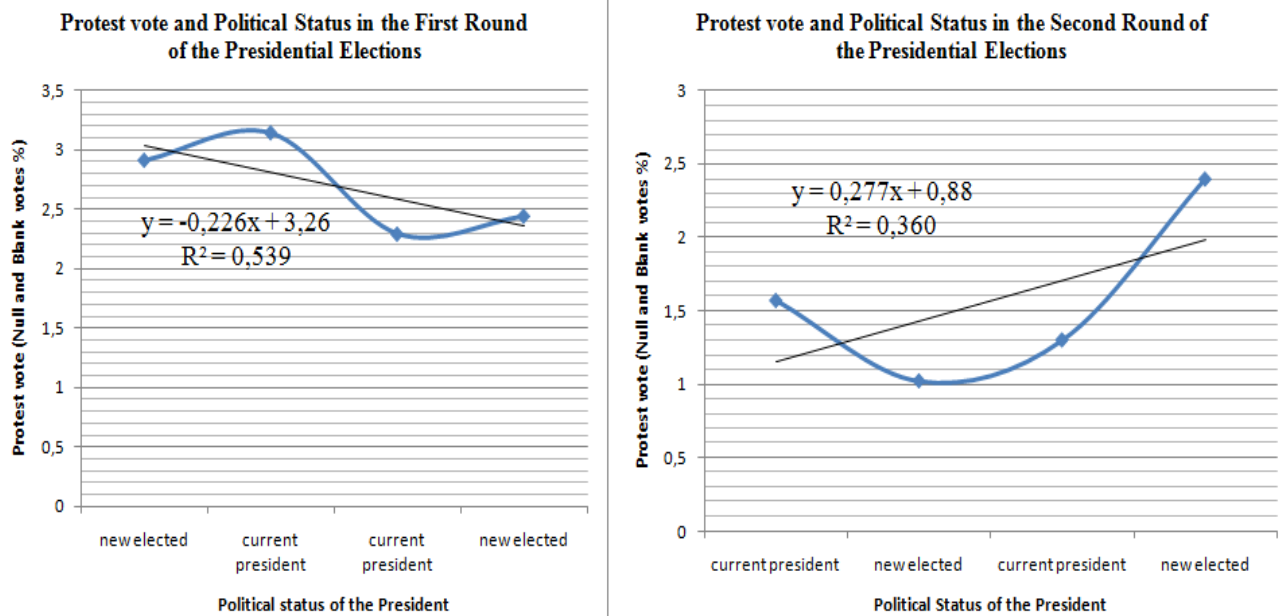


Figure 2: The regression equation between Protest vote and Political Status in the first and second round of Presidential Elections

In this context, the statistical relation between political status and protest vote is weak, with $R^2 = 0.36$, $p > 0.01$. In the second round of the elections we can notice that we have a small percent of the blank and null votes (1.3%-1.57%). Regarding the differential ratio between the second and first round of elections we can observe the diminution of the protest vote from the first to second round with 56,76%. If the first round of elections emphasizes political contestation and political apathy, the second round confirms the need for change in political leadership. When we refer to the political absenteeism we can observe a 12,14% differences between cycles in the first round of elections (min. 34.59% in 2000 and 46,83% in 2014). In the second round of elections we can stress that we have a difference of 8,89% between electoral cycles (42,5% in 2000 and 35,9% in 2014). Thus, in 2000 the competition between Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Ion Iliescu generates a high level of the political absenteeism. Citizens had developed mechanisms of political apathy or political alienation were they faced to political candidates with communist or extremist ideological and political perspective. An important observation refers to the fact that post-communist leadership generates the feeling of political alienation, fact which is demonstrated by the high level of protest vote and the high level of political absenteeism. In 2014, in the second round of elections, we have to observe a low level of political absenteeism associated to the need for changing the political status and the post-communist practices. The current President Klaus Werner Iohannis is seen as a good leader for changing the society, for consolidating democratic order and to fight against the corruption and the political inertia of the institutional framework. All these arguments had a positive and emotional impact in stimulating civic participation in the electoral process.

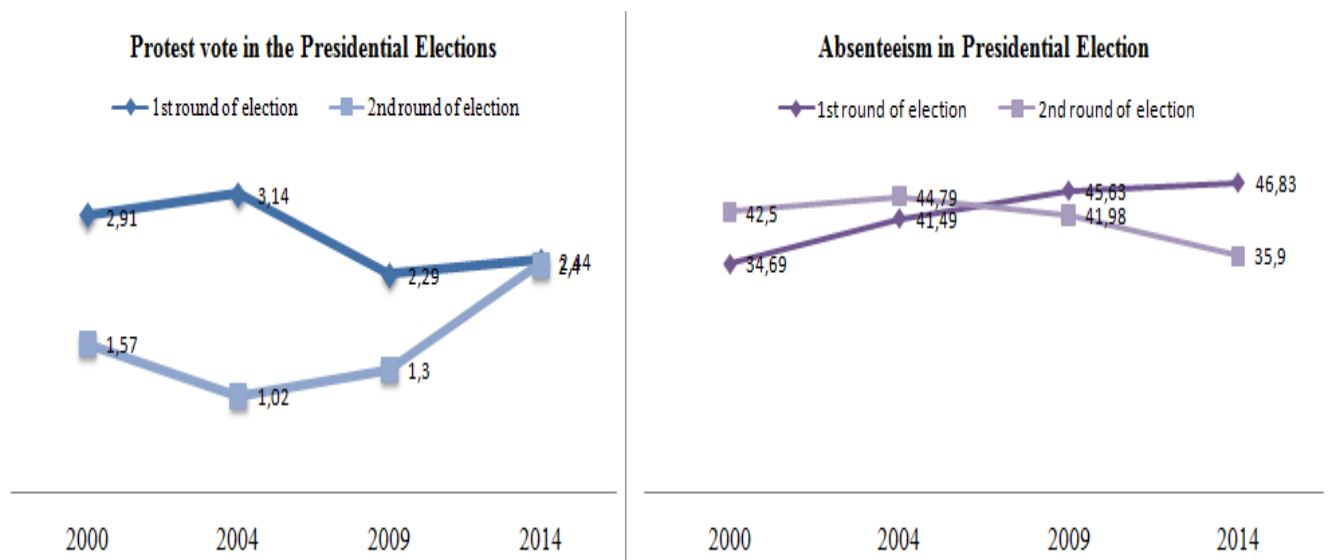


Figure 3: The dynamics of the Protest Vote and Political Absenteeism in Presidential Elections

If we test the relationship between political status and voter turnout we can observe a weak statistical model with $R^2 = 0.384$, $p > 0.05$. This model reflects the fact that, in a long term analysis, it's difficult to predict the dynamics of voter turnout starting from the current status of the Presidential candidate. Moreover, it is observable, in a detailed analysis based on separate round of elections that, if a candidate is the current President, voter turnout and voter absenteeism are relatively constant. This fact was demonstrated through the relation between protest vote and political status. The coefficient of determination is $R^2 = 0.92$, $p > 0.01$. The need for electoral change is met in the second round, where we can estimate a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.590$, $p > 0.05$.

If we refer to the ideological dimension of the electoral process we cannot identify any significant statistical relationship between ideology, protest vote and political status. In all the cases correlations are quite absent, with $R^2 = 0.10$, $p > 0.10$. If, globally ideological vote isn't reflected in voter turnout or in political absenteeism ($R^2 = 0.37$), when we create a deep analysis on the electoral rounds we can observe different statistical results. Thus, in the first round of the Presidential elections the voter turnout is strong positive related to ideological vote (preference for social democracy or liberal democracy). The main political party based on social-democratic ideology (PSD- Social Democratic Party) has its loyal electorate. In this meaning, this party obtains in election more than 32-35%. Also, other proportion of the voters is dispersed between PNL (National Liberal Party) and PDL (Liberal-Democratic Party). Beyond the ideological party, in the first electoral round of the elections we can identify the ethnical vote dedicated to the candidates from national minorities' political parties or groups. If in the first round of election we have a strong positive relation between voter turnout and political ideology, in the second round of election we have a very weak and insignificant statistical value ($R^2 = 0.139$, $p > 0.05$). The second round is specific for political changing and social mobilization of the citizens.

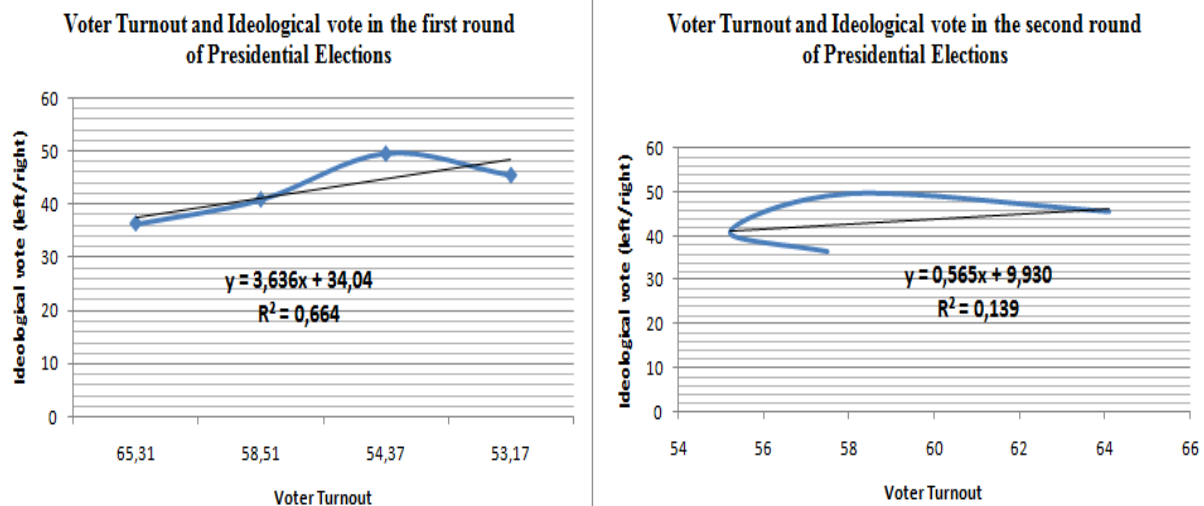


Figure 4: Equations of regression for Voter Turnout and Ideological vote

In the field of the Romanian Presidential Elections, political behavior, translated in the level of the voters' turnout, could be described and explained by two factors: political apathy and the political status of the candidate. Moreover, we have observed significant differences between first and second round of elections. These differences are expressed by the different factors which shape electoral behavior. In the first case we have to present the role played by the political status in motivating citizens to participate to electoral process. This round is, almost characterized by the increasing rates of political absenteeism and null or blank votes. This round is a mix between emotional vote, translated in social frustration, apathy and political alienation, and ideological vote, presented as a manner of rational or cognitive approach. But, all the quantitative data confirm the fact that Romanian Presidential Elections are characterized by a particular form of "hot cognition". The second round is characterized by political motivation for electoral changing and the lack of ideological bias and implicit attitudes. Probably the type of electoral system based on the rule "first pass the post" in the round facilitate a rational type of electoral decision. In a single electoral cycle we can identify the President who is re-elected. In other electoral cycles, the second round is strongly associated to the change of the political leadership. Beyond these statistical data and samples, we can confirm this hypothesis through the contemporary history of the Romanian's elections. Thus, except the year 1992, when Ion Iliescu is re-elected, in 1996 the second round of elections have generated a new Romanian President, with democratic perspectives: Emil Constantinescu. Thus, the second round of the Presidential elections could be described as a manner for emotional vote, for hope of democracy and for political progress.

The maximum value of R^2 , with a level of likelihood, is estimated in the equation in which we introduce all these factors: protest vote, political ideology and political status. In this sense, the regression model has $R^2 = 0.645$, $p > 0.02$. Although we don't have a strong linear relationship between variables, this model could cover, in reasonable manner, the reality of the Presidential election in the Romanian political system. If we test the size of the effect we can observe that: i. the size of the effect of the protest vote on the voter turnout is very high, with Cohen- $d = 12.59$ and $r = 0.987$; ii. When we measure the effect of the political status on the voter turnout we estimate Cohen- $d = 18, 16$ and $r = 0.993$; the last effect is represented by the influence of the ideological vote on voter turnout (Cohen- $d = 3,10$ with $r = 0.840$). Beyond these forms of political behaviors based on protest, apathy, ideological cognition or political change, Romanian reality couldn't be placed in the sphere of the Michigan model. The main particularity of the Romanian Presidential elections consists in the hybrid models based on both psychological determinants and, probably,

economic motivation. As many other transitional states, in Romanian society, electoral process is dominated by the economic determinants. This aspect generates in the field of the political practice the hypostases of the sociotropic voter.

5. Concluding remarks

This paper creates the relation between the theoretical models of the voter's behavior and the empirical field of the Presidential Elections in Romanian transitional system. However this approach aims to identify if in political reality we can observe a genuine form of the sociological, psychological or rational choice perspective. Although, the theoretical approach is filled by new perspectives which connect politics to neuro-psychology, in Romanian reality is very difficult to observe a cognitive strategy in electoral participation. Moreover, we can observe the emotional pattern reflected in protest vote and high level of electoral absenteeism. As form of political cognition, ideological approach is met only in the first round of elections. Romanian specificity derives from the hybrid model of the electoral decisions. Political decision is sustained both by the emotional and rational electoral strategies. Beyond these influences, with a high level of likelihood we can underline the idea of the economic vote, for maximizing both social and individual economic situation. Although our statistical model is not linear, we have to stress that in Romanian Presidential elections the decision of vote as voter turnout could be determined by the protest vote, the status of the political actors and the ideological perspectives.

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