

Formation of a Political Career in Romania Case Study: Prime Ministers, Romania from 1990-2020

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Abstract

This article examines the formation of the political careers of the Romanian prime ministers after the fall of communism. The analysis of political careers and training routes for the Romanian politician provides an overview of the entire political spectrum. Political career allows us to observe the reality that is established between the actors involved, state institutions, political parties, retraining mechanisms, or existing framework games. Political careers changed dramatically after the communist period. Democracy in Romania allowed the liberalization of this "trade", and the medium- and long-term effect was a decedibility of the politician, through the rise of political figures with academic quality, questionable morals and a rupture with intellectual elites.

Keywords: political career, prime ministers, politician

Jel codes: D72, D73

1. Introduction

Every society needs leaders. Heroes, civilizing characters, charismatic figures or full of magnetism, firm or subtle and mysterious leaders, all populate both the social life and the collective mind. Basically, we cannot speak of social life outside of an organization and a leader. Thus, the leader of a group or of a community or society becomes a guarantor of its order and functionality. Today he takes the face of the politician.

Political careers have changed significantly, with Romania's transition from a communist state to a consolidated democracy. Legislative framework, rules regulating the political system, method of nominating candidates, etc. All this has produced significant changes, and sociological and political research has not fully quantified this development (Henn, 2017). This article analyzing the political career of the Prime Ministers of Romania during 1999-2020 has the role of understanding the process of democratization and democratic consolidation through this perspective as well. For this reason, we consider that the study of the mechanisms that make possible the political ascent, but also of the qualities that the career of a politician requires in the contemporary society, can highlight specific patterns of building a career and affirmation on the political scene (Mattozzi & Merlo, 2008). The present analysis illustrates an image of the moment, framed in different vectors of analysis, such as the duration of the mandate, the political origin, the age, the sex, the number of mandates, the political functions, all these working together to form ways of becoming the politician for the position of prime minister.

2. Theoretical considerations of forming a political career.

The literature, which has in the foreground a qualitative approach, but also quantitatively on the politician, targets several segments and areas of overlap with him. We find politics as a social phenomenon, representing an indispensable element of human existence, the genesis and evolution of partisan forms, politics as a vocation and as a profession, the universal character attributed to the sphere of politics compared to other events, spheres of social life, culture, law, morals, religion or science (Voicu, 2008). All these things are contained in a political dynamism characterized by structure, stages, levels or mechanisms of interaction between the individual, partisan form and social area. The analysis of the politician must include elements that are also related to the civil society, through the mechanisms and variants of interaction and interdependence and with the functions of the civil society. The foundations of sociology, the analytical approaches, the models of analysis are the main tools to study the politician "in his adventure towards power" and to manage the affairs of the state (Voicu, 2008).

Studies show that the state has become one of the most emblematic quasi-universal figure. (Bernanrd & Lecomte, 2004). In this sense, the contractual relationship is under the sign of a political function. We can identify the politician as the person who has the well-identified role, that of **governing**. This role is usually assigned to individuals or a group, which by the decisions taken implies in one way or another the obligation to respect and execute them. The study on political leaders, especially those in the executive area, has been very little exploited in the area of political science and sociological analyses. However, we find a number of authors who have explored these areas (Joan Botella et al., 2009) or J. Blondel (1988) who show the genesis of the Austrian prime ministers, their provenance from public service, industry or interest groups, etc.

The analysis of the ministerial cabinets from the perspective of going through different political regimes is also analyzed by Juan J. Linz (2009) observing political issues, institutional systems and factors that determined the replacement of some elites with others. Petro Taveres de Almeida (2009) also spoke about the change in recruitment patterns of the governmental elite. The performance of a state's ministerial and executive is analyzed by Azzi (2013), affirming the need for expertise, partisan affiliation and political consensus in order to be successful. Our research approach fits into the directions of analysis regarding the identification of some patterns of formation of the politician for the position of prime minister.

3. Methodology

The analysis of the Prime Ministers of Romania aimed at carrying out a documentation. There were analyzed official documents represented by their CVs, declarations of interest at the time of holding the position. Furthermore, the data were selected on the basis of predetermined indicators to help achieve the objectives. There were analyzed 17 files of the politicians who held the position during 1990-2020. The year 1990 is the moment when Romania makes the transition to a democratic regime, after the Revolution of 1989, where the communist regime was removed. The year 2020 is the moment of the 30th anniversary of democracy. It is worth mentioning that the files of those in the interim periods were excluded from the analysis. The motivation is represented by the fact that the mandate was a short one, and the way of appointing them was a predominantly conjunctural one, caused by the inability of the prime minister to continue his mandate.

Purpose

Establishing training routes for prime ministers in Romania during 1990-2020, in the light of the analyzed indicators.

Objectives

- O.1 Evaluation of all the politicians who occupied the position of prime minister, in the period 1990-2020, except for those who had interim mandates.
- O.2 Identification and classification of routes to obtain a position of prime minister.
- O.3 Making correlations regarding the factors that influence the path to a position of prime minister.

Assumptions

- I.1 The position of prime minister in Romania is a direct consequence of belonging to a political party, but also holding a management position at national level.
- I.2 The mandate is fully linked to the existence of the party to which it belongs.
- I.3 Social determinants, such as age, gender, experience, profession, can influence their political path.

4. Profile of the Prime Ministers of Romania, in the period 1990-2020

The image of the position of Prime Minister in Romania has always been a controversial topic and which has maintained the attention of the local, national and international media. From the analysis carried out, it is noted that the period of their mandate (Table no. 1) varies between 3 months and 48 months. The analysis was carried out in months, taking into account the large number of mandates and very short periods. Taking into account that mean is 21.71 months (i.e. about 2 years), it is noted that 64.7% of them fall up to this average.

Table 1. The period of prime ministers' mandate in 1990-2020 expressed in months

Months	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
3	1	5,9	5,9	5,9
6	2	11,8	11,8	17,6
11	1	5,9	5,9	23,5
12	1	5,9	5,9	29,4
13	2	11,8	11,8	41,2
14	1	5,9	5,9	47,1
Valid 16	1	5,9	5,9	52,9
21	2	11,8	11,8	64,7
25	1	5,9	5,9	70,6
36	2	11,8	11,8	82,4
40	1	5,9	5,9	88,2
48	2	11,8	11,8	100,0
Total	17	100,0	100,0	

Source: personal processing

Although we could say that the small periods are due to the instability of the Romanian democracy, it is noted that the mandates between 3 months and 14 months are in the second part of the analyzed period, after 2004. However, one possible explanation is that the majority of those who had short periods of office did not have the highest office in the political party from which they came or were supported as independents by a governing coalition. If we talk about the political support, the analysis carried out shows that only 3 prime ministers were declared independents, and the rest in a proportion of 82.4% being part of a political party (Table no.2).

Table 2. The party he comes from

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
FSN	2	11,8	11,8	11,8
independent	3	17,6	17,6	29,4
PDL	1	5,9	5,9	35,3
Valid PSDR	1	5,9	5,9	41,2
PNL	3	17,6	17,6	58,8
PNTCD	2	11,8	11,8	70,6
PSD	5	29,4	29,4	100,0
Total	17	100,0	100,0	

Source: personal processing

In the case of the 3 independent prime ministers, they had the support of the Parliament by creating a governing coalition. This was determined either by public pressure or by the impossibility of forming a parliamentary majority of a single party. It is clearly seen from the analysis that membership of a political party is a necessary condition for access to this function of representation. This validates **the I.2 hypothesis** by which the leadership of a prime minister is in full connection with the existence of the party to which he belongs to the government. The analysis shows that if the average duration of people holding a prime minister's portfolio varies, a considerable difference emerges from what could be detailed as the "form" of a ministerial career. In general, the prime minister is the person appointed by the ruling majority party or by a governing coalition. He occupies the post of prime minister for a fixed period, and once he no longer holds the position, his ministerial career is also ended. This can also be seen from the analysis of the appointments held (Table No 3).

Table 3. Distribution of prime ministers according to the frequency of appointments

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	An appointment	12	70,6	70,6
	Two or more appointments interrupted	1	5,9	76,5
	Two or more successive appointments	4	23,5	100,0
	Total	17	100,0	100,0

Source: personal processing

It is shown that 70.6% of them had only one appointment, without returning to the previously occupied position. This fact may have different explanations, determined by the reason for the interruption of the mandate. If we find cases of corruption, the period of their rehabilitation is too long to be able to occupy this position. If the party has lost the political majority in Parliament, the prime minister's return can only be done through elections. The 4 successive appointments were made as a result of the restoration of some parliamentary majorities and thus the political configuration of the respective government was changed. For example, Victor Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania in 2012, was supported by the Social Liberal Union, formed by the Center-Left Alliance (made up of the Social Democratic Party and the National Union for the Progress of Romania) and the Center-Right Alliance, which consists of the National Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. Subsequently, the National Liberal Party decided to withdraw it from the governing coalition, which led to the change of the political configuration and in this regard a new government was appointed with the support of the Social Democratic Party, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, the Conservative Party and the National Union for the Progress of Romania. The reasons for the interruption of the mandate of a prime minister had two causes:

- a. external causes represented by social events caused by an economic, political instability, etc. or the loss of electoral power on the part of the party. Party governments in post-communist Europe have worked in very dynamic political and socio-economic environments (Grotz & Weber, 2012);
- b. internal causes represented by corruption scandals against the prime minister or the degradation of the relationship between him and the party leader.

Another analyzed indicator was represented by the occupation of those who occupied over time a portfolio of prime minister (Table no. 4). There is an inclination towards the positions of economist (23.5%), followed by the engineering professions (17.6%), on a par with those of legal or university professor.

Table 4. The profession held

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Economist	4	23,5	23,5
	Computer scientist	1	5,9	29,4
	Engineer	3	17,6	47,1
	Historian	2	11,8	58,8
	Jurist	3	17,6	76,5
	Teacher	1	5,9	82,4
	Professor	3	17,6	100,0
	Total	17	100,0	100,0

Source: personal processing

Their profession determines a pattern of formation of the politician in Romania. Although, the country was under the occupation of the communist regime, where the political elite had engineering studies, the identified professions show a liberalization of the "political market" and the capitalization of some liberal professions. In this context, we note that the professional experience they had before occupying the position of prime minister increases their influence on the entire policy set of that government (Alexiandou, 2015).

This factor is not a singular one. Rohrer (2014) analyzes the effectiveness of British premiers through a series of qualitative and quantitative, extrinsic and intrusive vectors that can influence the level of performance. Socio-demographic indicators can be useful information about how to form the politician. It is noted that all the prime

ministers of Romania obtained the position at the age of between 40 and 56 years. This aspect can lead to the idea of a society that values experience, expertise on public policies, but it can also indicate some closed system for accepting young people.

Table 5. Age at which he occupied a premiership portfolio

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
40	2	11,8	11,8	11,8
42	2	11,8	11,8	23,5
44	2	11,8	11,8	35,3
46	1	5,9	5,9	41,2
48	2	11,8	11,8	52,9
Valid 49	1	5,9	5,9	58,8
50	3	17,6	17,6	76,5
52	1	5,9	5,9	82,4
55	1	5,9	5,9	88,2
56	2	11,8	11,8	100,0
Total	17	100,0	100,0	

Source: personal processing

Statistics show that the Romanian government is in the "masculine" genre. In the entire history of Romania there was only one female prime minister. This happened during Romania's democratic period, the remaining 94.11% of the 17 prime ministers analyzed being male. Taking into account the data collected from the documentation, we can state that social determinants, such as age, sex, experience, profession, can influence their political path (hypothesis I.3).

5. Routes to obtain a position of prime minister

This analytical framework needs to be expanded to identify certain patterns of political career formation. The casuistry is very diverse, but it can be categorized as follows in the figure below.

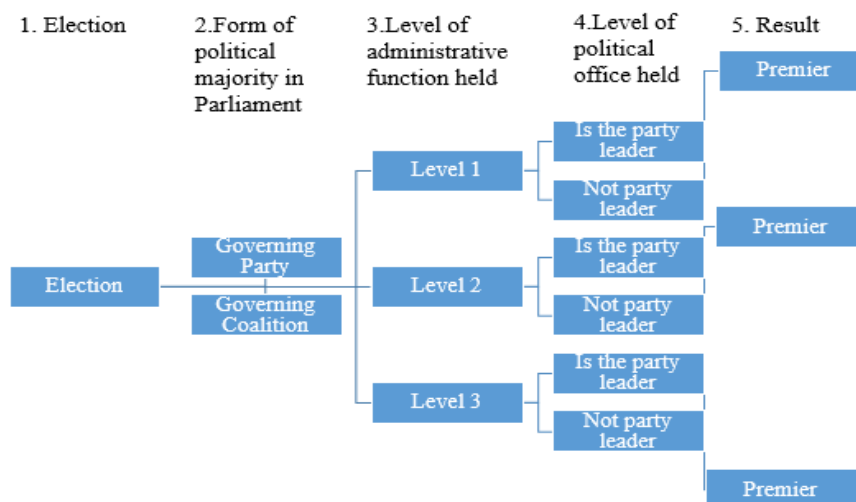


Figure 1. The route for premiership

Source: Personal processing

The figure above was made as a result of studying the career paths of the Prime Ministers in Romania. It has been noted that the process is started with parliamentary elections, except for the change of prime minister's mandates

between electoral stages. Regardless of the situation, the Parliament, through the voice of a political majority played by a ruling party or a coalition of several parties, proposes for validation a candidate for the position of prime minister. The Constitution of Romania defines very clearly the role of the Parliament (Constitution of Romania, 2003): "*The President of Romania designates a candidate for the position of Prime Minister and appoints the Government on the basis of the vote of confidence granted by the Parliament.*" At this stage we must say that the phenomenon of Romanian constitutionalism represented a clear vehicle towards the consolidation of democracy in Romania (Weber, 2003).

From the analysis of the administrative functions analyzed before their appointment as prime minister, it could be found that there are three levels (Stolz, 2001) of employment (Table no. 6):

- level 1 is represented by the candidate who holds a transnational position, at international level, in suprastate political bodies, a consequence of Romania's presence in NATO, EU, UN, etc.

-Level 2 covers national administrative and political representation functions. The candidates for the position of prime minister come from the Parliament (deputy/senator), from the government cabinet (ministers, state secretaries), or from some institutions where they previously held management positions (director, governor).

-level 3 is represented by candidates who have regional positions (presidents of county council) or local positions (mayor).

This analysis emphasizes that the structure of political careers is constituted by the logic of institutions of strategic importance or that the becoming of the politician is also influenced by the totality of the functions he holds. Thus, **the I.1** hypothesis that states that the position of prime minister in Romania is a direct consequence of belonging to a political party, but also holding a management function at national level, is validated.

Moreover, in a study conducted on 131 ministerial cabinets in the countries of the Central and Eastern European area, it was shown that in order to increase the performance of the prime minister, he must also be a party leader. This is how all the conditions to succeed in office are achieved (Grotz, 2021).

Table 6. Last administrative position before appointment as prime minister

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Level 1	2	11,8	11,8	11,8
Valid Level 2	13	76,5	76,5	88,2
Valid Level 3	2	11,8	11,8	100,0
Total	17	100,0	100,0	

Source: *personal processing*

The existence of a position of president of the party that wins the elections, or president of the governing coalition of several parties, is an indisputable advantage in acquiring the position of prime minister. Everything, it was noticed that in the 30 years of Romanian democracy, not all the time the prime minister was also the leader of the party. The explanations are multiple: the leader of the party at that time was incompatible with the position of prime minister, or there were certain accusations of corruption, etc. Only 23.5% of them were party presidents at the time of their appointment as prime minister. Depending on the degree of political support, several categories of formation of prime ministers in Romania could be identified:

1. prime ministers who have obtained portfolio as a result of the support of a party president;
2. independent prime ministers who had the support of a governing coalition;
3. "self-support" as a result of the position of party president held before the appointment and simultaneously with the portfolio of prime minister.

6. Conclusions

This analysis does not claim to provide exactly a route, but rather an image of the present. Thus, it could be ascertained that a political career and accession to a premiership is fully linked to political affiliation. The politician needs a professional expertise and a political experience that accumulates over time. The age at which you become prime minister is approximately after at least 25 years (on average) from the age of maturity. The prime minister is that person who has a history of political and administrative functions, which gives him an advantage in knowing public policies.

The Romanian political space has been in full development and change in the last 30 years, characterized by the transition from a communist regime to a consolidated democracy. This fact was also felt in the political careers and the position of prime minister, characterized by political instability, short mandates, lack of political predictability, sensitive parliamentary majorities, etc. A paradox of the period of mandates is represented by the fact that in the immediate transition from the communist regime to democracy, the mandates of the prime ministers were higher. In the evolution of the process of consolidating democracy, their mandates, paradoxically, have become shorter and more unstable. This aspect can also be explained by the presence of numerous social, economic, pandemic crises. Beyond these nuances, in definition, the politician is an exponent of the social, of the society, in order to ensure a good functioning of the communities.

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