

## Laurențiu Ștefan: Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Rezension / review

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Mansfeldová, Z. (2005). Laurențiu Ștefan: Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania. *Sociologický časopis / Czech Sociological Review*, 41(3), 512-515. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-55434>

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of the Czech Republic, this reviewer cannot shake the impression that the authors were also trying to impress their home institution. That is why there are passages in the text that have no informational value beyond the brief descriptions of specific situations they provide, the sole aim of which is to uphold the level of complexity of the information provided, and the effort to offer the most comprehensive amount of information possible wins out over any interest in presenting a persuasive indication of the position of the Czech parliament in Czech politics.

The second flaw is related to this, and it can be described simply as the absence of the topic the authors were supposed to address. In the introductory chapter the authors indicate that, 'to determine the real position of parliament in the system, its dominance or submissiveness in relation to the other branches of state power, it is necessary to specify the fields in which the activities of parliament are to be examined'. Though some fields of inquiry or description are specified further on, in the next sections of the book, the introductory objective of examining the position of parliament in Czech politics remains essentially unfulfilled. That the authors actually abandoned their work of analysis and summary is also evident in the fact that the book has no conclusion, where the authors ought normally to have presented their summary of the position of parliament in Czech politics and any other goals of the research. The authors have thus indirectly assigned the book a textbook status, reinforced moreover by their legalistic way of thinking. And this despite the fact that the more than decade-long evolution of parliamentarism in the Czech Republic calls for the description and interpretation of the clear trends in its work and its cast of politicians – e.g. the increasingly stable pool of MPs, the growing support for government bills, greater voting unity in the parliamentary clubs, etc. Trends are also appearing that are rendering the Czech parliament much more comparable to the parliaments in western European countries.

The third flaw relates to inaccuracies in the data presented in the text. Jan Kysela has already drawn attention elsewhere [2002] to the relatively large number of errors in the text and in the tables, usually related to details, and it is worth noting that these inaccuracies are primarily in reference to the Senate and senators. It is as though the authors were mainly concentrating on the Chamber of Deputies, where their descriptions are much more precise, and the Senate was consequently somewhat eclipsed, perhaps even because the information they had on the Senate was not that accurate. Despite these reservations, this reviewer considers the book to be a successful introduction to Czech parliamentarism. It may be hoped that the authors honour their informal commitment to continue to publish summary work of this kind after the next electoral term, and that next time they perform this task in a much more analytical manner.

Lukáš Linek

#### References

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#### **Laurențiu Ștefan: *Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania***

Bucharest 2004: Editora ZIUA, 279 pp.

Laurențiu Ștefan represents the young and upcoming generation of Romanian political scientists, and he has written the book, *Patterns of Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania*, which examines the structure and changes in the composition of political elite in post-communist Romania, devoting special attention to the routes they have taken to reach the peak party posts and the top positions in the executive and into parliament. As in the other post-communist

countries, in Romania political elites played a key role during the period that followed the collapse of communism and during the transformation of the political system, and this has led among other things to a renewed interest in political elites and in the study of them since 1989. Despite this interest no comprehensive study of post-communist political elites in Romania has yet been published, and even the summary studies on elites in Central and Eastern Europe and related research published in the 1990s [e.g. Best and Becker 1997] or the cross-national comparative study of elites coordinated in the early 1990s by Iván Szelényi and David Treiman do not cover Romania. Therefore, Ștefan's book is genuinely the first piece of work that in terms of the scope and depth of its analyses comes near to the already well-known studies on political elites in Central and Eastern Europe. The author notes, however, that the work is not just intended as a replica of the studies and analyses already conducted in the majority of countries in the CEE region. The author comes out with some critical comments about the theory of political recruitment, which he nonetheless attempts to surmount in an effort to find a more suitable interpretative framework.

The book is divided into two parts. The theoretical framework of the study is presented in the first part, while the second part is devoted to a thorough and systematic analysis of the data on political elites.

*Theories of Political Elite Recruitment* is the title of the first part of the book and it opens with an inventory of basic terms, such as 'political recruitment', 'recruitment', and 'selection', and how they are used in current theoretical concepts. From there the author proceeds to a discussion of the relevant theoretical concepts, starting with the classics, such as Mosca and Pareto, through to the contemporary concepts, and he attempts to provide a critical assessment of the key works. Although a rich selection of literature on political recruitment has emerged over the past forty years, the author expresses some disappointment with his findings. Despite the

mass of knowledge the accumulated works contain, the models they propose lack in diversity and are somewhat dominated by the unidimensional approach to political recruitment. They observe political recruitment as a dependent variable only and focus on the factors that determine recruitment. Ștefan, on the other hand, is more interested in the effects or consequences of the recruitment process. He inquires into what kind of expectations the people who have attained a high public function have in terms of party career, what kind of function represents a genuine party career leap, whether success at the lower echelon of the party hierarchy automatically signifies a greater chance of advancing through the party hierarchy, and what other career goals those who occupy positions are after. Ștefan clearly attributes political parties with occupying the primary role in the recruitment process.

The second part of the publication, *Political Elite Recruitment in Post-Communist Romania*, begins with a brief historical excursion through notable studies and informative resources on Romanian political elites, starting in 1866, which, as the author points out, was the key moment in the development of Romanian statehood. This introductory chapter to the second part is not a search for historical parallels. It simply documents the attention that has been devoted to national political elites in the past and has no direct connection with the rest of the book.

The essential core of the work is the analysis of political recruitment. This analysis draws on data from the ROMELITE database of Romanian MPs, the development of which was led by the author himself. This dataset contains information about the political, socio-demographic, and occupational background of the 1561 members of parliament who sat between May 1990 and May 2003 in the Romanian parliament. During the development of ROMELITE it became part of the comparative international project EURELITE – European Political Elites in Comparison: The Long Road to Convergence, a project conducted as part of the European

Science Foundation – Networks programme. The author thus constructed and elaborated a database that matches the European standard and which in the future will facilitate international comparisons and consequently contribute to advancing the level of knowledge about national elites. The data from the ROMELITE database are combined with self-perceptions about the most valuable qualities for candidate selection and election success. For this purpose questionnaire research and in-depth interviews were conducted among the MPs.

In the introduction to the analysis of political recruitment the author looks at the beginnings of the political career and how MPs start out. He goes back into the communist era in an attempt to discover to what degree a reproduction of elites occurred in the Romanian case. In the following chapters he focuses on the factors that influence an MP's path into parliament, whether this refers to a career in the party, prior parliamentary experience, or experience in public institutions. He looks particularly at the influence of the following factors: the length of party career, leadership position within the party structures, incumbency, previous experience in local and central administration, local background (residence, local visibility, leadership in the local party, experience in local institutions), type of party support (local organisation or central leadership), mechanism of recruitment (elections, decision of the local leadership, decision of the central leadership), perception of party democracy, types of career preferences.

The situation in Romania corresponds to the developments that have taken place in other post-communist countries (including the Czech Republic), where new political parties arose mainly in the period around 1990–92 and the people who were being voted into parliament had only recently become members of their particular party. That changed quickly, and the profile of MPs changed with it. In comparison with the Czech studies on this topic it is evident that in Romania there

is more accessible data on deputies than in the Czech Republic, for example, about their place of birth and place of residence, which has allowed him to study the MPs ties to the region, the interconnections between the MP's place of birth, place of residence, and the constituency they represent, and this also allows him to examine the issue of representativeness. It may only be a slight overstatement to say that the author may be envied the opportunity he had to gain data of this type, though it is a demanding process to acquire such data and he used a combination of various resources, as nothing like the Lists of MPs common in Western European and a number of post-communist countries exist in Romania. On the basis of his empirical findings Ștefan concludes that, "gradually, more and more constituencies are represented by politicians with national career and residence in Bucharest. Parliamentary activities become more and more a matter within the practical reach of central elite of the parties and less accessible to the genuine representatives of the constituencies" (p. 236). This is also owing to the fact that the number of MPs willing to divide their time between their constituency and the Chamber of Deputies in Bucharest is declining, as this double life does little to enhance a person's political career. The author expresses the concern that the parliament will soon cease to be a representative institution. It is moreover essentially closed to any candidates without a party affiliation.

The analysis deals not only with recruitment of MPs but also (and this is less common) with their substitutes, who are not elected, but who are next on the list and get a representative's seat in parliament if the MP is required to forfeit the position for some reason, usually owing to incompatibility of function. In the Romanian parliament this situation occurs with relative frequency because there is a large radius of positions there deemed incompatible with the parliamentary mandate (e.g. in the Czech Republic the range of incompatible positions is

very small and ministers often also hold a parliamentary mandate). Here Ștefan questions how much these substitutes differ from MPs given that in the elections they are placed by the party at a less eligible position on the party lists and inquires into whether they are viewed somehow as second-class MPs. What he concludes from his observations is that the substitutes are people with briefer political experience, they are somewhat younger than MPs, and they have less of an influence in the party or in their constituency, and he finds that only few of them later reach the peak of the party hierarchy.

Another topic that is usually studied in most analyses of parliaments is parliamentary mobility, crossing the floor from one party to another. This inter-party mobility was relatively common in the post-communist countries in the early 1990s and then gradually declined, and in this Romania was no different. It is a pity that the author did not devote more attention to a specifying the shifts between political parties in terms of the parties' positions on the political spectrum or to details on shifts between or even within political camps defined otherwise. Readers unfamiliar with the Romanian political scene would certainly welcome greater insight into what has occurred there. Ștefan's examination of parliamentary mobility even includes shifts from one constituency to another or from one parliamentary chamber to another. The notion of the move from one constituency to another as a type of parliamentary mobility is certainly interesting, and it may be based on the fact that, according to the author, there are two separate types of political career in Romania – local careers and national careers. There are few politicians who are capable of crossing the boundaries between these levels and it occurs only exceptionally.

In the final chapter the author looks at the recruitment pattern of ministers, prime ministers and presidential candidates, the relationship between a minister and the political party, the influence position in the party hierarchy has on managing to secure a

top position in the executive and on being named a minister. Here he presents a number of specific examples, but he is working with a limited amount of data here and he is therefore cautious in his conclusions.

In the concluding chapter of the book the author attempts to reveal general and party-specific patterns of recruitment on the example of relevant political parties, and he concludes that the actual contribution of individual parties to the general pattern of recruitment varies. On the basis of empirical findings he is also able to formulate a conclusion about the party-specific pattern of recruitment as being the outcome of many years of internal party practices. At this point one might regret that the author limited himself to Romanian data, because it is cannot be determined whether this is actually something specific to particular Romanian political parties or a specificity of particular party families. In order to make such conclusions, however, the necessary international comparison is lacking.

The book represents a significant contribution to the knowledge about Romanian post-communist elites and it fills in the blank spot Romania previously represented on the map of research into this issue in post-communist Europe. But the book offers more than this. The author warrants praise for his solid theoretical interpretation of the issue, his good knowledge of the subject, and his ability to identify key problems and to grasp them empirically.

*Zdenka Mansfeldová*

**Michael D. Kennedy: *Cultural Formations of Post-Communism: Emancipation, Transition, Nation and War***

Minneapolis and London 2002: University of Minnesota Press, 369 pp.

That transition studies is still a valid and vibrant field is evident from the recent appearance of a number of interesting studies