

Les alliances politiques dans les médias audiovisuels de Roumanie

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Résumé : L'article met en exergue la manière dont les principales alliances (coalitions) politiques roumaines ont été constituées et ont été présentées dans les médias roumains pendant les vingt dernières années. Le texte se focalise également sur l'étude de l'implication des journalistes et des analystes politiques dans l'explication de ces événements. Quatre alliances politiques constituent le terrain d'analyse : CDR (Convention Démocrate de Roumanie), l'Alliance D.A. – Justice et Vérité (Parti National Liberal – Parti Démocrate), ACD – Alliance Centre Droite (Parti National Liberal – Parti Conservateur), l'Union Social Libérale (Parti Social-Démocrate – Parti National Liberal – Parti Conservateur).

Mots-clés : alliances politiques, les medias, personnalités politiques, contexte socio-politique, les idéologies politiques, démocratie, journalistes, mentalité, groupes politiques, manipulation, information, image

Presentation of political Alliances in the Romanian audiovisual media

Abstract: This material wishes to highlight the way in which the main political alliances have been formed in Romania in the last 20 years, as well as the way they

have been reflected in the media. Moreover, we have tried to analyze the involvement of journalists and political analysts in explaining these political events. The study will focus on four political alliances, namely: CDR (the Romanian Democratic Convention), D.A. (Y.E.S. - Justice and Truth between PNL – the National Liberal Party and PD - the Democratic Party), ACD (the Centre-Right Alliance between PNL and PC – the Conservative Party) and USL (the Social-Liberal Union between PSD – the Social Democrat Party, PNL and PC).

Keywords: political alliances, media, political, socio-political, political ideologies, democracy, journalists, mentality, political groups, manipulation, information, images

The media played a fundamental role in the events of December 1989, as well as in the 20 years since then, especially through the way it presented the social, economic and political reality of Romania's transition towards a pluralist and democratic society. By analyzing the political life in these 20 years we think that it was marked by the struggle for power of those involved. During this period the political struggle took place between various political parties, as well as between political parties and political alliances. From our point of view, after 1989 many Romanians became viewers, thinking, at least at the beginning of this period, in the objectivity of the information received through the visual media. Thus, media manipulations were able to have maximum relevance because, as we stated earlier, people believed what they saw on TV. Things slowly changed (more in the last 10 years) firstly due to the fact that Romanian audiences became more mature, secondly due to the way in which daily reality was and is reflected in the audiovisual media and thirdly due to the increasing number of Internet users, people stopped being as gullible as they were in the '90's. The present study wishes to analyze, through this 20-year transformation of Romanian mentality, how the post-1989 political life was reflected in the audiovisual media, referring exactly to the four great political alliances that succeeded one another in this time span, namely: the Romanian Democratic Convention, the D.A. Alliance (Justice and Truth), the Centre-Right Alliance (PNL-PC), and USL (the Social-Liberal Union. Besides these alliances which we will analyze there have been other political alliances during these 20 years, such as: USD (The Social-Democrat Union between PD (the Democratic Party) and PSDR – the Romanian Social-Democrat Party), the National Union PSD+PUR (the Romanian Humanist Party) or the PSD-PC Union, but from our point of view these did not have as great an impact on the collective mind set as the four we have mentioned before and, thus, we will focus on the analysis of the four: CDR, D.A., ACD and USL.

In this comparative study we will use the analytical descriptive method, as well as media observation and analysis. Our analysis will focus especially on the way these great political alliances were presented by the most important television channels (and also by the printed press), as well as on emphasizing the similarities or differences in reflection and perception of the political realities of the four alliances. In order to have a unitary vision on the political phenomenon into which they have crystallized, in order to compare these alliances, they will be analyzed according to the following parameters: social-political context, political figures, political ideologies the media that presented information on these alliances, famous journalists that have analyzed these alliances.

1. CDR 26. 11. 1991 – 2000

1.1. *Social-political context*

„The Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) was formed in 1991”¹ as a political entity capable of creating an opposition pole to the FSN (the National Rescue Front). The political party which was the driving force behind this alliance was the PNȚCD (the Christian-Democratic National Peasants' Party), the revival of the National Peasants' Party. The political circumstances in 1991 and 1992 were extremely complicated and dominated by the FSN, a political group so-called emanating from the 1989 revolution, which took power after Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu fled and which kept the old communist state structures long after the events of December 1989. The main method used by the party in power at the time, regarding state institutions, was renaming, not restructuring. In other words, the state structures remained the same (with the same people) but their names were changed. From our point of view, a gain for Romanian democracy was the reestablishment of the historical parties PNȚCD, PNL and „PSDR (Sergiu Cunescu’s splinter group)”². The Romanian Democratic Convention wanted to represent a political alternative to what the so called FSN state party was back then.

1.2. *Political figures*

Among the political figures that were representative for the CDR, appearing in the media of the time we mention: „Corneliu Coposu (president of the PNȚCD)”³,

¹ www.politicaromaneasca.ro/partidul_national_taranesc_crestin_democrat-270

² <http://www.revista22.ro/articol-6012.html>

³ <http://www.pntcd.eu/corneliu-coposu-o>

„Radu Câmpeanu (president of the PNL)”⁴, Sergiu Cunescu (president of the PSDR). Later, along with the above-mentioned political figures, representatives of the civil also appeared, such as: Doina Cornea (former anticommunist militant), Ana Blandiana (poet), Emil Constantinescu (rector of the Bucharest University), Zoe Petre (professor) and many others that formed the anti-FSN resistance core and that propelled CDR forward through their spirit and personality. As we have stated before these figures had a common idea, namely: the alternative to the FSN state-party and its policies.

1.3. *Political ideologies*

As we have stated before the basis of the CDR was the PNTCD, a centre-right (Christian-democrat) historical party. From our point of view, the political reality was the following: the FSN was a centre-left party that was promoting an 'enlightened socialism' policy. From the point of view of ideology and workings of the democratic system this power had to be counterbalanced by a contrary political vision, namely a centre-right one. This was the CDR, which from our point of view was built around the 'nonFSN' idea and was based on centre-right ideas, although it was joined by Sergiu Cunescu's PSDR which was essentially a social-democrat historical party.

1.4. *The Media*

In general the media were opposed to the party in power and were promoting a lot of information about the CDR. In the audiovisual media, news and other information about the CDR were promoted through the public television channel „(TVR1)”⁵, as well as through national, regional and local radio stations. Also, the political reactions of the CDR were debated in the pages of the most important newspapers of that time, such as: „Adevărul”⁶ or „România liberă”⁷. We have much more information on the Democratic Convention of Romania (the Romanian Democratic Convention became the Democratic Convention of Romania on 13.08.1996 while keeping the same acronym, CDR). In 1996 the CDR manages to change the first political shift in power in Romania after 1989 and forms a government together with the „USD (the Social-Democrat Union)”⁸ led by Petre

⁴ <http://www.pnl.ro/Public/Profil/153/RaduAntonCampeanu.html>

⁵ <http://www.tvr.ro>

⁶ <http://www.adevarul.ro/>

⁷ <http://www.romanioliberal.ro/>

⁸ <http://romania.ici.ro/ro/istorie/hi80.html>

Roman. In the same year the CDR candidate, Emil Constantinescu, becomes the president of Romania, winning the second round of elections against Ion Iliescu. During the 1996 election campaign the media widely covered aspects of the CDR's political vision, as well aspects of its political program. From our point of view, the CDR's portrayal in the media was mostly positive especially due to the subjects included in its program e.g.: democratization of state institutions, decentralization, increasing the living standard et., but also because of many mistakes made by the ruling party until 1996, mistakes that were punished by journalists. We think that, by informing the population, the media played an important role in the CDR winning the elections. We would also like to mention here one aspect related to the types of media. We can talk about private titles or titles that were on the course of being privatized in the printed media (newspapers and magazines), but not in the audiovisual media where there was only a public television channel. The first private television channel that was relevant at a national level was ProTV, which began airing on 1.12.1995.

1.5. *Journalists*

Among the most well known journalists that analyzed or wrote about the CDR phenomenon in the media there were: Ion Cristoiu, Petre Mihai Băcanu and Cristian Tudor Popescu.

2. The D.A. Alliance (Justice and Truth) 29.10.2003 - 05.04.2007

2.1. *Social-political context*

„The D.A. Alliance”⁹ was founded on 29.10. 2003. The social-political situation, as well the mentality in Romania were different from those in 1991. In 2000, because of the break-up of the CDR, a vacuum of political power was created in the centre-right and the PNL could not gather all the votes in this area. As a consequence of this phenomenon, as well as of a government that corroded the CDR (1996-2000), a come-back of centre-left parties could be noticed in the preferences of the electorate, namely for PDSR (the Social Democracy Party of Romania, which together with the Romanian Humanist Party formed the Social-Democrat Pole – PSD). The Social-Democrat Party was formed on 1.06.2001 through the merger of the PSDR (the Romanian Social-Democrat Party) and PDSR (the Social Democracy Party of Romania). As we stated before, the centre-left parties came back in power

⁹ <http://www.dapnl-pd.ro/presa.php>

in 2000 and the position of president of Romania was retaken by Ion Iliescu in the 2000 elections. As a consequence, in 2000 we witnessed the second shift in political power through free elections, a sign that democracy was developing more and more. The 2000-2004 period was one of consolidation of the PSD regarding the territorial and administrative areas, as well as regarding the political area. In that period the country was led by Adrian Năstase, a social-democrat prime minister. The consolidation of a political force like the PSD led to the weakening of the other political forces that looked for a solution in order to find a political counterbalance against the PSD. Thus, the idea of forming an alliance, which was called the D.A. (Y.E.S.) Alliance (Dreptate și Adevăr - Justice and Truth), was born. Basically the year 2003 marked the formation of two strong political poles in Romania, the PSD on one side and the D.A. Alliance on the other.

2.2. *Political figures*

Among the political figures of that time, that were noticed when the D.A. Alliance was born were: „Theodor Stolojan, president of the PNL”¹⁰ and „Traian Băsescu, president of the PD”¹¹. Theodor Stolojan had a very good image since the time when he was prime minister of Romania and at the time he was president of the only centre-right Romanian political party in the parliament (PNL). Traian Băsescu was the president of the PD (another opposition party in the parliament) and the mayor of the capital (Bucharest) and was considered to be the strongest voice of the opposition. Along with the two, the following politicians were noticed within the D.A. Alliance: Călin Popescu Tăriceanu (PNL), Ludovic Orban (PNL), Mona Muscă (PNL), Gheorghe Flutur (PNL), Vasile Blaga (PD), Adriean Videanu (PD), Radu Berceanu (PD). Along with these political figures, a large number of figures from the civil society were also noticed, such as: Alina Mungiu Pipidi, Mircea Dinescu, Mircea Cărtărescu, Andrei Pleșu, Renate Weber and others. On the other side, in the PSD camp two political figures stood out: Ion Iliescu and Adrian Năstase, and from the PUR (the Romanian Humanist Party), Dan Voiculescu.

2.3. *Political ideologies*

As we have stated, in 2004 we can speak of two political blocks, the PSD on one side and the D.A. Alliance on the other. As far as the PSD was concerned, it had a clear centre-left orientation. In the alliance we could witness an ideological anomaly which we will explain in the following: „the PNL had a clear centre-right

¹⁰ <http://www.stolojan.eu/pagina-detaliu/curriculum-vitae>

¹¹ 194.88.148.104/e7/df/83/c2/CV_Traian_Basescu.pdf

ideology”¹² and the PD a centre-left ideology. Despite this, the two parties set ideologies aside and formed the D.A. Alliance as a pole against the PSD, an alliance which was mostly perceived as a centre-right one, although it included the PD, a centre-left party, because the political program of the D.A. Alliance was mostly a centre-right one.

2.4. *The Media*

Hundreds of pages were written in all the national, regional and local newspapers and from our point of view this alliance was portrayed mostly positively rather than negatively in the media of that time. Among the newspapers with national coverage that wrote a great deal about the D.A. Alliance in the 2004 campaigns as well as in the following period we mention: *Adevărul*, „*Jurnalul Național*”¹³, *România liberă*, „*Evenimentul zilei*”¹⁴. Compared to the 1991-1996 period, in 2004 the spread of private media at a national level was much wider and due to this fact, the amount of information on the D.A. Alliance sent through the media was much larger compared to the CDR. In 2004 along „with PROTV”¹⁵, there were other channels that promoted political information, such as: „*Antena 1*”¹⁶, „*Realitatea T.V.*”¹⁷, „*OTV*”¹⁸, „*B1 TV*”¹⁹ and others. Along with private stations, political information was also promoted by the two public television channels TVR1, TVR2 through news shows or through other shows. From our point of view, a feature of political shows of that time was represented by the televised non-debate. In other words, Traian Băsescu was not in the same shows as Adrian Năstase, but separately. During that period, apart from the election campaign, another event received a lot of attention from the media, namely: Traian Băsescu replacing Teodor Stolojan as the D.A. Alliance presidential candidate. We can consider this event as being a media boom. The same can be said about the last television show between the two presidential candidates: Traian Băsescu and Adrian Năstase, a show hosted by Cristian Tudor Popescu. After Traian Băsescu won the presidential elections in 2004, the D.A. Alliance came to power, events that were very present in the media of that time.

¹² <http://www.pnl.ro/>

¹³ <http://www.jurnalul.ro/>

¹⁴ <http://www.evz.ro/index.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.protv.ro/>

¹⁶ <http://www.a1.ro/>

¹⁷ <http://www.realitatea.net/>

¹⁸ <http://www.otv.com.ro/>

¹⁹ <http://www.b1.ro/>

2.5. *Journalists*

Among the important journalists that analyzed the phenomenon created by the D.A. Alliance we can name the following: Cristian Tudor Popescu, Ion Cristoiu, Sorin Roșca Stănescu, Marius Tucă, as well as political show hosts especially those from the public TV stations, but also those from the private ones: Antena 1 and Realitatea TV. Among political analysts we can distinguish several names that, from our point of view, were important: Cristian Tudor Popescu, Emil Hurezeanu, Iosif Boda, Dan Pavel and others.

Unlike the CDR period, the D.A. Alliance period was represented not only by an informational explosion, but also by the media and the public becoming more mature. Political arguments and programs started to have an ever more increasing role for the electorate. From our point of view, the massive vote received by the PSD in the 2004 elections was due more to the fact that this party was in power, as well as to the very powerful territorial structures of this party. In the meanwhile, the vote given to the D.A. Alliance and implicitly to Traian Băsescu was due to the image that the alliance, as well as its candidate had in the printed and audiovisual media. Thus, we would like to emphasize, in the case of the D.A. Alliance, the important role that the media had in creating the image of political actors, an image that was decisive in regard to the result of the 2004 parliamentary and presidential elections.

3. **ACD the Centre-Right Alliance PNL-PC and USL (the Social-Liberal Union)**

3.1. *Social-political context*

Each government has its characteristics, and the Boc government is no exception. The alliance that we will analyze in the following was formed in January 2011, seven years after the creation of the D.A. Alliance and 20 years after the creation of the CDR. The first aspect that we wish to emphasize concerning the social-political context of the year 2011 is represented by the Romanian electorate becoming more mature and by the diversification, modernization and development of the media. As predicted, after 2004 the PD, transformed into „PDL (the Democrat Liberal Party)”²⁰, became more and more powerful (despite the government interruption) due to frictions with the PNL. In 2008 the PDL came back in power together with the PSD. The 2009 presidential elections divide the two parties, with the PDL staying in power. 2009 also brought Traian Băsescu's victory in the

²⁰ <http://www.pdl.org.ro/>

presidential elections and the beginning of his new term at the Cotroceni palace. In 2010 the government was still led by Emil Boc (president of the PDL) and the PDL was still in a government alliance with the „UDMR (the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania)”²¹, a government that was supported in the parliament by the „UNPR (the National Union for the Progress of Romania – a centre-left party)”²², which was formed by independent members of parliament or members of parliament that came from other political parties (especially from the PSD), and was also supported by members of national minorities, other than the Hungarian minority. The situation of the government in 2011 is similar, with Emil Boc as prime minister, supported by the political set-up that we have previously described. The 2010 political year brought a lot of social convulsions because of the government's policy and also brought a lot of discontentment felt by citizens, which came as a reaction to the government's unpopular measures. This discontentment was a reason for the opposition to call for the parliamentary method of replacing the government through a non-confidence motion. The non-confidence motions did not pass the vote in the parliament and the same government stayed in power. Inspired by this reality, the political parties in the opposition came to the conclusion that they can be more relevant to the population united in an alliance than separately. This idea of the opposition was carried out in two steps or two stages. The first step in assembling the opposition was taken with the signing of the protocol between the presidents of the PNL and the „PC (Conservative Party)”²³ on 10.01 2011 and creation of the ACD (the Centre-Right Alliance). This was followed by the second step with the signing of the protocol between the ACD and the PSD on 05.02.2011 (between the PNL, the PSD and the PC respectively). Thus, 2011 brings again an alliance between two different ideologies: the ACD, centre-right and „PSD (Social Democrat Party), centre-left in the Romanian political spectrum”²⁴, thus validating the same idea in Romania, just like in 1991 and 2003, that the driving force behind political alliances is not ideology, but rather that the core of political alliances is the excessive administrative power of the parties in power.

3.2. Political figures

Among the political figures of the ACD we enumerate the following: Crin Antonescu (PNL), Daniel Constantin (president of the PC). The creation of this alliance also had negative reactions from leading figures of the PNL, who did not

²¹ <http://www.udmr.ro/>

²² <http://www.unpr.eu/>

²³ <http://www.partidulconservator.ro/>

²⁴ <http://www.psd.ro/>

agree with this tactic, namely: Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, Ludovic Orban and Varujan Vozganian.

As far as the USL is concerned we think that along with the political figures mentioned before, other political figures were present in the media, especially political figures of the PSD and the PNL, such as: Puiu Hașoti (PNL), Relu Fenechiu (PNL), Victor Ponta (PSD), Marian Vanghelie (PSD), Ion Iliescu (PSD), Petre Roman (PNL), Adrian Năstase(PSD) and others.

The party in power strongly criticized the creation of this union through Emil Boc, Vasile Blaga and Elena Udrea. Emil Boc called the USL: 'The populist-socialist union that supports the state created by Ion Iliescu'.

3.3. *Political ideologies*

From an ideological point of view we can speak about the ACD in terms of an alliance between two parties: the PNL (with a centre-right vision) and the PC (with a more centre focused vision). As the name describes it, this is a centre-right alliance.

Referring to the USL (the Social-Liberal Union) we have a clear gathering of two different ideological blocks, namely the ACD on one side (formed by the PNL and the PC), with a centre-right vision and on the other side the PSD with a centre-left vision.

3.4. *The Media*

As we have stated before, the Romanian media became very developed in the last 20 years. Regarding political television shows we think that there are two important television channels, namely „Antena 3”²⁵ and Realitatea TV. The two television stations declare themselves as being independent. Despite this, especially in the last two years of government it was noticeable that the format of the shows on the two channels was attacking rather than supporting the government and Traian Băsescu. Although the manner of the shows is kept within the boundaries of objectivity, it is extremely cleverly designed regarding the way the themes are being presented. This way of presenting the themes is not in favour of the government or the president Traian Băsescu. We came to these conclusions after watching during these two years hundreds of shows on the two channels. Despite this, the presentation of the Centre-Right Alliance, was far from being as resounding as the one that the D.A. Alliance was in its time. We think that this was due to the fact that the moment of creation of this alliance was overshadowed by other events related to

²⁵ <http://www.antena3.ro/>

the drop in the population's living standard or the recalculation of the military pensions etc.

If the ACD did not enjoy a powerful presentation in the media things were completely different regarding the USL. On 05.02.2011 all the creation process of the alliance was presented on news shows and especially on talk shows on Realitatea TV and Antena 3.

Regarding the development of media communication we would like to draw attention on the Internet, on the parties' websites, but also on the increasing number of online editions of newspapers at a regional, local and national level. In other words, the Internet plays and will play an ever increasing role in reflecting aspects of the Romanian political life.

3.5. Journalists

As we have said, the creation of the Centre-Right Alliance did not have great media relevance, but despite this event was presented on news shows of the main television channels (Antena 3, ProTV, Realitatea TV etc.) and the journalists that promoted this event were the presenters or the hosts of those shows.

The creation of the USL was presented in greater detail by the two television channels Realitatea TV and Antena 3, and among the presenters or political analysts we mention: Emil Hurezeanu, Mugur Ciuvică, Doru Viorel Ursu, Oana Stancu, Ema Zeicescu, Andreea Crețulescu, Alessandra Stoicescu, Dana Grecu, Radu Tudor, Mihai Gâdea and others.

Conclusions

The first conclusion regarding our analysis refers to the way in which post-1989 political alliances were created, namely: these were formed because of the exaggerated consolidation or strengthening of the parties in power and not on the basis of ideology or doctrine. In other words, the ideologies of the parties were of little importance. Also, we think that the post-1989 political alliances were circumstantial, rather wanting to tear down the party in power (although their discourse and program were presented as for the good of the people), which is why they were not very solid and broke-up in a relatively short while. The break-up of the first two political alliances was due to frictions that appeared between the founding parties, after they took power. This makes us wonder: is it power that divides and lack of power that unites? From our point of view, the answer to this question is 'yes'.

As far as figures being depicted in the media during the formation of these political alliances, a lot was based on the presidents of the political parties that formed the alliances. But there are two political figures that were present in the media during the formation of all the four political alliances that we have analyzed in this material, namely: Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman.

Regarding the media we think that this was intensely involved in the detailed presentation of the birth of these political alliances, as well as of their development. An extremely important aspect related to the media and the twenty-year period since the events of December 1989 is their development, improvement and diversification and we wish to make special mention of the online media.

Regarding journalists and political analysts, we think that they were always close to the political phenomenon, having rather positive views in the moment of creation of the previously mentioned political alliances. In this case we refer to the titans of Romanian journalism as well as the most important political analysts of the times.

We would like to end this material by gladly saying that certainly, no matter the degree of objectivity (smaller or larger), with which political events were presented in Romania during the 20 years since December '89, the media fulfilled and continues to professionally fulfil the role of 'guardian of democracy'.

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