

SOCIAL ACTORS IN A POLITICAL GAME. THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL ELITE AND DEMOCRATIZATION, 1989-2000.

*Irina Culic***

Abstract

There are many factors accounting for the success and form of the transition to democracy. The present study examines the role of the political elite in the process of democratization and democratic consolidation for the case of Romania (1989-2000). It focuses on the structure and social composition of the Romanian political elite, pointing to its disunity and lack of integration and explaining how they have affected its political performance. For the purposes of this research, the elite was operationalized as comprising the members of the successive Parliaments. The case of Hungary is considered as a basis for comparison for the first post-communist legislature in order to understand the qualitative difference in relatively similar findings of elite fragmentation and communist elite reproduction. The smoother political transition to democracy involving actual political plurality and the practice of negotiation, the clear link between the political parties and the social groups and interests within the society they represented, and the more institutionalized political space made Hungary a more effective democracy, at least in terms of parliamentary activity.

Keywords: democratization, elites, elite cleavages, political parties, voting behavior

* Irina Culic is a lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology, Babes-Bolyai, Cluj