



ORIGINAL PAPER

Romania's Democratic Consolidation in the Last Decade

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Abstract

The assumption of the paper is that (a) in comparison with the previous decade, Romania's degree of democratic consolidation did not significantly changed, it still reflecting problems in terms of the rule of law, control of corruption, effective formal and informal institutionalization and behavior of actors, government accountability mechanisms; (b) in comparison with other post-communist new democracies, at present European Union's member states, Romania ranks in the class of apparently consolidated liberal democracies. As such, the paper focuses on (a) the category of democratic consolidation, on the five concepts of democratic consolidation – the avoidance of a democratic disintegration, the avoidance of a democratic erosion, institutionalization of democracy, the completion of democracy and the deepening of democracy –, and especially on the distinctions achieved by Guillermo O'Donnell between the informally and formally institutionalized countries; (b) the measurement of Romania's democratic consolidation in the last decade in comparison with other new democracies, former communist countries; (c) the classification and interpretation of the results.

Keywords: *procedural democracy, substantive democracy, electoral democracy, liberal democracy, democracy formal and informal institutionalization, democratic consolidation*

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Democratic consolidation

The democratic consolidation is one of the most relevant indicators of the positive evolution of all types of democratic regimes. It is even more important for the European countries, exponents of the “third wave of democratization” occurred in the early 1990s, inasmuch as there is still much confusion as respects the identity of their types of political regimes, particularly regarding the semi-presidentialism – the political regime of Romania and another twelve Central and Eastern European countries –, and the functioning mode of power in these types of regimes. The “consolidation” of a liberal democracy is considered the subsequent stage of what is generally called in the literature the “transition” stage from totalitarianism or authoritarianism to democracy, the both stages representing the “democratization” – the overall process of regime change from beginning to end (Pridham and Vanhanen, 2003: 2) with “a multilevel or multidimensional” dynamics (Pridham, 2000: 4) as well as its outcome. If the “democratic transition” circumscribes the regime change from the point when the previous totalitarian/authoritarian system begins to collapse until the situation in which, with a new constitution, “the democratic structures become routinized and the political elites adjust their behaviour to liberal democratic norms”, the “democratic consolidation” – a lengthier process, with wider and possibly deeper effects – “involves in the first instance the gradual removal of the uncertainties that invariably surround transition and then the full institutionalization of the new democracy, the internalization of its rules and procedures and the dissemination of democratic values” (Pridham and Vanhanen, 2003: 3). If the “incipient democracies” come to be “stuck in transition” and do not succeed in establishing consolidated and functioning democratic regimes, they can become “illiberal” (Zakaria, 1997), “delegative” (O’Donnell, 1996), or “hybrid” regimes (Diamond, 2002), namely “ambiguous systems that combine rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially illiberal or even authoritarian traits” (Ottaway, 2003, apud Menocal et al., 2008: 30).

As such, fundamental to democratization studies (to “transitology and consolidology”) is the major divide between the *formal or procedural* conception on democracy and the *substantive* conception on democracy. Regarding the *formal or procedural democracy*, the most influential presentation is considered (Pridham, 2000: 4) Dahl’s concept of “polyarchy.” It stands as reference descriptor for “the democratized regimes” or “the regimes that have been substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation” (Dahl, 1971: 8). Dahl defined the polyarchy as “a kind of regime” “in which power and authority over public matters are distributed among a plurality of organizations and associations that are relatively autonomous in relation to one another and in many cases in relation to the government of the state as well” (Dahl, 1984: 237), a type of regime that has as key characteristic “the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals” (Dahl, 1971: 1). According to Dahl, in order for a government to be responsive to the preferences of its citizens there are necessary three conditions: “all full citizens must have unimpaired opportunities to formulate their preferences,” “to signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective actions” and “to have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of the government” (Dahl, 1971: 2). Dahl’s assumption was that for these three opportunities to exist among a large number of people “the institutions of the society must provide at least eight guarantees”: freedom to form and join organization, freedom of

expression, right to vote, eligibility for public office, right of political leaders to complete for support and votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections, institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference (Dahl, 1971: 3). The renowned American author considered also that these eight guarantees “might be fruitfully interpreted as constituting two somehow different theoretical dimension of democratization”: (1) the extent of permissible opposition, public contestation, or political competition and (2) the right to participate in public contestation (Dahl, 1971: 4), the right to vote in free and fair elections partaking of both dimensions. In contradistinction, the *substantive democracy* “goes beyond” the *formal democracy* “in demanding key areas in which the quality of democracy may be tested” and consolidated by regulating the power relations in order to “maximize the opportunities for individuals to influence debates about the key decisions that affect society” (Pridham, 2000: 4). As such, in relation to the democratic consolidation of the “new polyarchies” O’Donnell considered that “other attributes need to be added to Dahl’s list” (O’Donnell, 1996: 35). So, in the case of various newly democratized countries the democratic consolidation is defined as *institutionalization* of the intermittent elections and of the complex organizations, basically the Executive, Parliament, parties, and the judiciary, highly formalized by detailed and explicit rules (O’Donnell, 1996: 34-35). A fully *formal institutionalization* – of the rules and institutions – is considered as being realized when the behavior of the individuals in institutions and of the individuals interacting with institutions *fits with the rules*. As Philippe Schmitter pointed out, the democracy institutionalization represents “the ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ order”, the structuring, routinization, stabilization of patterns of interaction and of constant and autonomic institutions in relation to the changes brought about from outside (Schmitter, 1988: 10). Essentially, the democracy institutionalization represents “the internalization” or “appropriation” at institutional and inter-individual levels of a democratic motivating behavior. Generically, the *formal* institutionalization is parallel with a highly *informal* institutionalization – of some influential rules, of a permanent and pervasive *particularism* or *clientelism*. The *particularism* represents various forms of “non-universalistic relationship, ranging from hierarchical particularistic exchanges, patronage, cronyism, and favors to actions that, under the formal rules of the institutional package of polyarchy, would be considered corrupt” (O’Donnell, 1996: 40). The *corrupt character of particularism*, of the concepts and practices (neo-patrimonial and delegative) of political leading is determined by the violation of an essential principle of the formal institutionalization of polyarchies, namely the observance of the “normative, legal and behavioral distinction between public and private spheres,” by the infringement of the “universalistic orientation of a version of public good” by those who have leading roles in the state institutions. The *consolidation* occurs when democracy “becomes the only game in town” (Linz, 1990: 156), when the particularism is not an important part of the regime, when is prevented any caesaristic, plebiscitarian Executive which erodes “the horizontal accountability” of powers, favours the generalized lack of control, authoritarian practices, and bias in favor of highly organized and economically powerful interests. According to Schmitter, the consolidation involves the process of converting patterns into structures (Schmitter, 1988: 32-33) or of converting “the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions... into relationships that are reliably known, regularly practiced and normatively accepted by those persons or collectivities defined as the participants/citizens/ subjects of such institutions” (Schneider and Schmitter, nd: 5). This transforming ensures “channels of access, patterns of

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inclusion, resources for action and norms about decision-making conform to one overriding standard” of citizenship (Schneider and Schmitter, nd: 5). In a more systematic defining, the four analytical levels of a theory of democratic consolidation (explanatory model) are considered to be: (1) *constitutional consolidation* or the macrolevel – the level of structures and constitutionally established institutions: the head of state, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and the electoral system; (2) *representative consolidation* or the mesolevel of collective actors – parties and interest groups; (3) *behavioral consolidation* or the second mesolevel – the level of informal political actors, “the potentially political ones”: the armed forces, major land owners, capital, business, and radical movements and groups with potential veto power which can pursue their interests either inside, or outside, or against democratic norms and institutions; (4) *democratic consolidation of the political culture* or the micro-level, the citizens and their culture as the socio-cultural substructure of democracy (Merkel, 2008: 14). In a teleological perspective, the defining of the democratic consolidation includes five concepts: avoiding democratic breakdown, avoiding democratic erosion, institutionalizing democracy, completing democracy, and deepening democracy. The first two, “negative concepts,” variants of “negative” consolidation or states of “non-consolidation” – in O’Donnell’s inspired terms, “*rapid deaths*” of democracy and “*slow deaths*” (“*salient regressions*”) of democracy – express “the democratic survival,” avoidance of regressions and democratic stability. If “the *rapid death*” is identified with the classical coup politics, “the *slow death*” is described as “a progressive diminution of existing spaces for the exercise of civilian power and the effectiveness of the classic guarantees of liberal constitutionalism” (O’Donnell, 1992: 19), as a “slow and at times opaque” (O’Donnell, 1992: 19) “process of successive authoritarian advances” (O’Donnell, 1992: 33), “a silent regressions” which in the end would lead to a *democradura*, a repressive façade democracy (O’Donnell, 1992: 19, 33, apud Schedler, 1997: 15-16). Schedler states that, subsequent to the publication of O’Donnell’s article, the reality has ironically shown that “quite some new democracies do not face the danger any more of retroceding to semidemocratic rule – because it is there were they have moved to already” (Schedler, 1997: 16). The Austrian author also cites Samuel Huntington’s assertion that with contemporary neo-democracies, “the problem is not overthrow but erosion: the intermittent or gradual weakening of democracy by those elected to lead it,” for instance, by “executive led-coups” (Schedler, 1997: 16). The last two concepts – completing democracy, and deepening democracy – “positive notions” indicate “the democratic progress” and the advances in the *quality of democracy* (Schedler, 1997: 10-11). Specifically, the positive formulations of democratic consolidation indicate that the purpose is the obtaining of continuity, permanence, strengthening, sustainability and irreversibility of democracy. The deepening of democracy, as ended transition from the *electoral to liberal democracy*, appears as being the stage of democracy wherein “all the protagonists, institutional (e.g. the presidency, the government, parliament) as well as political (e.g. parties and the party system), have achieved significant political stability”, the decision-making is effective, exists a fair amount of agreement among the political elites and “there is no undemocratic challenge by significant political actors against the rules of the game” (Pasquino, 2007: 23-24).

On the methods employed to measure the democratic consolidation

The decantation of the degree of democratization and democratic consolidation in Romania follows some of the methods employed in the recent decades in the Western

reference research, namely (1) the quantitative measurement, description and analysis, and (2) the comparative analysis. Given the aim of the paper, to measure the variation of democratic consolidation over a decade in the same country and to analyse it by reference to the variation across the region – the countries found in the same type of evolving process –, the quantitative analysis employs empirical indicators and scales provided by renowned statistical research institutions assessed in the literature as accurate, non-deficient and non-distorting. Since the process of democratic consolidation, consistently conceptualized, is much less operationalized in the literature (V. Schneider and Schmitter, nd.: 1), in order to avoid the imprecision in the operationalization of the democratic consolidation process, the paper selects and correlates the indicator of several measurements and their scores. The first method of measurement used in the paper order is that proposed by Carsten Q. Schneider and Philippe Schmitter, a strategy that measures and analyzes the consolidation of democracy in six Central and Eastern European countries between 1980 and 1999 using data matrix of *Economist Intelligence Unit* (EIU). The measurement of democratic consolidation is related by that of the liberalization of autocracy and with the modes of the transition to democracy. The scales obtained are relevant both for the pace of the two democratic processes and for the similarity of their degree of success. The illustration of the variation of democratic consolidation degree in the last decade is obtained by using, as a second method, several parallel measurements covering the interval 2013-2016 and sixteen Central and South-Eastern European countries. The measurements are selected from the annual reports of *Freedom House*, *Bertelsmann Stiftung*, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, *World Bank Global Democracy Ranking* and, more comprehensive, *Worldwide Governance Indicators*. The analysis of their ratings involves not only the comparison of the scores of temporal democratic consolidation but also those of national and zonal one. The third method employed in this democratic consolidation research is a strategy of measuring the public perceptions and attitudes over the legitimacy of the regime and the fundamental institutions and values of democracy, as are recorded in barometers of public opinion. The paper presents data, retrieved from *World Values Survey Wave 6* and *Standard Eurobarometer*, regarding the confidence in government, political parties, parliament, churches, armed forces, press and justice system of the Romanian public and, for comparison, of the other nine Central and South-Eastern European publics, as well as the attitudes of Romanians towards Romanian political system.

Measuring democratic consolidation

I. A comprehensive strategy for measuring the democratic consolidation is that proposed by Carsten Q. Schneider and Philippe Schmitter. The components of democratization are measured by 12 indicators that capture especially the behavior of political actors, aiming the structural aspects of the exercise of power, the rules of executive forming and of sharing decision-making powers with local authorities, the formal and informal agreement on the rules of associations forming and social movements behavior, the rules which establish the property right and the access to media. This survey uses the data matrix of *Economist Intelligence Unit* (EIU), presenting the scores on the 12 items as a comparative analysis of the Liberalization of Autocracy (LoA) and the Consolidation of Democracy (CoD) in six Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries – the Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, **Romania** and Slovakia. Schneider's and Schmitter's complex strategy of measurement is to relate the consolidation of democracy (CoD) scale with the liberalization of autocracy (LoA) scale and with the

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“intermediate” scale for measuring the characteristics of the mode of transition (MoT). According to the cumulative LoA scores, Romania, as well as Bulgaria, came with little or no evidence of liberalization prior to 1989, but “once the process started, the countries very quickly attained a full score of 7” and “by the end of period, all of the CEE countries had converged upon the same ‘perfect’ score” (Schneider and Schmitter, nd.: 18). According to the raw scores of the MoT, Romania “fits the syndrome” of “**successful imposed transition** in which no public negotiations with opponents took place, some open factionalism within the ruling elite was acknowledged and all the electoral items were positive” (Schneider and Schmitter, nd.: 21), Hungary and Poland being the only countries with “**successful pacted transitions**” and Bulgaria with a “**less successful pacted transition**”.

Table 1. The Twelve Items of the Consolidation of Democracy Scale

C-1	No significant political party advocates major changes in the existing constitution
C-2	Regular elections are held and their outcomes respected by public authority and major opposition parties
C-3	They have been free and fair
C-4	No significant parties or groups reject previous electoral conditions
C-5	Electoral volatility has diminished significantly
C-6	Elected official and representatives not constrained in their behavior by non-elected veto group within countries
C-7	1st rotation-in-power or significant shift in alliances of parties occurred within the rules established
C-8	2nd rotation-in-power or significant shift in alliances of par/ties occurred within the rules established
C-9	Agreement, formal and informal, on association formation and behavior
C-10	Agreement, formal and informal, on executive format
C-11	Agreement, formal and informal, on territorial division of competence
C-12	Agreement, formal and informal, on rules of ownership and access to media

Source: Schneider, C. Q. and Schmitter Ph. C. (nd), Conceptualizing and Measuring the Liberalization of Autocracy and the Consolidation of Democracy across Regions of the World and from Different Points of Departure, 12 (Figure 3). Retrieved from: <http://www.eui.eu/Documents/DepartmentsCentres/SPS/Profiles/Schmitter/Salamanca2.pdf>

The temporal interval in which the democratic consolidation is measured is between 1980 and 2000, and the evaluation score falls between 1 – equivalent of the full fulfillment of any indicator – and 0 (zero) – when the indicator is not fulfilled.

Table 2. The Cumulative Consolidation of Democracy Scores for All Items: Central and Eastern Europe (1980-1999)

	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00
Poland	0	3	5	75	85	9	95	9	95	10	11	11	93
Hungary	0	1	65	65	65	65	9	9	10	10	11	11	87
Czech	0	0	65	75	8	8	85	85	9	9	105	10	855
Bulgaria	0	0	5	8	75	6	8	10	10	75	105	105	83
Slovakia	0	0	75	75	75	75	75	75	8	8	105	105	82
Romania	0	0	3	55	7	7	7	7	105	105	105	105	785

Source: Schneider, C. Q. and Schmitter Ph. C. (nd), Conceptualizing and Measuring the Liberalization of Autocracy and the Consolidation of Democracy across Regions of the World and from Different Points of Departure, 23. Retrieved from: <http://www.eui.eu/Documents/DepartmentsCentres/SPS/Profiles/Schmitter/Salamanca2.pdf>

The findings confirm the expectation that a rank-order correlation exists between the aggregate LoA and CoD scores. As such, not all the countries that had been most successful in liberalization did also best in the consolidation of their democracies. Hungary illustrates this situation. Contrariwise, Bulgaria illustrates the case of a more success democratization than liberalization. Romania, as well as Czech Republic and Slovakia, are cases of consistency both in liberalization of autocracy and in consolidation of democracy. Romania occupies in this six countries scale the last place for the interval 1980-1999, but its scores for the last four years of the interval are constant high – 10.5. II. Another strategy is the comparative measuring of the transition from the electoral democracy to the liberal democracy, and therefore of the degree of democratic consolidation expressed by different criteria: the compliance of the rights and civil freedoms; the rule of law; the balance and control of public authorities; the institutionalization of the party system; the functionality of public institutions. This type of measuring uses annual reports of certain specialized institutions such as: *Freedom House*, *Bertelsmann Stiftung*, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, or *World Bank Global Democracy Ranking*. In the following, there are presented some findings of these surveys for the interval 2013-2016.

Table 3. Indicators of the Current State of Democracy in Central and South-Eastern European Countries in *Freedom House's* and *Bertelsmann Stiftung's* Ratings

Country	Freedom House Rating				Bertelsmann (Political) Transformation Index (value)		
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2012	2014	2016
Albania	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	7.25	6.70	6.95
Bosnia and	3.0	3.5	3.5	4.0↓	6.40	6.35	6.30
Bulgaria	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.65	8.35	8.15
Czech Republic	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.0	9.65	9.60	9.45
Croatia	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.5	8.40	8.45	8.40
Estonia	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.55	9.70	9.70
Hungary	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.5↓	8.35	7.95	7.60
Latvia	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.5↑	8.80	8.75	8.75
Lithuania	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.35	9.25	9.30
Macedonia	3.0	3.5	3.5	3.5	7.60	7.20	6.65
Montenegro	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0↓	7.60	7.90	7.85
Poland	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.5↓	9.20	9.50	9.50
ROMANIA	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.55	7.90	8.15
Serbia	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.5↓	8.05	7.95	7.85
Slovakia	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.00	9.05	8.85
Slovenia	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	9.65	9.30	9.20

Sources: *Freedom in the World 2017*, 20-24. Retrieved from: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf
Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformations Index. Retrieved from: <https://www.btproject.org/en/index/status-index/>

Freedom House Rating (FHR) expresses the average between political rights (PR) and civil liberties (CL); 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. *Freedom House Rating* indicated as having as country's status in 2016 the "electoral democracy" all the 15 Baltic, Balkan and Central European countries, except Macedonia, as

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“consolidated democracies” Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia; as “semi-consolidated democracies” Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, **Romania**, Serbia; as “transitional governments or hybrid regimes” Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia. *Bertelsmann Democracy Status or State of political transformation* (BT) evaluates – maximum being 10 – the stateness, political participation, rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, political and social integration. According to *Bertelsmann Democracy Status 2016*, “democracies in consolidation” are Estonia, Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Latvia, **Romania**, Croatia, Bulgaria; and “defective democracies” Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 4. Indicators of the Current State of Democracy in Central and South-Eastern European Countries in *Economist Intelligence Unit's* and *Global Democracy's* Ratings

Country	Economist Intelligence Unit Index of Democracy					Global Democracy ranking 15 December 2015		
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total score 2010-2011	Total score 2013-2014	Rank Change loss /gain
Albania	5.67 hybrid	5.91 hybrid	5.67 hybrid	5.91 hybrid	5.92 hybrid	57.2	59.7	+3
Bosnia & Herzegovina	5.11 hybrid	5.78 hybrid	4.78 hybrid	4.83 hybrid	4.87 hybrid	51.5	51.5	-4
Bulgaria	6.72	7.10	7.37	7.14	7.01	64.4	65.0	0
Croatia	6.93	7.04	6.93	6.93	6.75	67.8	67.6	+1
Czech Republic	8.19 full	8.17 full	7.94	7.94	7.82	70.7	71.3	-1
Estonia	7.61	7.74	7.74	7.85	7.85	71.9	74.5	+3
Hungary	6.96	7.53	6.90	6.84	6.72	68.1	67.6	-2
Latvia	7.05	7.37	7.48	7.37	7.31	69.0	71.2	+2
Lithuania	7.24	7.43	7.54	7.54	7.47	70.2	71.8	+5
Macedonia	6.16	6.33	6.25	6.02	5.23 hybrid	54.8	54.4	-10
Montenegro	6.05	6.57	5.94 hybrid	6.01	5.72			
Poland	7.12	7.30	7.47	7.09	6.83	70.3	71.3	0
ROMANIA	6.54	7.06	6.68	6.68	6.62	63.7	64.5	-1
Serbia	6.33	6.62	6.71	6.71	6.57	60.4	61.2	+2
Slovakia	7.35	7.40	7.35	7.29	7.29	67.9	68.3	+2
Slovenia	7.88	7.96 full	7.57	7.57	7.51	74.2	76.1	+1

Sources: *Economist Intelligence Unit Index of Democracy*. Retrieved from: http://pages.eiu.com/rs/783-XMC-194/images/Democracy_Index_2016.pdf

Global Democracy: The Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy. Retrieved from: http://democracyranking.org/ranking/2015/data/Scores_of_the_Democracy_Ranking_2015_letter.pdf

Economist Intelligence Unit Index of Democracy (EIU) is based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. Based on their scores on a range of 60 indicators within these categories, each country is classified – on a scale of 0 to 10 – as

one of four types of regime: “full democracies” (8-10), “flawed democracies” (6-8), “hybrid regimes” (4-6), and “authoritarian regimes” (0-4). In compliance with *Economist Intelligence Unit Index of Democracy* 2015 and 2016, there are not “full democracies” among recently democratized countries. There are indicated as “flawed democracies” Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, **Romania**, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, and as “hybrid democracies”: Albania and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

The Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy (Global Democracy rankings 2010-2011 & 2013-2014) weighs the following political variables: Political rights (Freedom House, 25%), Civil liberties (Freedom House, 25%), Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 25%), Press freedom (Freedom House, 10%), Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 10%), Change of the head of government (last 13 years, peaceful, 2.5%), Political party change of the head of government (last 13 years, peaceful, 2.5%). Each variable averages high/100.0 and low/1.0, except Press freedom in which averages high 1.0 and low 100.0. In the table: **green**: indicates “Within the highest third of all countries,” **blue**: indicates “Within the medium third of all countries,” **red**: indicates “Within the lowest third of all countries”. In *Rank Change*: *loss/gain* are indicated with **green** “Country has gained in rank since the previous period”: Albania, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia; with **red** “Country has lost in rank since the previous period”: Bosnia & Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, **Romania**; and with white “Country’s rank has remained stable over the two periods”: Bulgaria and Poland.

Table 5. Central and South-Eastern European Countries’ Current State of Democracy in Worldwide Governance Indicators

Country	Worldwide Governance Indicators											
	Voice & Accountability				Rule of Law				Control of corruption			
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015
Albania	0.00	0.04	0.16	0.16	-0.57	-0.57	-0.37	-0.36	-0.72	-0.72	-0.55	-0.44
Bosnia & Herzegovina	-0.14	-0.16	-0.09	-0.11	-0.23	-0.17	-0.20	-0.29	-0.30	-0.22	-0.28	-0.37
Bulgaria	0.38	0.32	0.34	0.39	-0.12	-0.14	-0.08	-0.12	-0.24	-0.29	-0.28	-0.31
Croatia	0.50	0.47	0.49	0.50	0.21	0.26	0.31	0.20	-0.04	0.11	0.19	0.20
Czech Republic	0.94	0.96	1.03	1.02	1.01	1.00	1.14	1.12	0.23	0.19	0.32	0.39
Estonia	1.09	1.09	1.17	1.17	1.13	1.16	1.36	1.33	0.98	1.11	1.27	1.25
Hungary	0.74	0.73	0.54	0.52	0.60	0.56	0.50	0.40	0.28	0.29	0.13	0.10
Latvia	0.74	0.74	0.83	0.82	0.76	0.75	0.87	0.79	0.15	0.26	0.34	0.40
Lithuania	0.91	0.92	0.96	0.97	0.81	0.79	0.91	0.98	0.31	0.36	0.48	0.56
Macedonia	-0.01	-0.04	-0.13	-0.18	-0.24	-0.20	-0.03	-0.17	0.02	0.02	0.09	-0.13
Montenegro	0.23	0.18	0.18	0.15	-0.01	0.02	0.07	0.03	-0.10	-0.25	-0.01	-0.09
Poland	1.04	0.97	1.10	1.04	0.74	0.79	0.82	0.80	0.58	0.55	0.59	0.58
ROMANIA	0.30	0.29	0.38	0.43	0.02	0.11	0.15	0.15	-0.26	-0.19	-0.14	-0.05
Serbia	0.18	0.29	0.23	0.23	-0.39	-0.34	-0.16	0.09	-0.31	-0.27	-0.19	-0.24
Slovakia	0.95	0.94	0.98	0.97	0.46	0.45	0.47	0.48	0.07	0.06	0.12	0.15
Slovenia	0.98	0.98	0.95	0.95	0.98	0.97	0.98	0.95	0.81	0.70	0.69	0.73

Source: *Worldwide Governance Indicators*. Retrieved from: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#reports>

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Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) represent “one of the largest compilations of cross-country data on governance publicly available” (“a survey of surveys approach”). They are aggregates of various perception-based indices (“unobserved components model”), of several hundred individual underlying variables, taken from 35 data sources from 33 organizations around the world. They “capture perceptions of fundamental governance concepts” and report on six key dimensions of governance: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, Control of Corruption. In this paper there are selected only three of them: *Voice and Accountability*, which “captures perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association and a free media”, *Rule of Law*, which “captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence”, and *Control of Corruption*, which “captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as ‘capture’ of the state by elites and private interests.” (WGI, <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#doc>). Governance score estimates the governance measured on a scale from approximately -2.5 to 2.50. Higher values correspond to better governance. Level 0 (zero) is taken for the perception of the rule of law functioning.

Table 6. Romania on Several Indicators

	Absolute scores	Scale	Higher score is
FHR	2.0	1-7	Worse
BTI	8.15	0-10	Better
EIU	6.68	0-10	Better
GDR	64.5	100-0	Worse
WGI Voice & Accountability	0.43	-2.50-2.50	Better
WGI Rule of law	0.15	-2.50-2.50	Better
WGI Control of corruption	-0.05	-2.50-2.50	Better

Source: Author's synthesis

Having an aggregate average index of 2 in *Freedom House's* evaluation (FHR), equal to that of Bulgaria, Romania can be considered as belonging more to the group of liberal democracies than as occupying a position at the border or outside it, but as a “semi-consolidated country”. Countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, do occupy “almost always” higher positions in the group of liberal democracies (“consolidated”).

According to *Bertelsmann (Political) Transformation Index* (BTI) – that evaluates the modes of political representation and mediation between society and state, the political culture, system of political parties, interest groups, citizens' consensus on democratic norms and procedures, the development of social capital and voluntary participation – Romania, as a “democracy in consolidation”, is also at the lower limit of the group of liberal democracies.

Economist Intelligence Unit Index of Democracy (EIU) survey highlights that, in comparison with other recently democratized countries, Romania, as a “flawed

democracy”, minimally satisfies criteria such functionality of the governing and of the party pluralism, social and political integration of the groups in the civil society, the participation and political culture.

In *The Democracy Ranking of the Quality of Democracy* Romania is situated in the medium third of the CEE countries, with a lost in rank since the previous period. In compliance with *Worldwide Governance Indicators* (WGI), Romania has the lowest score for the rule of law criterion, significantly lower than those received by Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary. In what concerns the horizontal responsibilities (voice and accountability), Romania does not meet the requirements of a consolidated democracy. Romania obtains a value two or three times lower as respects the degree of compliance with the balance and control of public powers (*checks and balances*), in comparison with Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary Latvia, and Lithuania. Also Romania is in first quarter of the most strongly affected countries by corruption.

III. A complementary strategy of measuring the consolidation of the democratic regimes emphasizes the cultural orientation of the citizens and of the political class, reflected in the attitudes, preferences, support or hostility toward the values and institutions of democracy. Barometers of public opinion and the research of culture and political values provide important clues regarding the perceptions and attitudes over the legitimacy of the regime and the fundamental institutions of democracy.

Table 7. Confidence in Public Institutions Romania 1995-2014

	1995-1999	2005-2009	2010-2014
Confidence: The national government	3.1% A great deal	2.3% A great deal	4.4% A great deal
Confidence: Political Parties	2.1% A great deal	1.2% A great deal	2.6% A great deal
Confidence: Parliament	2.7% A great deal	1.4% A great deal	3.6% A great deal
Confidence: Churches	43.6% A great deal	58.8% A great deal	43.0% A great deal
Confidence: Armed Forces	34.7% A great deal	31.8% A great deal	27.2% A great deal
Confidence: The Press	6.8% A great deal	7.6% A great deal	7.3% A great deal
Confidence: Justice System	12.2% A great deal	3.6% A great deal	7.3% A great deal
Country is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that for the benefit of all the people	66.3% Run by a few big interests		62% Run by a few big interests
Life satisfaction	2.7% Satisfied	4.3% Satisfied	13.2% Completely
Respect for individual human rights		53.7% Not much	60.7% Not much

Source: World Values Survey Wave 6. Retrieved from: www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

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Table 8. Confidence in Public Institutions CEE countries, EU's members

Country	Political Parties			Parliament			Government			Justice	
	2008	2015	2016	2008	2015	2016	2008	2015	2016	2008	2016
Bulgaria	14	13	11	8	14	12	29,9	23	24	17	20
Czech Republic	15	13	13	16	17	17	20	29	27	36	43
Estonia	15	15	14	37	35	33	48	43	43	59	62
Hungary	13	16	17	16	30	26	16	33	30	36	45
Latvia	9	8	7	9	21	17	16	25	27	33	42
Lithuania	16	12	8	11	17	10	16	32	24	25	40
Poland	11	14	13	13	19	19	20	20	22	36	42
ROMANIA	14	12	13	19	17	14	25	23	24	25	35
Slovak Republic	21	16	16	41	29	32	36	33	33	30	29
Slovenia	20	16	7	34	11	12	40	16	16	30	19

Sources: *Standard Eurobarometer* 84, Autumn 2015. Retrieved from:
<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2098>

Standard Eurobarometer 85, Spring 2016. Retrieved from:
<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2130>

The average of confidence in public institutions (political parties, parliament, and government) in 2008-2015 is lower in Romania compared with many other recently consolidated democracies or in the process of consolidation. Low threshold of trust in parties and parliament, particularly in Romania (and not only) is mainly due to the weak parties institutionalization.

Table 9. Attitudes towards the Romanian Political System Romania 2010-2014

Attitude	2010-2014
Having a democratic political system	46.6% Very good
How democratically is this country being governed today	7.9% Completely democratic
How often in country's elections: Voters are threatened with violence at the polls	6.9% Very often
How often in country's elections: Rich people buy elections	23.9% Very often
How often in country's elections: Voters are bribed	20.3% Very often
How often in country's elections: TV news favors the governing party	18.4% Very often
How often in country's elections: Votes are counted fairly	22.7% Not at all often

Source: World Values Survey Wave 6. Retrieved from:
www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

The interpretation of the data provided by *World Values Survey* (WVS) and *European Values Survey* (EVS) reveals in Romania a reduced satisfaction in respect of democracy. As such, the values recorded reflect a perception of the political system as a system suffering from serious democratic deficiencies, the perception of a poor representation of the citizens' interests, of an uncertain legitimacy of elections results and of a weak institutional performance of the state. In general, the results reveal a *low level of public confidence in state institutions*. The attachment to the *principles* of democratic government and the support for their practical implementation are obvious, instead "the satisfaction in relation to the government," to the concrete reforms and to the political system record *extremely low levels*. Even in respect of the democratic character of government is expressed a highly lack of satisfaction – as indicates also a report released recently under the aegis of the European Commission (Balász et al., 2015: 75) – and even frustration. The values recorded entitle or justify us to consider the attitudes toward democracy as being relevant to the perception of the political system as suffering from serious democratic deficits, as being "poorly consolidated," namely still "vulnerable" in terms of democracy. Also, these values are relevant to the perception of "the political elite" as corrupt, self-interested, dishonest and ineffective.

Conclusion

The empirical evidences concerning the consolidation of democracy process in our country – both at institutional level and at the level of attitudes and behaviours on behalf of the political class and citizens –, the comparing of the position of Romania with those of other recently democratized countries, the factual analysis of the political leadership styles, the presidentialization of power for almost 10 years (2005-2014) and the unfortunate recent evolution in the level of political legitimacy of executive power configures the conclusion that in Romania there are rather uncertainties regarding the democratic accumulation. The turning into routine of the mechanisms of democratic governing exertion or setting up the rule of law is in Romania in point of reaching the minimal consolidation threshold, assimilation of defining traits of liberal democracy, respectively. Moreover, not only does the democratic consolidation process stagnate; in the last few years it is more and more threatened by ever greater authoritarian temptations manifested by actors in key positions who are inclined to return to authoritarian, to non-democratic practices.

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