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RELIGIOUS INTERACTIONS OF THE
ROMANIAN POLITICAL PARTIES.
CASE STUDY: THE CHRISTIAN-
DEMOCRATIC CONNECTION

Over the past 20 years, along with official endeavors directed towards the accession of Romania into the European structures, political parties tried to integrate themselves into wider European families. Approaching the European People's Party (the most prominent group in the European Parliament) - dominated by Christian democrats whose existence was largely influenced by the Catholic social teaching - seemed to be one of the most difficult tasks. For their first European elections held in 2007 several Romanian political parties - apart from the National Christian Democrat Peasant Party (a member of the European Christian Democratic Union since 1987) - changed their orientation and claimed themselves as Christian Democratic. This article intends to explore the extent to which Romanian political parties who assert themselves as Christian-democratic can be considered to belong to this political family or whether their claim has a rather administrative motivation.

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The Christian democracy has been at the heart of the European edifice since its beginnings. It has mainly contributed to its design and successful development meant to unify the Old Continent. Neither the Liberals, nor the Socialists could claim to have offered such an inspiring impetus to the process of European unification as it happened in the innermost circles of the post-war Christian democracy where the project took shape and was put into motion thanks to a number of resolutely European politicians. The support of Christian Democrats has remained crucial to the destiny of European construction up to the present day. As representatives of a political programme that came into being at the moment when the interests of the Catholic Church, after it reconsidered its social mission, and those of the political organisations aiming to promote the traditional spiritual values and the social well-being began to overlap, the Christian Democrats themselves have benefited from a widespread support for this project in key European countries. Following the last enlargement of the European Union to Romania and Bulgaria, eyebrows were raised with

regard to the viability of a Christian democratic insertion on the Orthodox soil since the majority of population in both countries belongs to this denomination. The issue becomes even more substantial to be dealt with if we take into consideration the fact that the Judeo-Christian roots of Europe also include a strong Orthodox component¹. However, we consider that the intrinsic difficulties of the interactions between Christian democracy and politics in an Orthodox context have already been revealed by the complex agenda of the constant dialogue between the European People's Party (as a wider forum of representation for the European Christian Democrats) and the Orthodox Church started in 1996. On the other hand, we should mention the reticence of Romanian political parties in securing connections with Christian democratic players on the European political stage prior to the accession of Romania into the European Union.

We share the opinion that, especially with regard to the later remark, a rather general analysis of the opportunity to sow the seeds of Christian democracy on Romanian soil will necessarily have to deal with the issue of doctrinaire affiliation of Romanian political parties. According to an already well-established pattern, parties tend to disregard political doctrines which they consider to be of no interest for the wide public and not relevant for an effective contract with their electorate. They are regarded only as vehicles to achieve a European affiliation². Over and over again they are inclined to replace their political programme, as confirmed by the democratic vote of the electorate, with an ever vacillating list of interests of limited concern³. Several reasons such as the local mentality and the speed of changes occurring in the post-communist Romania were put forward to explain that was little room left for ideological subtleties⁴.

In this respect, the article will try first to assess the evolution and the main tenets of today's Christian democracy in order to create an analytical framework for the research of the connection between Christian democracy, religion and Romanian political parties. Subsequently we plan to apply this framework to the study of the Christian democratic credentials of three Romanian parties which were already admitted into this political family: the National Christian Democrat Peasant Party (PNȚCD), the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) and the Democratic-Liberal Party (PD-L) while leaving aside some other smaller parties with similar orientation. All through our analysis we will also raise questions regarding the core reasons for a Christian democratic option of the Romanian political parties in order to better evaluate the truthfulness of their commitment to this doctrine. We would like to make clear from the very beginning that the relation between religion and politics should not be confounded with that between the State and the Church. Whenever we refer to the relation between the State and the Church we relate this to the phenomenon of secularization.

The evolution of Christian democratic parties

The idea of Christian democracy traces its existence back to the time of the French Revolution⁵. It developed during the 19th century in response to the propensity of the Catholic Church to neglect the social problems of the day. It was the merit of Pope Leo XIII to have undertaken the first steps in addressing these problems⁶. His work helped fostering new political organisations of Christian inspiration⁷ that paved the way to the later Christian democratic parties. By the end of the century an organized Catholic response emerged in the form of confessional political parties in many Western European countries with significant Catholic population. Although distinctive from the conservative parties especially in terms of priority given to the social welfare over economic issues, they maintained a good deal of common ground with these⁸. In the Protestant countries, there were usually the Conservatives the ones that preached the virtues of authority, tradition and submission to the established order⁹ as opposed to the liberal tendencies of the Protestant churches.

Despite the fact that the reconciliation of the Catholic Church with modernity was continued by a number of encyclicals issued by the successors of Leo XIII¹⁰, in the aftermath of the Second World War the influence of the Church in the creation of Christian democratic parties seems to have been less direct¹¹. The post-war success of the Christian democrats stemmed largely from the collapse of the traditional right-wing parties, which had fallen out of favour after the fall of authoritarian regimes of Italy, France, and Germany. Christian democracy emerged then as a neutral and unifying voice of the centre-right. Its legitimacy was reinforced by an outright condemnation of the extreme doctrines on both left and right of the political spectrum, as well as by the incorporation into its ranks of moderate elements of Protestant confession. However, it was undeniably in predominantly Catholic Western European countries that the Christian Democrats are most firmly anchored. But it cannot be denied that, as these parties have evolved, they have considerably modified their original exclusive orientation as religious projects beholden to the Catholic Church and tended to become more secular, independent and political popular¹². As such their doctrine was gradually adopted not only by Protestants, but also by Orthodox Christians.

The basic features of today's Christian democracy

Christian democratic parties throughout Europe openly promote the virtues of Christian faith¹³. They emphasize the role of the spiritual, the primacy of ethical norms in politics, the supremacy of common good, the dignity of the person, the property, and the subsidiarity¹⁴. Generally speaking, Christian democratic parties tend to defend Christian values but

avoid presenting them in an uncompromising manner. They are usually accused of lacking character and not having a definite profile¹⁵. At the same time they do not fit into the customary categories of political thinking as they tend to borrow important elements from other political ideologies¹⁶. Under these circumstances the Christian Democrats usually try to gain the votes from “moderate” uncommitted elements. Although it is not at all prohibited to attract votes in this way, it is yet dangerous for parties claiming to represent the values embedded in the Church philosophy¹⁷. In this context, it is also worth to mention that, due to their “interclassism”¹⁸, these parties adjusted their message in order to be able to address the people without making any references to class allegiance. However, these parties do not fit into the category of catch-all parties¹⁹ as they strive to persuade especially the moderate layers of the electorate from the perspective of Christian moral principles.

One of the main features of Christian democratic ideology remains the blunt refutation of the extreme doctrines put forward by both left and right as they represent types of materialism that is opposed to the teachings of the Church. The point of view adopted by the Christian Democrats reflected the influence of the Church upon their hierarchy of values: the ascendancy of the spiritual over the material and the necessity to make economics contribute to the general welfare²⁰. Consequently, Christian Democrats were most involved in building up a solid approach – mainly in the economic area – which was equidistant from both *laissez-faire* capitalism and communism; as a result, they put into practice liberal economic policies with significant elements of social protection.

The second characteristic of the Christian democratic movement is the importance it attaches to the values of morality. The Christian Democrats tended to embrace Christian ethics and to assert the Christian heritage of their country, rather than adopting a more liberal and secular stance. They believed that it was the government’s duty to encourage and enforce traditional ideals: morality and family values, opposition towards secularism and privatization of religious belief, a pro-life position in the abortion and euthanasia controversies, resistance vis-à-vis the stem cell research, prohibition of drugs and pornography. Church ruling in these areas had been automatically inserted in the Christian democratic programme for many years. Progressively the Christian Democrats came round to the idea that personal religious convictions should be regarded as a private matter and be kept apart from the party’s programme. The change was a product of necessity as it was motivated by constraints that originated in the changing nature of the electorate and resulted in bringing the Christian democratic parties closer to the conservative ones.

The third characteristic is that the Christian democratic movement emphasizes the inalienable rights of individual and society in relation to civil authorities. Being firmly anchored in the Catholic tradition, the

Christian Democrats built a philosophy centered around the organic view of man and society rooted in pluralism (maintaining the fact that man needs to be regarded as a member of various social groups – family, profession, community that require the protection of the State), personalism (enforcing the idea that while respecting individualism and the political rights that uphold human dignity, it is also necessary to limit these rights in certain circumstances when the common good so requires) and solidarism (referring to the socially interactive citizen who assumed responsibility not only for his own welfare, but also for the other members of community)²¹. Under these circumstances, Christian Democrats favour the dispersion of power both territorially and functionally between different levels of authority. It is under their undeniable influence that subsidiarity was brought as a fundamental principle into the legal framework of the European Union²².

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the post-Second World War Christian democratic parties have been resolutely European and it is particularly in this domain that they have been the most tenacious which came to be another important feature of these parties.

The supranational dimension of the European Christian democracy – the European People's Party (EPP)

At the European level the Christian Democrats have teamed up ever since the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951²³. On their basis, the European Christian-Democratic Union (ECDU) bringing under the same roof all Christian democratic parties of Europe was formed in 1965. In view of the forthcoming first European elections from 1979, the Christian democratic parties from the European Community joined forces and laid the foundation for a new grouping to represent their interests in the future European Parliament – the European People's Party²⁴. The group had been the subject of several transformations until 1999 when the European People's Party (Christian Democratic) was set up by bringing together the Christian Democrats and the Conservatives from all states of the European Union²⁵. If at the beginning the organisation was gravitating around Christian Democrats and arduous supporters of European integration, nowadays we can witness a tendency rather towards softening the ideology than towards reinforcing Christian Democratic values. The party abolished its traditional programmatic principles without replacing them by a new, unambiguous doctrine and now tends to identify itself as 'centrist' and 'reformist', although still Christian democratic²⁶, which indicates an ostensibly more reduced influence of Christian democracy and the rise of a pragmatist, and anti-Socialist stance²⁷. This evolution was triggered by the need to accommodate more parties as a result of the continuous waves of enlargement of the EU. Based on its electoral

performances, EPP is now regarded as the main centre-right party at the European level²⁸.

Foreseeable difficulties of implementing a Christian democratic programme

The analysis undertaken on the origins, evolution and current state of Christian democracy had in view the evaluation of the extent to which this doctrine anchored in the Catholic social teaching might be translated to an Orthodox country such as Romania. From the outset we reckon with a number of difficulties that could make such an implant problematic. A part of them stems from the intricate historical relations between Church and politics. Others find difficult to reconcile the Christian democratic principles with the realities of the Orthodox area.

Regarding the relations between the Church and politics, we consider that we will first have to take into consideration that Christianity is perceived in Romania as inextricably linked to nationality and that Romanianism was regarded in our modernity as having a spiritual substance²⁹. To a certain extent, Orthodoxy, nationalism as well as traditionalism extract their vigour from this spiritual substance. Therefore, it is considered that the Church served primarily the interests of the nation and not the interests of the society and of its every people³⁰. A second observation which derives from there is that the Romanian Orthodox Church, unlike the Catholic Church or even its Russian sister, was unable to build up a social doctrine stating the rules that would stir the behaviour of its devotees in every aspect of life. Under these circumstances, we can witness a rupture “between the spiritual identity and the day-to-day life”³¹ of most Romanians. This brings us to a third observation, namely that the Orthodox Church has generally been politically passive, “functioning in symbiosis with sympathetic governments”³², reinforcing the metaphor of a Byzantine “symphonia”³³ used to suggest the double-headed formula of leadership in an Orthodox country where the State is in charge with the secular affairs and the Church with the spiritual ones. Burdened by its communist past, the Orthodox Church preferred to withdraw itself into an ivory tower in an attempt to maintain its own neutrality in relation with both public affairs and political parties³⁴. Fourth, we will have to make reference to the Romanian Orthodox Church as part of an Orthodoxy which despite its profound unity in terms of faith, ceremony or canonical discipline³⁵ finds it difficult to act in unity on the European stage in relation with other significant actors such as the Catholic Church, the European People’s Party or even the European Union.

Having in view the above mentioned considerations that render difficult any attempt to find and cast the fine distinctions of Christian democratic doctrine in the political programme of the most relevant

Romanian parties belonging to this political family, we will attempt to evaluate their loyalty to this doctrine based on their commitment to introduce its principles (as revealed in Section 2) in their political programmes and political actions. Special attention will be paid to their ability to manage the religious relations since we share the opinion that Christian democratic parties have a special duty to open up a dialogue with the spiritual leadership in order to persuade the Church – as an independent dialogue partner – to cooperate with the civil society for the social well-being and with politicians for a healthier political environment. However, we do not intend to perform this task exhaustively since we are aware of the fact that the Christian Democrats themselves tend to embrace the complex issues of their political programme with more flexibility.

The resurgence of Christian democratic ideas in Romania

The National Christian Democrat Peasant Party (PNȚCD)

PNȚCD represents a party with deep historical roots in modern Romanian history³⁶ and is still regarded, despite its electoral misfortunes in the 2000s, as an important forerunner of Christian democracy in Romania. The party was set up in the aftermath of the Romanian Unification of 1918 (on 10 October 1926) as a result of the merger between the National Romanian Party, one of the most important political groupings of the Romanians in Transylvania, led by Iuliu Maniu, and the Peasants' Party, a party from the Old Romanian Kingdom, under the leadership of Ion Mihalache. The result was the National Peasants' Party (PNȚ) led, with very small interruptions, until its dissolution (on 29 July 1947) by Iuliu Maniu, a prominent Romanian politician of the interwar period. Although neither Iuliu Maniu³⁷, nor the other leaders of PNȚ did make explicit references to Christian democracy and its related principles already established in other parts of Europe, the speeches, press articles, political programmes and other party documents showed that it had strong affinities to this particular doctrine³⁸. Nevertheless, due to the insufficient doctrinaire clarifications within PNȚ and taking into consideration the traditionally strong links between the Church and the State in Romania as well as the absence of a social doctrine of the Orthodox Church³⁹, Western researchers studying the political history of Eastern Europe did not include Romania among the countries with a Christian democratic tradition⁴⁰. A clear-cut PNȚ option in favour of Christian democracy appeared only in the years that followed the Second World War, especially if we analyze the PNȚ's principles formulated by Iuliu Maniu in 1946⁴¹ – the Christian morale, the illuminated patriotism, a functioning democracy and the social justice –, the overtures made by PNȚ members in exile towards *Nouvelles Equipes Internationales* and Geneva

Circle⁴² or the series of conferences organized by the younger generation of party leaders under the influence of philosophers Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier⁴³ at the Romanian Athenaeum⁴⁴.

By the end of the 1940s the ground was already prepared for an open statement of allegiance to Christian democracy, but this had to be postponed for several decades due to the instauration of the communist regime that interrupted the normal course of Romanian political life. Only on 2 February 1987 did PNȚ – still outside the law – join the European Christian Democratic Union. This was the context in which the particles “cd” standing for Christian democratic were added to the party name. The decision was not at all opportunistic. It reflected not only the party preferences which gained strength towards the end of the 1940s, but also the personal commitment of Corneliu Coposu⁴⁵, the new party leader, to link up with the party traditions and to deepen the objectives of his political foregoers. The rest of the party members validated his decisions formally on 8 January 1990, on the occasion of the first party meeting after December 1989, when the party was set up again under its new official name – PNȚCD.

The statute of the party, as well as the political programme adopted at its first congress in 1991 and revised several times (in 1996, 2005, and 2007) stated a doctrine that was explicitly Christian democratic. It reaffirmed that the party would stand up for the moral reconstruction of society (along the axis formed by school, church and family), for the setting up of a social market economy, the separation of powers within the State, decentralisation and local autonomy, for the full restitution of the properties confiscated by the communists and the integration of Romania into the European structures⁴⁶. In relation with the Church, the party would endeavour (along a well-established pattern in Western democracies) to guarantee the Church's financial independence and to get it involved in society, but not in the public sector or in politics⁴⁷. However, during the first years after 1989, the PNȚCD was perceived rather as the main opposing force to the remnant communist structures and mentalities and less as a promoter of Christian democracy, whose principles remained unclear to a large part of its members. The party was perceived as one truthful to its own objectives (as opposed to the catch-all parties)⁴⁸ whose uncompromising anti-communist stance reflected the need for a new moral order in the Romanian society⁴⁹. In fact, there are voices who question the real political identity of PNȚCD since the party recommends itself as a peasant party but the farmers barely represent 15% of its members⁵⁰, as a national party whereas its office years showed that it represented only the interests of a narrow part of the electorate and as a Christian democratic party while within its ranks the doctrine was merely understood as a “devout religiosity turned towards a ‘mythical’ past of

interwar Romania”⁵¹ which is in complete disregard for the Western European understanding of it⁵².

After the modest results the party obtained in the 1990 elections, PNȚCD managed – thanks to the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) (an electoral alliance controlled by PNȚCD) – to become the most important party of the opposition in the 1992 elections, and the main ruling party in 1996. The programme of the governing coalition⁵³ aimed to insure Romania’s transition towards the state of law and the market economy, and represented a compromise between the often-divergent solutions suggested by the allied parties of Christian-democratic, liberal and social-democratic inspiration. Its office years were marked by inflation, economic difficulties, numerous conflicts between the coalition parties, as well as by an obvious inability to manage reform in a coherent manner. Surprisingly, PNȚCD incurred almost exclusively the lack of success of the government⁵⁴. But the difficulties generated by the impossibility to steer the government in the right direction were balanced by intense efforts for doctrine clarification since the years of institutional straying coincided with a prosperous publishing activity⁵⁵ – one of the most consistent of its kind in the 1990s in Romania – confirming beyond any doubt and suspicion of political opportunism, the alignment of PNȚCD to the European trend of Christian democracy. The official admission of PNȚCD to the European Christian Democratic Union (ECDU) and to the Christian Democratic International validated the party leaning towards Christian democracy. In addition, the party was granted the observer status in December 1996 and that of an associate member (March 1998) of the European People’s Party.

Impaired by the poor governance and discredited as a moral force, confronted with a significant decline in the relevance of the anticommunist rhetoric, decimated by numerous dissidences and weakened by unsuccessful attempts to relaunch the party, PNȚCD failed to attain parliamentary representation (5% threshold) in the electoral ballots that followed (2000, 2004, and 2008). The decline of the party seemed to coincide with a rejection of the Christian democratic doctrine in Romania. However, the rising tide of Christian democracy in Europe helped to reverse the interest in these ideals into the country, but could not prevent the further plunging of PNȚCD into a deep morass. The party proved to be unable to come up with a new message persuasive enough to bring it the necessary votes. Especially after 2005 when PD-L undertook a radical ideological turn towards Christian democracy, PNȚCD tried to strengthen its Christian democratic credentials and set up (under its own tutelage) a Christian democratic pole. Together with the Union for the Reconstruction of Romania (URR), the Popular Action (AP) and the Christian-Democratic Party (PCD), PNȚCD signed the Popular Manifest in January 2005 stating as goal of the four political parties the creation of a popular party. Two months later PNȚCD absorbed URR and transformed itself in Christian

Democratic Popular Party (PPCD). The move (also valid for the PD-L) had been accelerated by the fact that Romania was about to enter the European Union and ran the risk of not being represented in the largest political group of the European Parliament. Nevertheless, the fact that the popular movement, although closely related to Christian democracy, does not rely on a solid doctrine and the absence of an electorate open to the popular message⁵⁶, on the one hand, and the accession of PD-L into the EPP in spite of the PNȚCD's opposition, on the other hand, persuaded the party that it was futile to direct its efforts towards this purpose. On 10 September 2006 the party decided to abandon its attempts to transform itself in PPCD and returned to its old name. Unable to find its own way to the electorate, the party directed then its efforts towards concluding an alliance with the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Popular Action (AP) in order to create a centre-right pole on the Romanian political stage. The alliance came into being in August 2008 but did not manage to prevent another electoral disaster for PNȚ-CD in the 2008 general elections.

In the end, we can assert that in the case of PNȚCD the Christian democratic option was grounded in the party's political preferences developed over a larger time span. However, its office years showed the PNȚCD's lack of ability to bring its policy actions in line with its political programme. Apart from the anticommunist rhetoric inspired by the great importance it attached to moral virtues and to the strong support for European integration, very few Christian democratic principles animated the party's political stance.

The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR)

The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) was set up on 28 January 1990 for the purpose of representing and defending the interests of the Hungarian community, the largest ethnic group in Romania. From a political point of view, the existence of a "splitting up minority" represents a special case as it favours a particular political behaviour, different from that of the majority⁵⁷. Although an important political player, UDMR is not registered as a political party, but as a union⁵⁸, since according to the Romanian law the political organisations of the Romanian citizens who belong to the ethnic minorities participating in elections are legally considered equivalent to the political parties. However, in comparison to all other political organisations belonging to the ethnic minorities who have had to make use of the Constitutional provisions about their representation in order to gain a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, UDMR has relied on an extremely interesting political structure that enabled it to win over 30 mandates of deputies and senators in the Romanian Parliament⁵⁹. Consequently, UDMR proved to be more than a political organisation of the ethnic minorities although it made use of the Constitutional provisions with regard to its status and

more a political party according to its own dynamics, its electoral scores and its parliamentary representation. This is why some authors suggested that the Union might be regarded as an ethnic party⁶⁰. It is true that its participation in various governing coalitions made UDMR look much more like a political party, but there are still important areas in which it differentiates from these, as the Union has not only to represent politically the interests of the Hungarian minority, but also to organize this community⁶¹.

If the political status of the Union is difficult to be properly characterized, its political doctrine is even more problematic. UDMR combines a wide variety of platforms with different doctrinaire orientations resembling rather a system of parties⁶². Beside its territorial organisations, it includes opinion groups and associate members such as the Liberal Circle, the Social-Democratic Platform, the Christian Democratic Movement, the Transylvanian Hungarian Initiative, the Reformist Block, the Small Farmers' Platform, the Forum of Hungarian Women from Romania, and the Forum of the New Democratic Left, as well as various social, scientific, professional, and cultural groups⁶³. Given its heterogeneous membership, its multiple doctrinaire identities and because the entire activity of the party aims mainly to promote the interests of the Hungarian minority, UDMR has no doctrine as such. Apart from a general characterization of UDMR as a “centre-right” organisation⁶⁴, we cannot say anything about its ideological orientation. The extremely sketchy political programmes of UDMR put forward measures regarding the maintenance and consolidation of the Hungarian identity, the support for the European integration, and the need to achieve institutional and economic reform. The elements that could bring UDMR closer to Christian democracy – the proclivity for subsidiarity⁶⁵, certain theses of personal and cultural autonomy⁶⁶, the attention given to Church and school⁶⁷, a market economy with considerable elements of social policy⁶⁸, a tight correlation between social solidarity and individual responsibility⁶⁹ – are not essential for the whole structure of its political programme, and are not sufficient either to consider this union as being of a Christian democratic orientation. In spite of this uncertain doctrine identity, paralleled by numerous internal oppositions⁷⁰, UDMR became an observer for the EPP as of March 1998, and an associate member as of October 1999, although without fulfilling in full the necessary criteria for joining⁷¹.

Its democratic, reformist and pro-Western position initially brought UDMR closer to the historical parties, without preventing its future cooperation with the Social Democratic Party led by Ion Iliescu and Adrian Năstase since its loose ideological affiliation did not hamper such a possibility. The constant percentage of votes obtained in each election – approximately 7%, corresponding to the proportion of the Hungarian minority in Romania – turned UDMR into an important player on the

Romanian political stage. Its support was decisive in order to insure the parliamentary majority for all governments from 1996 to 2008. It is assumed that even before the 2004 elections, after its participation in two consecutive governments, UDMR managed to fulfil the bulk of its political goals (bilingual guiding plates in public areas, use of Hungarian language in administration and justice, education in Hungarian language from primary school to university)⁷². However, a number of highly sensitive goals of the Hungarian minority such as the autonomy of Transylvania or at least of the Szekler regions or a Constitutional change that would remove the references to Romania as a “national state” remained unfulfilled and the chances for their accomplishment within a Romanian framework are extremely low. That is why it is expected that the Union will try to find European solutions to its specific problems. Considering the significance the Union attaches to the principles of subsidiarity (understood not just in the sense of decentralization, but more in the sense of autonomy), pluralism (perceived more as a right of the Hungarian minority to different, overlapping allegiances), solidarism (regarded more as a duty of the majority to manifest a larger sympathy for the needs of the minority), the Christian democratic political family appears to be the best fitted for the UDMR agenda. Under these circumstances, we tend to assert that UDMR's rallying to the majority group in the European Parliament is rather opportunistic than based on doctrine affinities. Moreover, it helps UDMR to give a sense to its ideological orientation as the Union can be perceived as a representative of Christian democracy in Romania and to extend its political status coverage by being recognized as a representative of the most numerous political groups in the European Parliament, according to the results of the latest European elections.

The Democratic-Liberal Party (PD-L)

PD-L is a newcomer in the Romanian Christian democratic family. Prior to the radical change of its political identity, the party defined itself as social-democratic and had dispute over this area on the Romanian political stage with the Social-Democratic Party (PSD). The two parties share a common past since both stemmed from the National Salvation Front (FSN) set up on 6 February 1990 by Ion Iliescu, the first president of post-communist Romania. Against a background of tough disputes between a “reformist” wing built around the then prime minister Petre Roman and a more “conservative” one that remained faithful to Ion Iliescu, the later left the party and formed what is now known as PSD, whereas those remaining built as of 31 March 1993 the Democratic Party (PD). This split triggered an extremely strenuous relation between PSD and PD because both of them claimed a reputation as centre-left parties. The office years as a junior member of the coalition built by CDR and UDMR (1996-2000) highlighted PD's faithfulness to the principles of social democracy.

After its accession to the Socialist International (as a full member) and to the European Socialist Party (as an associate member), the Democratic Party, who sought to be internationally acknowledged as the only representative of Romanian social-democracy, opposed obstinately but in the end unsuccessfully to the admission of PSD to these forums. Even after the change of leadership in 2001 when Petre Roman was replaced by Traian Băsescu (then mayor of Bucharest), the party reconfirmed its social-democratic orientation. Because the party was still at loggerheads with PSD (at that time the ruling party), the newly elected PD leader undertook a change of course and stirred his party into an alliance with the National Liberal Party (PNL).

The winning of the 2004 elections by the Justice and Truth alliance (DA, standing for *Dreptate și Adevăr*) made up of PNL and PD brought into the debate the problem of the doctrinal orientation of PD within the wider context of discussions about a possible fusion of the two parties. As we have shown above, PD has been constantly oriented towards social democracy at both discourse and action level: too little of its political programme or of its concrete actions justified PD's jump to another ideological orientation. Nevertheless, PD re-invents itself, this time as a people's party, at the extraordinary National Convention of 25 June 2005. The documents adopted on this occasion presented PD as a "centre, Republican Party with a modern European popular doctrine" whose aims were "to establish an efficient and modern market economy with a human face; to supply competent public services; to offer a wide, active and well-oriented social protection system in compliance with an independent, accessible and effective justice". The explanation offered for this change of direction tried to emphasize that the popular option was "neither a moment of context, nor a change of direction, but only the logical step forward" for PD since it meant "reaching an agreement between its doctrine and the main characteristics of its political practice and actions, from its birth up to the present". The option for a new popular identity and doctrine was presented as a "guarantee" that the party would "be able to take on successfully the long-term responsibilities it was given on the basis of the 2004 election results, in the perspective of the Romanian accession to the EU". PD presented itself as a "pragmatic, modern, reform-oriented party [...] connected to the political realities of the European Union". However, in a rather surprising manner, PD kept its electoral logo – the rose – a symbol with obvious social-democratic connotations.

Following this ideological turn, the Democratic Party applied for the affiliation to the European People's Party on 27 June 2005 and was shortly granted the status of observing member (September 2005). It was for the first time that EPP received a party which had been a member of the European Socialist Party. On that occasion, Wilfried Martens, President of the EPP, stated that the accession offered to the party "an important opportunity to defend Romania's application to join the European Union",

which was “an enormous chance for any associate party”. In spite of good intentions both sides expressed, the political analysts were almost unanimous on the opportunistic character of both PD’s ideological swing and EPP’s admission of PD. PD’s decision was perceived as a proof of lack of ideological depth of Romanian political parties⁷³ and as a tacit recognition of the defeat suffered against PSD on the centre-left side of the political spectrum. The analysts also remarked the unorthodox pressure exerted by EPP to include within its ranks a party with an important parliamentary percentage, in order to maintain its political advantage in the European Parliament even after Romania’s accession to the European Union⁷⁴.

In December 2007, PD incorporated the Liberal-Democratic Party – the dissident wing of PNL – and changed its name into the Democrat Liberal Party (PD-L)⁷⁵. The new programme of the party⁷⁶ reconfirmed its popular orientation. According to this document, the party leaned ostensibly more towards Christian democracy since among its political aims was stated a series of elements required but not sufficient to prove a Christian democratic affiliation such as: support for a market economy adjusted in the spirit of liberty, responsibility and justice (Art. 1.2.3); for the principles of pluralism (Chapter I. Values and Principles of the Democrat-Liberal Party and Art. 1.2.4), personalism (“A new party” – the introductory part of the document), and solidarity (Art. 1.1.4); for the strengthening of civil society (Art. 1.2.7); for an active involvement of Romania into the European construction (Art. 2.1). Concerning its religious convictions, PD-L’s stance is, however, more reserved and, at the same time, more nuanced, which is understandable if we take into consideration the complex relation between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian State. PD-L refrains from making ample commentaries and states briefly that even “if it supports the separation between Church and State, it accepts the role of religion and of religious institutions” in maintaining the social order. At the same time PD-L “supports the cooperation between State and religious denominations in social, educational and cultural fields, on the basis of their joint responsibilities towards the public good” (Art. 1.2.4).

In this context, it is also worth to mention that this slight Christian democratic proclivity is not articulated in a way that might spoil the Party’s efforts to attract the main political streams of the centre-right under its tutelage. The top-priority item of the Party leadership remains the creation of a strong centre-democratic pole able to accommodate a whole range of parties that fit into this category (Christian Democrats, Conservatives, and right-wing Liberals) without melting them into one bigger party⁷⁷. In a way, we can affirm that PD-L is trying to recreate at the national level what EPP represents for the European Parliament at the supranational level. But this is a little bit puzzling as EPP consists of a number of parties which at least proclaim a clear-cut ideological allegiance whereas PD-L is not able to deliver such a straightforward message even at the national level. The idea behind was simply to unify the centre-right

Romanian parties in a way in which neither PNȚCD, nor PNL were able to fulfil⁷⁸.

PD-L won the 2008 elections and therefore was designated by the President of Romania to form the new government. In order to reach a parliamentary majority, PD-L did not turn to its traditional allies, namely PNL and UDMR, but to its archrival on the left side of the political stage, namely PSD. The obvious social-democratic imprint of the actions of the PD-L – PSD government, corroborated with the less and less explicit stance in relation to the Christian democratic principles in PD-L leaders' discourse, leave open the subject of party's real allegiance to Christian democracy. Under these circumstances, the real political identity of PD-L has been increasingly questioned⁷⁹. There are authoritative voices as that of professor Michael Shafir who shares the opinion that the party is to be better regarded as a populist party than a popular one⁸⁰. However, it is sure that we will need time to be able to assess the real political identity of PD-L.

Conclusions. Perspectives of Christian democracy in Romania

The analysis of the evolution of Christian democracy in Romania seems to confirm the expectations of the political analysts who doubted the possibility of successfully achieving such a doctrine transplant on the Orthodox soil. The Orthodox Church, socially involved in an insufficient manner, has not provided so far a solid foundation favourable to build-up a Christian democratic doctrine adapted to the Romanian mentality. The communist regime left durable imprints on the Orthodox Church. As such they tended to overemphasize the Church's philetism and continuing tradition of obedience to the secular power. Under these circumstances, the Romanian Orthodox Church remained – even after 1989 – closely associated with the office holders with whom it shared the vision of a paternalistic state anchored in the traditional values. Its unconditional blessing for the governing parties has further harmed the equilibrium of the Romanian political stage due to the high level of trust the Church enjoys⁸¹. A paradigmatic change is however to be expected since the Orthodox Church tends increasingly to become less involved in the political area and much more present in the social sphere⁸². Such a situation will lead without doubt to changes in the perception of the relation between parties and doctrines, including Christian democracy. For the time being, however, the three political parties touch upon the issues of Church-politics relations in their political programmes, without accompanying these with relevant actions.

To these fundamental issues one has to add the more challenging dilemma generated by any attempt to put into practice some of the guiding principles of Christian democracy in a country like Romania. For instance, as already mentioned, Christian democracy attaches a particular value to

the virtues of subsidiarity which presumes regional decentralization⁸³. From a Romanian perspective in which the merits of a national, unitary state of a Jacobin style still receive a widespread “admiration”, the subsidiarity remains an extremely thorny issue to be dealt with by the local political parties. Again, the principle of subsidiarity finds its way in all the three political programmes and receives a widespread admiration especially from UDMR and PD-L, but its implementation still remains far behind the declarations.

Although placed high on the agenda of PNȚCD, Christianity failed to contribute to the setting up of a tangible action programme since political problems found no way on the agenda of the Church⁸⁴. However, this is not the only problem of the party because its entire post-communist existence has been persistently marked by the gap between its aspirations and the ability to deliver a clear programme, as well as to attract a specific electorate. As a historic party, PNȚCD seems to be now unable to catch up with history since after three electoral cycles without parliamentary representation it holds uncertain perspectives of recovery.

UDMR, a political ethno-centrist group, for which Christian democracy is just one of the possible ideological options cannot represent for the doctrine we are exploring anything more than a marginal trend. Its decision to follow a Christian democratic path at the European level was to a large extent motivated by the conviction that this platform might better serve the interests of the Hungarian minority in Romania.

In this context, the Democratic-Liberal Party represents an atypical case. Its social-democratic antecedents and the short time passed from the ideological somersault of 2005 render difficult any analytical attempt to ideologically classify the party or to scrutinize the factual implementation of the political programme of the European People's Party. At the discourse level, the Democratic-Liberal Party assumes a popular identity which, meanwhile, leaves open the perspective that PD-L would contribute to the configuration of a new Romanian Christian democracy after a period of doctrine clarification.

The successful models of the European Christian democratic parties and the Romanian membership of the European Union have produced emulation for Christian democracy, at a time of apparent decline of this doctrine in Romania. Since the European People's Party – which continues to represent an important landmark of Christian democracy – encourages rapprochement, alliance formation and even agglutination around a Christian democratic platform of parties sharing this ideology, PNȚ-CD, UDMR and PD-L might be tempted to create a strong Christian democratic coalition. Such a development could pave the way to an interesting evolution in this direction and lead, perhaps, to a successful Christian democracy in the predominantly Orthodox Romanian area. In spite of the optimism showed by PD-L⁸⁵ and the general recognition of the fact that a divided Christian democratic movement is both vulnerable and

counterproductive⁸⁶, it is somehow difficult to believe that such a development could gain ground in the near future. This can be explained on the one hand by the deep disagreements between PNȚ-CD and PD-L because the former is much too proud of its own pedigree and shows an obvious preference for alliances with parties with unambiguous Christian democratic orientation⁸⁷ or with a historical background similar to its own⁸⁸ and on the other hand by the very specific political agenda of UDMR tailored to its own concerns regarding the rights of the Hungarian minority.

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Notes

¹ Alojz Peterle, „Present and future dialogue between the EPP-ED and the Orthodox Church”, *European View*, Vol. 6 (2007): 127. See also Teodor Baconsky, „Europa creștină. Metoda cut and paste” in *Pentru un creștinism al noii Europe*, Seria Boltzman, Vol. III, ed. Teodor Baconsky, Ioan I. Ică jr., Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban et. all (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007): 22-23.

² Cristian Preda, „Popularii români”, *Revista 22* (25 June 2005) at <http://www.revista22.ro/popularii-romani-1792.html> [accessed on 15 March 2009].

³ See for instance Radu Preda, „Lecțiile unei crize (I). Partidele politice” (essay published in *Adevărul literar și artistic* 874 (6 June 2007): 7) in *Semnele vremii. Lecturi social-teologice*, ed. Radu Preda (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2008), 140-143.

⁴ Brândușa Armanca, „Dacă zona creștin-democrată e divizată, e mai vulnerabilă” (interview with Jürgen Henkel, director of the Romanian branch of Hanns Seidel Foundation), *Ziua* (27 March 2006) at <http://www.ziua.net/display.php?id=196557&data=2006-03-27> [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁵ It was used for the first time in 1791 by the bishop Lamourette who tried to fashion a new and more democratic model of Church organisation. However, until the end of the 19th century the resort to this concept was rather sporadic and confusing. See Hans Maier, *L'Eglise et la démocratie* (Paris: Criterion, 1992), 105. See also Jean-Dominique Durand, *Europa democrației creștine* (Iași: Institutul European, 1995); Yves Mény and Andrew Knapp, *Government and Politics in Western Europe: Britain, France, Italy, Germany*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 66-67; Michael Patrick Fogarty, *Christian democracy in Western Europe: 1820-1953* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974).

⁶ Faced with an emerging society of individuals, Pope Leo XIII sought to restore - based on the Thomist philosophy - the ideal of a corporatist harmony that has always been part of a utopian Christian imagery. He tried to lay the Catholic thinking on more critical and constructive foundations by actively seeking to confront the problems of the time. See also Marcel Prélôt and Georges Lescuyer, *Histoire des idées politiques*, 12th edition, (Paris: Dalloz, 1994), 572. In a succession of four encyclicals issued between 1885 and 1890 he tried to explain the political position of the Church. They were supplemented by a fifth one *Rerum novarum* of 15 May 1891 on the condition of the workers and social matters.

⁷ The organisations of Catholic action set as their goal the well-being of the people. Their activity was oriented along Catholic lines under the guidance of Catholic leaders.

⁸ With conservatism they have in common the opposition to secularism, the resistance to the dilution of traditional moral values, the prominence attached to law and order, as well as the hostility to any form of centralized economy.

⁹ Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, (London: University Paperback, 1972), 212. Conservatives think that all societies need to be held together by a set of shared values and beliefs, and that religion provides society with such a moral fabric.

¹⁰ The most outstanding contributions were brought by Pope Pius XI (*Quadregesimo Anno*, 1931) and Pope John XXIII (*Mater et Magistra*, 1961). See also the documents elaborated within the framework of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

¹¹ Maurice Duverger, XXXI-XXXII.

¹² Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1-20.

¹³ Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 63.

¹⁴ See Rafael Caldera, *Specificitatea democrației creștine* (Bucharest: Ed. Progresul Românesc, 1992), 63-64; Pierre Letamendia, 26; Chantal Millon-Delsol, *Statul subsidiar* (Cluj-Napoca: EFES, 2001), 204; Luigi Sturzo, *Libertatea: prietenii și dușmanii săi* (Bucharest: Ed. Paideia, 2001), 47-48; Jean-Dominique Durand, 131-177.

¹⁵ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, „Christian Parties: An Oxymoron?”, *The National Review*, Vol. 43, No. 13 (29 July 1991): 21.

¹⁶ Paradoxically, there are also similarities to be found between Christian democracy and the ideologies that it had long rejected and attempted to build an alternative to. With liberalism they share the emphasis laid on private property,

individual initiative and human rights. With socialism they find common ground in the support for the welfare state, community and the regulation within certain limits of the market forces.

¹⁷ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, 21.

¹⁸ See Daniel L. Seiler, *Partidele politice din Europa* (Iași: Institutul European), 67. The author considers that these parties reflect with fidelity the social structure of the Catholic community. They possess a militant and electoral basis scattered well beyond the classical social classes as their electorate cast the vote on the basis of its Catholic affiliation.

¹⁹ Unlike the populist parties who are „catch-all focused”. See Michael Shafir, „From Historical to „Dialectical” Populism: The Case of Post-Communist Romania”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes*, vol. L, Nos. 3-4 (September-December 2008): 428. For an interesting discussion along the same lines but applied to the German case, see also Oskar Gabriel and Everhard Holtmann, *Handbuch politisches System der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 2nd edition (München: Oldenbourg, 1999), 505-508.

²⁰ It is on this basis that the Christian democrats dissociate themselves from the conservatives, for whom social interests take second place to the dictates of the economy.

²¹ Gabriel Almond, „The Political Ideas of Christian-Democracy”, *Journal of Politics*, vol.10, no. 4 (1948): 751-755.

²² Already mentioned explicitly in Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) as a necessary solution against excessive centralization, the subsidiarity has its roots in the nineteenth-century 'political Catholicism' that was gradually taken over by Christian democracy in the aftermath of the Second World War. See Michael Burgess, *Comparative Federalism: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 174-175.

²³ However, efforts to forge cooperation between European Christian democratic parties go back to the interwar period. See Roberto Papini, *L'Internationale démocrate chrétienne. La coopération internationale entre les partis démocrates chrétiens de 1925 à 1986* (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1988), 20-21. For further details, see also Pascal Delwit, „The European People's Party: stages and analysis of a transformation”, in *The Europarties. Organisation and Influence* ed. Pascal Delwit, Erol Külahci, Cédric Van de Walle (Bruxelles: Centre d'étude de la vie politique of the Free University of Bruxelles, 2004), 136-137.

²⁴ The grouping was formed in 1976 and benefited from the impetus given to it by the former Belgian Prime Minister Wifried Martens, who presided over the committee that drew up its statute and rules of procedure. The most sensitive issue proved to be the naming of this organisation as on the one hand there were those who would have preferred a clear-cut connection to its Christian democratic roots and, on the other hand, those who would have preferred not to shut the doors for the conservatives and other parties that could have helped to build a credible opposition to the leftist parties. The result was of course a compromise as the new grouping was baptized European People's Party – Federation of the Christian Democratic Parties within the European Communities. See Ovidiu Vaida, „Bătălia pentru curentul popular”, *Sfera Politicii* 118 (2006): 8-10.

²⁵ Richard Corbett, Francis Jacobs and Michael Shackelton, *Parlamentul European*, 6th edition (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 2007), 77.

²⁶ “[...] us as Christian Democrats, moderates, and centrists, members of the EPP”. See *A Union of Values* – Final Text agreed at the XIV EPP Congress (Berlin, January 2001) at <http://www.epp-ed.eu/group/en/unionofvalues-final.asp> [accessed on 15 March 2009].

²⁷ Steven Van Hecke, „Démocrates chrétiens et conservateurs au Parlement européen. Mariage d’amour ou de raison?”, in *Démocraties chrétiennes et conservatismes en Europe. Une nouvelle convergence?* ed. Pascal Delwit (Bruxelles: Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2003), 329.

²⁸ Steven Van Hecke, 323-343.

²⁹ See also Ioan-Vasile Leb and Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, „Nationality and Confession in Orthodoxy”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 7,21 (Winter 2008): 75.

³⁰ Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* (Bucharest: Universul, 1998): 316.

³¹ Radu Preda, „Un început de drum” (essay published in *Adevărul literar și artistic* 862 (14 March 2007): 7), in *Semnele vremii. Lecturi social-teologice*, ed. Radu Preda (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2008), 45-49.

³² John T.S. Madeley and Zsolt Enyedi, *Church and State in Contemporary Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2003): 222.

³³ Teodor Baconsky, *Turn înclinat: fragmente de arheologie profetică* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2007): 192.

³⁴ Sorin Alexandrescu: 316.

³⁵ Radu Preda, „Teologia panortodoxă” (essay published in *Renașterea* 12 (2004): 3), in *Semnele vremii. Lecturi social-teologice*, ed. Radu Preda (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2008), 25-30.

³⁶ According to one of the most important party leaders, Gabriel Țepelea, the party has behind it a history of 150 years. See Gabriel Țepelea, „Istorie zbuciumată, istorie glorioasă” (first published in *Dreptatea*, 15 February 1990) in: IDEM, *Itinerar în vremi de cumpănă. Articole. Evocări. Declarații. Interviu* (Bucharest: Tritonic), 13-16.

³⁷ Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu. Biografia unui mare român* (Bucharest: Ed. Saeculum I.O., 1997), 160.

³⁸ See Dorin C. Domuța, “Prémises chrétien démocrates dans la pensée de Iuliu Maniu”, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai - Studia Europaea* XLVIII/1 (2003): 123-130.

³⁹ See also C. Dron, “Biserica și problemele sociale”, *Viața românească*, Iași, 1927, 235 and following.

⁴⁰ See also Jean-Marie Mayeur, *Des partis catholiques à la Démocratie chrétienne* (Paris: Ed. Armand Colin, 1980), 217.

⁴¹ Ion Diaconescu, “Pe același drum”, in *Pe același drum. Doctrina creștin democratică românească*, ed. Gabriel Țepelea (Bucharest: Ed. Tritonic, 2000), 10.

⁴² For instance George Ciorănescu played an active role in Nouvelles Equipes Internationales. See George Ciorănescu, *Europa unită. De la idee la întemeiere* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2004). For further details, see Ștefan Delureanu, *Geneza Europei comunitare. Mesajul democrației de inspirație creștină* (Bucharest: Ed. Paideia, 1999), 60.

⁴³ See in this context the personalistic preoccupations of Eugen Ionescu and Emmanuel Mounier’s interview published in the magazine „Viața românească”, no. 4 (1939): 130-136.

⁴⁴ The texts of these conferences were then published in a collection of volumes under the suggestive title “Issues of our time” [*Problemele timpului*]. See also the standpoints of other important party leaders: Gabriel Țepelea, *Problema omului în societatea românească* (Bucharest: Ed. Vremea, 1947); Ion Miclea, *Elemente de politică*

creștină (Bucharest: Ed. Vreimea, 1947); and Coriolan Gheție, *Introducere la omul nou* (Bucharest: Ed. Vreimea, 1947).

⁴⁵ Personal secretary of Iuliu Maniu, sentenced in 1947 by the communist authorities to 17 years in jail, and a frontline character of Romanian politics after 1989, when he became the official leader of PNȚCD.

⁴⁶ See *Postaccession Political Program National Christian Democrat Peasant Party* (adopted on 21 January 2007) at www.pntcd.ro [accessed on 15 March 2009]. See also Victor Ionescu, *Creștin-Democrația europeană și Creștin-Democrația românească*, (Iași: Editura Lumen, 2006), 67-68.

⁴⁷ See paragraph IV.2.g from the *Postaccession Political Programme National Christian Democrat Peasant Party*.

⁴⁸ Dana Curciu-Sultănescu, "Dincolo de cele două Românii" in *12/XII: Revoluția portocalie în România* ed. Bogdan Teodorescu and Dan Sultănescu, (Bucharest: Editura Fundației PRO, 2005), 223.

⁴⁹ See also Nicolae Constantinescu, „Nevoia de creștin-democrație în România de azi”, *Revista 22* (10 November 2006) at <http://www.revista22.ro/nevoia-de-crestin-democratie-in-romania-de-azi-3219.html> [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁵⁰ Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Systemwechsel in Rumänien: Von der Revolution zur Transformation* (München: Oldenbourg, 1998), 283.

⁵¹ Bogdan Lefter, „Creștin-democrați, populari, conservatori”, *Ziua* (10 February 2005) at <http://www.ziua.ro/display.php?data=2005-02-10&id=169195> [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁵² See also Lavinia Stan, „From Riches to Rags: The Romanian Christian Democrat Peasant Party”, *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2005): 198.

⁵³ Made of CDR, the Social Democratic Union (UDS) and UDMR.

⁵⁴ See also Florin Abraham, *România: de la comunism la capitalism* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2006), 381.

⁵⁵ Run mainly through the Department of Studies, Doctrines and Programmes, coordinated by Gabriel Țepelea, the vice-president of the party.

⁵⁶ Dana Curciu-Sultănescu, 224.

⁵⁷ See Elena Romașcanu, „Partide etnice și partide regionaliste. România vs. democrațiile stabile”, *Journal for the Studies of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 9 (winter 2004): 99.

⁵⁸ The political organisations of most ethnic minorities are called unions. Only the German minority is represented by a forum and the Jewish minority by a federation. See Cristian Preda, *Partide și alegeri în România postcomunistă: 1989-2004* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005), 20.

⁵⁹ According to the electoral results, UDMR gained 41 seats in the 1990 elections, 39 in 1992, 36 in 1996, 39 in 2000, and 32 in 2004. See Cristian Preda and Sorina Soare, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic din România* (București: Nemira, 2008), 163. UDMR is represented by 31 parliamentarians after the 2008 elections.

⁶⁰ See for instance Elena Romașcanu, 99-101 or Daniel Badea, „Fundațiile liderilor – Non-profitabil profitabil din curtea UDMR”, *Prezent* (16 June 2008) at http://www.prezentonline.ro/article_detail.php?idarticle=2816 [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁶¹ See the Programme of UDMR (adopted on 2 February 2003) at www.udmr.ro [accessed 15 March 2009]. According to this document, the Union functions on the

basis of the principle of internal self administration, by separating its decision-making, executive and control branches.

⁶² Arthur Suci, "Analiza politicilor discursive: Vadim vs. UDMR. Reînvierea temei naționale" in *12/XII: Revoluția portocalie în România* ed. Bogdan Teodorescu and Dan Sultănescu (Bucharest: Editura Fundației PRO, 2005), 231.

⁶³ Florin Abraham, 404.

⁶⁴ See also Anneli Ute Gabanyi, 297.

⁶⁵ See especially the part of the UDMR Political Programme on the regional development and to the local administration.

⁶⁶ See especially the part of the UDMR Political Programme on the autonomy.

⁶⁷ See especially the part of the UDMR Political Programme on religious denominations, youth, social policy and family policy.

⁶⁸ See especially the parts of the UDMR Political Programme on economic and social policies.

⁶⁹ See especially the part of the UDMR Political Programme on the basic principles.

⁷⁰ The moderate, "centralist" grouping around UDMR's president Markó Béla faces increasing opposition from the Reformist Block aggregated around László Tökes and the mayor of Odorheiu Secuiesc, Szasz Jenő. The moderates, who brought UDMR several times in government, perceive UDMR as a national party although with a regional representativity and a special responsibility for the organisation of the Hungarian minority, whereas the reformists favour the creation of a special political-administrative unit in the regions inhabited by the Hungarian minority with a distinct political activity. If the moderates share the opinion that the unification with Hungary might be realized only within the borders of the European Union, the reformists aim at a society with fragmented identities whose loyalties do not overlap. As the opposition between the two wings deepened, the reformists or the radicals as they are also known decided to set up their own political organisation Hungarian Civic Union (UCM) as an alternative to UDMR. See Florin Abraham, 410-411.

⁷¹ See Sorina Soare, "Du conservatisme et de la démocratie chrétienne. Stratégies de survie politique dans l'espace politique roumain d'après 1989", in *Démocraties chrétiennes et conservatismes en Europe. Une nouvelle convergence*, ed. Pascal Delwit (Bruxelles: Ed. de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2003), 303.

⁷² Arthur Suci, 232.

⁷³ See Cristian Preda and Sorina Soare, 147.

⁷⁴ According to professor Daniel Barbu, „not even the most superficial observer of the Romanian political life had ever suspected this party of Christian democratic, conservative or peasantist inclinations. On the contrary, the Democratic Party always distinguished itself by social-democratic ambitions". In his opinion, the only explanation for such an abrupt change from one side of the political spectrum to the other resides in the politicking tactics in Brussels itself. „In Bucharest and Brussels alike" there is „indifference with regard to [political] convictions and a focusing on opportunities. Why should not the largest European political party adopt the Romanian party, which seemed to be destined to long-term primacy in electoral preferences at the Union's oriental margins?". See Daniel Barbu, „Lecția Europei", *Prezent* (19 December 2006) at

<http://www.prezentonline.ro/print-preview.php?idarticle=3069> [accessed on 15 March 2009]. See also the statements of Jürgen Henkel, director of the Romanian branch of Hanns Seidel Foundation, who acknowledged that for PPE „is important

that PD managed to become the third party on the Romanian political stage” in the interview he offered to the Romanian daily *Ziua*, in Brândușa Armanca, „Dacă zona creștin-democrată e divizată, e mai vulnerabilă”.

⁷⁵ For a larger discussion on the technicalities of the merger between the two parties, see Valeriu Stoica, *Unificarea dreptei* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), 91-101.

⁷⁶ *Political Programme of the Democrat-Liberal Party* (adopted on the first Congress of the party on 15 December 2007) at www.partiduldemocratliberal.ro [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁷⁷ Valeriu Stoica, „Restructurarea polului de centru-dreapta. Scenarii și provocări pentru Partidul Național Liberal” (Text presented on the occasion of the meeting from Hilton Athénée Palace Hotel on 30 May 2005) in: *Unificarea dreptei*, 170-179.

⁷⁸ Valeriu Stoica, „Liberalii și unificarea forțelor de dreapta” (Essay published in *Ziarul Financiar* from 13 November 2006) in: *Unificarea dreptei*, 212-213.

⁷⁹ See for instance Ioana Paverman, „O struțocămilă ideologică: Partidul Democrat-Liberal”, *Observatorul cultural*, 402 (13 December 2007) at http://www.observatorcultural.ro/O-strutocamila-ideologica-Partidul-Democrat-Liberal*articleID_18887-articles_details.html [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁸⁰ Michael Shafir, 468-469.

⁸¹ According to the Barometer of Public Opinion (BPO) carried out by Gallup Romania in May 2005, 83% of Romanians declare that they have very much and much trust in the Church, whereas the trust in the institutions representative for democracy, namely the Parliament (22%) and political parties (13%) remains at an extremely low level. These data are confirmed by BPO 1998 – 2007 of the Soros Foundation, according to which 84% of the Romanians have very much and much trust in the Church, 74% in the priest/pastor, 18% in the Parliament and 12% in the political parties. See Gabriel Bădescu, Mircea Comșa, Dumitru Sandu, and Manuela Stănculescu, *Barometrul de opinie publică 1998-2007*, (Bucharest: Fundația Soros România, 2007).

⁸² See for instance the decisions of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church that forbid the bishops, the priests, the deacons and the monks the participation in party politics and in electoral campaigns, the running for Parliament, city council, mayoralty, vice-mayorality and the holding of positions in central and local administration. ***, „Ultimele hotărâri ale Sfântului Sinod”, *Ziarul Lumina* (10 martie 2009): 1 at <http://www.ziarullumina.ro/articole;887;1;7157;0;Ultimele-hotarari-ale-Sfantului-Sinod.html> [accessed on 15 March 2009].

⁸³ According to Ecumenic Patriarch Bartholomeu I

⁸⁴ Sorin Alexandrescu: 318.

⁸⁵ Valeriu Stoica, leading representative of the PD-L, assumes that the construction of a centre-right pole will take place only gradually in a similar manner to the one that led to the fulfilment of the goals of the Treaty of Rome. See Valeriu Stoica, „Schiță de lucru privind direcțiile strategice ale PLD” (Text presented to the Permanent Delegation of PLD in July 2007), *Unificarea dreptei*, 277-290.

⁸⁶ See Nicolae Constantinescu, „Nevoia de creștin-democrație în România” and Brândușa Armanca, „Dacă zona creștin-democrată e divizată, e mai vulnerabilă”.

⁸⁷ See the signing of the Popular Manifest by PNȚ-CD with three smaller Christian democratic parties – the Union for the Reconstruction of Romania (URR), the Popular Action (AP) and the Christian-Democratic Party (PCD) in January 2005.

⁸⁸ See the creation of the Right Centre Pole by PNȚ-CD, the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the Popular Action (AP) on 19 June 2007.