

The Ideological Mapping of Political Parties in Romania. The Relationship between Dimensions of Competition and Ideological Consistency

George Jiglău, Toma Burean and Gabriel Bădescu

Political Science Department
College of Political Science
Babeş-Bolyai University

What are the main dimensions of competition in Romanian politics? Is there a match of the electorate policy preferences with those of political parties? Are these dimensions of competition present at the individual level preferences? This paper will analyze what are the main dimensions of competition between parties in Romania surveying patterns of the party in the electorate. Next we discuss the reliability of using VAA data for Romanian party mappings and compare our results with other party mappings. Following Converse's measurement of ideological consistency we survey ideological patterns at the individual level. The analysis reveals that one dimension consistency is higher than ideological consistency. We find a positive effect of education and right wing ideological leaning. There is a positive effect of the time of survey response on ideological consistency. The results provide validity for the measurement of ideological consistency at the individual level.

INTRODUCTION

On December 9, 2012 Romania had parliamentary elections for *Camera Deputaților* and *Senat* the two representative assemblies. The results showed that the clear victor was the Social Liberal Union the governing coalition (Uniunea Social Liberală-USL) composed of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat - PSD) and the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal) with 58% of the vote. The opposition represented Right Romania Alliance composed of The Democratic Liberal Party (PDL – Partidul Democrat Liberal) and two smaller parties Civic Force (FC - Forța Civică) and New Republic (Noua Republică) obtained 16%. A new party entered the parliament the People's Party - Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD Partidul Poporului – Dan Diaconescu) with 13%. The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania obtained 5% of the vote. The results showed that the Democratic Liberal Party which was a governing party from 2004 until February 2012 lost half of its electorate. This result comes after a difficult economic period. During the period of the right wing government Romania was faced with periods of economic contraction counteracted by austerity measures such as laying off 30% of the public workforce. Wages in the public sectors were cut by 25% and the employment rules forbade hiring unless seven public employees were laid off. The period just before the parliamentary elections was confronted with political scandals and instability. In the beginning of 2012 protests against the austerity measures (Burean and Badescu 2013) coupled with politicians' corruption scandals led to the resignation of PDL government. A government of technocrats took its place. The new government head by the leader of Civic Force lasted for three months and had to resign upon receiving a no confidence vote. The opposition took charge and in May the USL government headed by the socialist Victor Ponta was invested. The period from May to December was turmoiled by the scandals surrounding the suspension of the president Traian Basescu. Several institutions and political leaders within the EU expressed concerns regarding the fairness of the way the president was suspended and the interim president became Crin Antonescu the head PNL. The results showed that a large majority of the citizens that turned out to vote voted for the suspension of the president. The 50% threshold required for a referendum to be legitimate failed to be reached and president Basescu was reinstated as president in August.

The 2012 electoral results showed that the Romanian political party system became volatile. First 13% of political preferences of voters shifted to a new populist party. The People's Party – Dan Diaconescu was one the first new parties that came from outside the political arena to enter parliament since 1990. Since 1990 the number of political parties in Parliament decreased. In 1990, 16 parties entered the legislative assembly benefiting from an electoral system without threshold. In 1992, seven parties passed the 5%, in 1996 there were six parties, in 2000 five, and in 2004 and 2008 the number of parties was four (Jigla and Gherghina, 2011). In 2012 five parties gained representation in Parliament.

The political alliances parties made since 2008 contributed to the confusion in terms of choosing a political party. In 2008 PDL and PSD formed a large coalition and governed for several months. This was followed by a minority government headed by PDL and UDMR that governed until 2012, when a government was formed by the coalition of PNL and PSD. This is the political and economic context in which we will analyze party mappings. We want to see to what extent these events are reflected in the issue preferences of citizens. Are the party mappings and ideological thinking affected in any way?

This paper will use the VAA data collected from the application „votulmeu.com” to build party maps based on the preferences of citizens and party supporters and track any evidence of the confusion that would exist at the electorate level. It will discuss the validity of the results. Next we will look at the structuring of preferences at the individual level. We will

explain the variance of ideological consistency by left-right and GAL-TAN self placement, education, frequency of political discussion and age. Unlike in other surveys the VAA measures the exact time it took the user to complete the survey. We introduce this measure into the regression model and expect that longer time of response is associated with higher ideological consistency. Compared to other studies we provide a measurement of the individual level ideological consistency and find support for the aggregate measurements of party mappings.

The paper is structured in the following way: First we describe the use of VAAs in studies on political behavior. Secondly we present the approaches used in party mappings in general with a focus on studies that used VAAs followed by a discussion on party mappings in Romania and studies on ideological consistency at the individual level. Next we present the Romanian VAA and the methodology, followed by a presentation of the results and a discussion on the implications of the findings.

VAA STUDIES

The rationale of a voting advice application is to provide an online tool for citizens to match the issue preferences of political parties to citizens' preferences on a list of issues. It is designed more as a tool for citizens than a method of data gathering. Due to the high number of respondents and the focus on matching policy preferences of citizens to candidates, researchers use it to test hypotheses regarding the quality of advice it gives and the biases it encompasses or as a determinant of vote choice or as a measurement of congruence between citizens and candidates or political parties.

The number of citizens that respond to voting advice applications varies substantially.

For example in the Netherlands in the 2006 elections there were 4,6 million users, Germany in 2009 there were 6,7 million (12% of the electorate), Belgium had 1 million users (13% of the electorate), Switzerland had 1 million users (more than 20% of the electorate). In the Czech Republic at the presidential elections on 2013 over 1 million users used KohoVolit.eu. In 2009 European Elections in Poland) there were 31389 users, in Lithuania 1836 and in Latvia 974. Finally in Romania in 2009 there were 1678 respondents VAA, Bulgaria 6319 and Hungary 6622 (Eudo.eu). The 2012 voting advice application used in this paper had 16107 respondents that went through the test, representing 0, 08% of the electorate. Compared to 2009, VAA, the number of respondents increased dramatically.

First there are studies that inquire about the quality of the match given by such a tool (Lefevere and Walgrave 2012). They see the VAA as having potential to give the wrong advices because of the way the issues are framed and phrased. This research focuses on the effect of statement selection on the type of advice the software offers. They draw warnings about the distortions and the manipulative potential of the application (Nuytemans et al. 2010). The number of issues that are characteristic to an ideological camp may favor matches with parties of the same profile (Lefevere and Walgrave 2012). Some VAAs contain statements that are associated by citizens with a political party (Nuytemans et al. 2010). The more there are statements associated with a party the more that electoral competitor is favored.

Secondly there are studies that measure the impact of VAA's on the party vote. VAA can be considered as a mechanism of vote influence or as an additional tool of the electoral campaign that help voters to make informed choices. That is why it could be considered as an instrument of political influence. There is an abundant literature on the effects of political campaigning on political preferences. Hansen (2008) identifies six stories explaining the impact of electoral campaigns. First citizens can learn from campaigns what are their duties and choices (civic learning model) (Freedman et al. 2004 and Moore, 1987), secondly citizens

have predispositions that are simply reinforced through campaigns (minimal effects model) (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954, Schmitt-Beck 2007: 753), thirdly political campaigns can set the issues according to which citizens judge candidates (priming studies) (Iyengar and Simon, 1993) and influence party choice, fourthly citizens acquire and digest information obtained from political campaigns and make decisions according to the type of information they remember (memory based models) (Althaus, 2003, Zaller, 1992,). The fifth model sees the voters as continuously ingesting information (Lodge et al. 1995) from political discourses and adjust or reinforce their preferences. Finally the model of heuristics (Iyengar, 1990, Lau and Redlawsk, 2001, Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991) that considers voters as investing minimal efforts to obtain good quality or enough information to make a choice between candidates. Studies that use VAA embraced models of campaign influence on vote choice. Some compared vote switching of VAA users to non-users. The results showed that VAA users are more likely to resort to vote switching (Andreadis, Pianzola and Garzia, 2013) than non-VAA users. This finding confirms the civic learning model in which the VAA is viewed as a political learning device. Wall, Krouwel and Vitiello (2011) used an experimental design to present the Dutch VAA as more of a tool for reinforcing pre-existing preferences of citizens. They found confirmation of the minimal effects model of VAA influence on vote in electoral campaigns.

Thirdly there are studies that accentuate the use of VAA as an alternative for measuring congruence or mapping the preferences of the party in the electorate. These are domains that are not so well covered by the existing research (Garzia and Marschall, 2012) and it tries to put the data obtained through this application as a proxy for expert survey or party manifesto party mappings. VAA are easy to organize, the number of respondents is high and in many countries the characteristics of the respondents match the features of citizens answering in face to face surveys. Research that built party mappings focused on accuracy and relative match with party mappings from manifesto data or surveys. The results indicated that VAAs can be used especially in countries in which the number of users is high and approximating the population's socio demographic characteristics. Although VAAs may measure accurately party positions there they do not take into account valence issues and can be manipulated by candidates who might choose to have positions close to as many voters as possible in order to get a higher score (Wagner and Ruusuvirta, 2010). VAA respondents are well educated, young and interested in politics. Where possible the problem of representativeness was partially solved giving weight to (Wheatley et al. 2012) under-represented groups.

Wheatley et al. (2012) built a party system map using data from an experiment in which they compared VAA data from Scotland to party supporters' preferences on VAA with a survey, discovering remarkable similarities between VAA party mapping and the party mapping that used survey data. Germann et al. (2012) build the party mappings by using data from Smartvote for the Swiss parliamentary elections of 2007 and find comparable results with survey measurements of the preferences and mappings from survey data. Our paper belongs to this third stream of studies.

We explore and identify patterns yielding from the political preferences expressed by users of the *Votulmeu* (My Vote) and compare our results with ideological mappings of data from Romania that used other data gathering methods.

We go further and drawing from ideological consistency studies starting with Converse (1964) we compute scores of ideological coherency of citizens. The aim is to explain the level of programmatic coherence of citizens according to the type of issues, party support, left-right self-placement and political interest. This test is needed since the VAA data and party mappings literature relies on the propensity of citizens to relate issues and use them to select parties.

IDEOLOGICAL SPACE AND PARTY MAPPINGS

Researchers map parties most often according to expert surveys, interviews with representatives and party activists (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Greco, 2003, Markowski and Tucker 2010) or party manifestoes (Benoit and Laver 2006, Budge et al. 2001, Klingemann et al. 2006, Laver 2001). The VAA presents certain advantages compared to them: they are cost effective, the number of respondents is high and they offer a platform for comparison of preferences of citizens with parties or candidates. On the bleak side, respondents are self-selected, respondents might not be representative, and parties could manipulate their position to become more popular online (Germann et al. 2012).

For Romania, and most of post-communist new democracies in Eastern Europe, Herbert Kitschelt (1992) identified two dimensions of competition between political parties that are present in the countries that joined EU until 2007. First the source of competition between political parties was viewed as originating from the allocation of material resources in society. On the one hand there are political parties that support the unstructured allocation while other parties will support a redistributive system. Secondly the competition among parties stems from the way rights should be distributed in society. One camp supports a universal, equal opportunities view of how these rights should be allocated. The other camp agrees that certain groups should enjoy more rights than others. Other topics identified by Kitschelt (1992) were regime divide or the communist/anticommunist divide, national-cosmopolitan and ethnic divide. Evans and Whitefield (1993) and Whitefield (2002) confirm the findings of Kitschelt. Whitefield (2002) claims that despite the diversity of cleavages the dimensions of competition in Eastern Europe turned out to be not very different from the Western Europe. The importance of ethnic diversity (attitudes toward Hungarians or Russians) remains one specific dimension of competition in some countries from Eastern Europe (Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, or Romania). Kitschelt (1992) used mass surveys and expert placement of parties when building the party maps in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. For Romania he mapped parties on the distributive versus spontaneous market allocation axis and the authoritarian versus libertarian axis. Greco (2003) used expert survey data from 2002 to discover an economic dimension and a *pro* versus *anti* attitude towards minorities.

Later studies confirmed the existence of two dimensions of competition among parties in Romania (Benoit and Laver, 2006). Fesnic (2008) built party mappings using preferences of the Romanian electorate from 1993 until 2006 and identified a dimension labelled left-right referring to what Hooghe et al. (2010) called economic left right. The second dimension identified was labelled New Politics referring to the authoritarian/libertarian preferences.

European integration is an issue that gains relevance in Eastern Europe. The Chapel Hill expert surveys of 2006 and 2010 focused on this topic revealing parties as having differentiated positions in Eastern Europe (Hooghe et al. 2010 and Bakker et al. 2012). In Poland the results of the 2003 referendum could be explained by the electoral choices of the 2002 parliamentary elections. The choice for a Eurosceptic party in 2002 predicted an anti EU attitude in the referendum, overshadowing socio-demographic determinants. The result is surprising for a political system characterized by low party loyalties (Markowski and Tucker, 2010). *We hypothesize that with the help of the Votulmeu. VAA data we identify dimensions of competition similar to other party mappings for Romania. The economic left right dimension, GAL-TAN and attitudes toward EU are the issues on which parties would be differentiated.*

The next section will analyze the extent of programmatic thinking of VAA users. Party mappings are important when voters and parties think in terms of policies. Citizens use party mappings in order to judge and select parties according to their own preferences. VAAs have this assumption when the application matches the preferences of respondents with the political parties' stance. We will measure programmatic thinking of respondents by analyzing the extent of ideological coherence of citizens drawing from ideological consistency studies.

IDEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY

To what extent citizens and party supporters hold true attitudes? The type of data that the VAA provides allows for an attempt to answer this question. The study of Converse from the 1960ies and 70ies (Converse, 1964, Converse 1970, Converse and Markus 1979) surveyed preferences of the American citizens and looked for issue constraint as a measurement of ideological thinking. He used item-correlations to policy preferences to find weak correlation between issues (Kuklinski and Peyton, 2007). Consistency is defined as predictability. It is a concept that comes from cognitive dissonance theory that explains the need of individuals to have attitudes in equilibrium. According to Converse the most “trivial” expression of issue constraint is that opinion on policies should be logically related and easy to predict one issue stance from another. He included two other indicators of ideological thinking that were less used. The level of complexity of ideological thinking was measured with open ended questions (Campbell et al. 1960, Converse 1964) criticized more for measuring verbal skills (Wykoff, 1980). The stability of the preference was measured with panel study data and differentiated the opinions from attitudes although it was not clear how to differentiate attitude change from randomly expressed preferences (Bennet, 1975, 178 Wykof 1980, 121). The other problem is that attitude stability might be an indicator of a rigid type of thinking that is not what Converse would characterize as having a belief system. As a measurement of issue consistency Converse (1964) and later on Nie (1974) made use of the gamma coefficient as well, that proved to be inefficient for measuring pairs of responses across variables (Balch, 1979: 221). The topic of belief systems in mass publics sparked controversies and discussions about the validity of the measurements (Coveyou and Piereson, 1977, Nie and Andersen 1974, Nie and Rabjohn, 1979, Wykoff, 1987). The using of the gamma coefficient and the Pearson’s R are providing measurement errors when used to measure attitudinal stability or ideological constrain (Achen, 1975, Erickson, 1979). Other authors proposed exploratory factor analysis to find issue constraints (Stimson 1975, Judd and Milburn 1981) and were criticized for using Pearson’s R and not addressing the problem of differing distributions. Wykoff (1980, 1987) focused on the validity of the measures of consistency and revealed that level of conceptualization, attitude stability and consistency are not related. Moreover there was no indication that there is a relationship between consistency and variables such as education or political interest making Wykoff suspect serious validity problems of the concepts.

Converse (1964) concluded that the majority of American citizens have no attitudes that is why it is nearly impossible to find ideological thinking or constraint. The critics of Converse in the 70ies argued that his measurements are flawed (Coveyou and Piereson, 1977, Nie and Andersen 1974, Nie and Rabjohn, 1979,), that consistency should be measured at the individual level (Barton and Parsons, 1977).

Zaller (1992) follows Converse’s ideas and finds out that the political environment shapes the way citizens think about ideology. The attention citizens pay to politics is shaping the type of opinions they express in surveys. Polarization makes citizens to pay more attention to politics. The VAA in Romania was applied during the parliamentary elections electoral campaign, a favorable context for drawing citizens’ attention to politics. Bartels (2003) confirms Zallers’ findings that the context has a powerful impact on citizens’ preferences thus making it difficult to find true consistent belief systems in citizens’ minds. Since our study is cross sectional it is possible that what we will measure is more a product of the environment than a manifestation of belief systems.

Other researchers (Klingemann, 1979, Dalton, 2002, Gordon and Segura 1997) measured the presence of ideological consistency and the citizens’ ability to use the left right super

dimension. People are increasingly able to use the left right scale to position parties and this shows that although citizens are unable to relate particular issues that make up a liberal or conservative or socialist ideology they can use these terms to correctly choose parties. In Romania the usage of left right scale usage is scarce with 40% of the citizens being able to place themselves on the scale (Marian, 2012). The ideological leaning differentiates the Romanian electorate. Thus right wing supporters are predominantly urban, better educated and with higher income than left wing supporters (Fesnic, 2008). *Thus the expectation is that right wing supporters would be more consistent than supporters of left wing parties.*

Many studies showed that there is a linkage between education, political interest and ideological leanings and the capacity to use the left right scale (Huber and Powell, 1994, Zaller 1992, Althaus 2003, Wykoff, 1980, 1987, Converse 1964). Converse (1964) and later Wykoff (1980, 1987) linked having a belief system to education and political interest. Converse found that the different categories of elite who are educated qualify as ideologues (Converse, 1964). Barton and Parsons (1977, p. 171) indicated that at the individual level there is a link between education and consistency and that the elite have more consistent attitudes than the public.

The VAA data allows for an implicit measurement of ideological thinking. Unlike face to face surveys the VAA records the time it takes for a respondent to complete the questionnaire. We suspect that the style of response affects ideological consistency. Users that respond fast might not dedicate much time in thinking about the answers. That is why we suspect that the amount of time to fill in the questionnaire has a positive effect on ideological consistency. Citizens who take more time in answering to questions on policy might have more meaningful responses. Finally we control ideological consistency by age. We suspect that older citizens might take longer to fill in the questionnaire than their younger counterparts.

Following these findings we make use of measurements of ideological consistency at the individual level. We differentiate between issue arena consistency and cross domain consistency. The first measures coherence on one dimension (economic left-right, European integration and GAL-TAN). The second is a measure of consistency on two dimensions and we call it ideological consistency. Single domain consistency represents the sum of differences between all the possible combinations of pairs of variables within that arena. The score is recoded so that it would vary from 0 to 1. 0 would mean perfect consistency. We have obtained three scores of consistency: on European integration and austerity measures, GAL-TAN and left-right.

The formula for measuring the level of consistency is the following:

$$C = \sum_{1 \leq i < j \leq n} |V_i - V_j|$$

C= preference consistency
 Vi = a preference expressed on issue i
 Vj= a preference expressed on issue j

For ideological consistency, we applied the same formula in which we paired issues from related dimensions. Thus we obtained three scores of ideological consistency: European

integration + GAL-TAN, European integration and left-right, GAL-TAN and left-right. We hypothesize that party supporters are more consistent on a single dimension and receive better scores than on ideological consistency.

In order to explain the variance of consistency scores following Wykoff (1987) and others (Barton and Parsons, 1977, Dalton 2001) we expect ideological consistency to increase with level of education, frequency of political discussion, time in preference expression and left right use.

Ideological consistency = time to fill in the survey X b1 + education X b2 + left-right X b3 + GAL-TAN X b4 + frequency of political discussion X b5 + age X b6 + B

We expect the following hypothesis to be tested successfully:

H1. Single domain consistency of party supporters will be higher compared to cross domain or ideological consistency.

H2. Following Wykoff (1980, 1987) warnings we test the validity of the computed measure of consistency. Those citizens that are party supporters and discuss politics frequently, take longer time in expressing their preferences, have right wing ideological leanings and are better educated and consistent.

H3. We expect to find these effects on the ideological consistency score on GAL-TAN and LEFT-RIGHT than on any other combination with the European integration and austerity measures dimension. The latter is context dependent and contains recent issues. Previous studies did not find such a dimension of competition in Romania that is why we suspect that it will become less relevant in time.

Wheatley et al. (2012) acknowledged the need for an indicator of ideological thinking by selecting the citizens that responded that they feel close to a party because of the ideas it promotes. The coherence of group ideological preferences has important implications: for instance, it allows the treatment of many political groups (both manifest and latent) as if they were single entities. Party mapping procedures relies on assumptions of factorial analysis that uses correlations to confirm theoretical constructs of political competition. The VAA data allows looking at the manifestation of these theoretical constructs at the individual level.

The next section will present the Romanian VAA application, followed by the description of the methods used for testing the hypotheses and operationalization of concepts.

METHODOLOGY

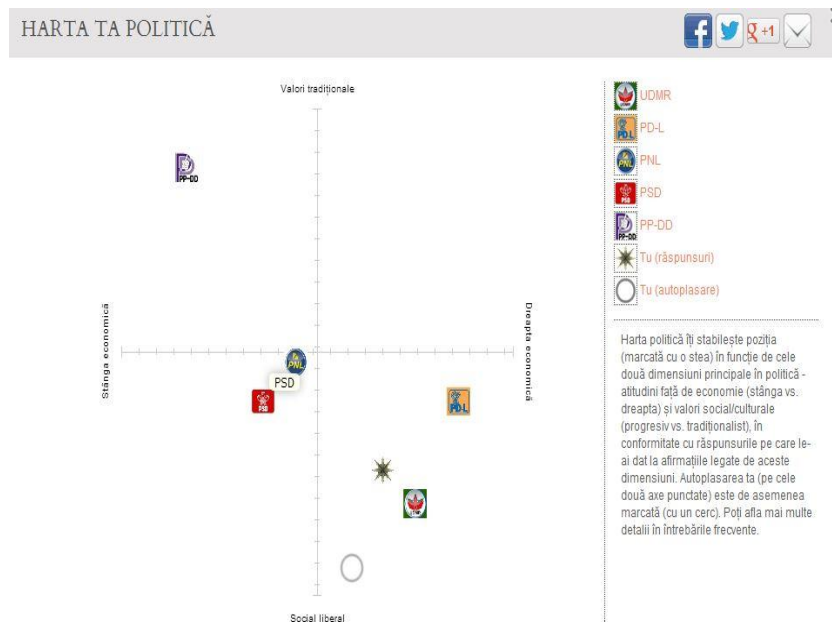
Votul Meu (My Vote)

”Votul meu” is the VAA that went online one month before the Romanian parliamentary elections that took place on 9 december 2012. The users had to express their preferences on thirty statements that were considered to be the most important for that particular electoral campaign. The possible answers were: “Completely Agree”, “Agree”, “Neither Agree nor Disagree”, “Disagree” and “Completely Disagree”. One extra option presented to respondents was “Don’t Know”. The positions of the political parties in Romania were coded on the same 30 statements by country experts and the application tied the responses of each applicant with

the score obtained by the party through the expert coding. Pre electoral surveys predicted that five parties would enter the parliament. These are the Social Democratic Party (PSD-Partidul Social Democrat), National Liberal Party (PNL- Partidul Național Liberal), The Democratic Liberal Party (PDL - Partidul Democrat Liberal), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR- Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România). At the time the elections took place PSD and PNL were in an alliance called the Social Liberal Union (USL-Uniunea Social Liberală). They were joined by several smaller parties such as the Conservative Party (PC-Partidul Conservator) and The National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR-Uniunea Nationala pentru Progresul României). Both parties have less than 2% of electoral support yet they had parliamentary representation in the 2008-2012 legislature and gained seats in the 2012 elections as well as part of the coalition. PDL was also part of an electoral coalition named The Right Romania Alliance (ARD- Alianta Romania Dreapta) that included The New Republic (Noua Republica) and the Civic Force (FC - Forta Civica) who's few representatives gained parliamentary representation. The small parties that entered the parliament with the exception of Civic Force had very few respondents. The Civic Force has 16% support within the electorate. Following the disastrous results in the parliamentary elections however the alliance was dissolved and leaders of the Civic Force were absorbed by the Democratic Liberal Party.

In addition to the preferences on policies users were asked questions on party identification, voting behavior and left and right. "Votul Meu" contained 18484 respondents. Not all of them completed all the questions in the survey or had valid answers. After various procedures of filtering 16107 respondents' answers were kept.

Figure 1 Party positions according to expert surveys (votulmeu.com)



Methods

For the identification of dimensions we made use of the factor analysis with Varimax rotation. To identify the groupings of statements that qualified for theoretical constructs, we selected factors with Cronbach alpha higher than 0.7. In order to identify the positions of parties on the ideological maps we have selected the respondents that felt close to a party and they intend to vote for that party. We basically followed the method that was used in other Scottish (Wheatley, et al. 2012) and Swiss (Germann et al., 2012) VAAs. These restrictions reduced

the number of respondents to 6259 which represents 38% from the total number of persons that completed the VAA survey.

Party supporter's issue dimension consistency represents the difference between the average level of consistency of all party supporters on the dimension and the individual consistency score. The individual consistency score is the sum of differences between pairs of responses on the variables that compose the issue dimension.

Party supporter ideological consistency represents the difference between the average level of ideological consistency of all supporters and the ideological individual consistency score. The individual ideological consistency score is the sum of difference between pairs of responses on the one variable that is from two different dimensions. We included the time of response as an implicit measure of how much citizens need to think to answer questions. We suspect that the more time a person spends on a survey the more consistent the responses will be. Conversely Political interest is measured by frequency of political discussion. Left-right use is measured by the difference between the self-placement of the person and the average score of the party supporters.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In Romania, in 2012, 44% of the population uses Internet, representing the lowest level of Internet use in the European Union. It is no surprise that the data generated by Votul Meu suffered to more extent from similar representation biases as other VAAs. 78% of VAA respondents have graduate studies, and 78% come from urban areas. A 2012 face to face survey showed that 13% of the population has graduate studies and only half of the population of Romania lives in rural areas. The population that was surveyed also differs in terms of political preferences. The majority prefer right wing parties and the VAA shows that it would the right wing parties that would win the election. Thus our data will reflect the more the urban, highly educated citizens. Zaller (1992) and later Althaus (2003) showed that the better off category of population might also be the most influential voice on representatives. This group is ideal to survey because it would increase the chances to discover patterns of ideological thinking among the electorate.

Before engaging into the analysis of preferences we follow Converse's warnings regarding the pursuit of patterns of ideological thinking. When discussing about people having belief systems we have to take into account the number of non-responses. Converse (1964) noted that the number of "no opinion" in surveys is quite high leaving the expression of preferences to a few citizens. In the Romanian VAA the number of non-responses on issues is low. It ranges from 0.6% (89) to 7.5% (1190). Party supporters represent 38% (6177) of the respondents in our survey. The level non response of party supporters ranged from 0.5% (31) to 4.6% (282). In order to map the preferences of the party in the electorate (Key) we used exploratory factor analysis. (Table 1)

Table 1. Factor analysis of 30 statements on important Romanian issues.

Rotated Component Matrix

Nr.	Issue	Austerity measures/European integration	GAL-TAN	Left-right
1	The state should intervene to lower the price of basic foods.	-.266	-.116	.697

2	The Romanian state should allow the Canadian company Gabriel Resources to continue operations at Rosia Montana.	,598	,103	-.185
3	The poorest citizens should pay less income tax.	-,115	-,014	.693
4	Pension funds should be nationalized to fill shortages in the state pension fund.	-,083	,055	.632
5	External loans from institutions such as the IMF are a good solution to crisis situations.	,668	,021	-.094
6	Foreign private investors' access to natural resources contracts in Romania should be banned.	-,391	-,095	.417
7	It is acceptable for the government to cut salaries in the public sector during the crisis to keep the budget deficit at a low level.	,495	,014	-.332
8	Parliament should remain bicameral.	-,365	,043	.022
9	Romania should become a parliamentary republic.	-,367	,148	.090
10	All proven collaborators of the Securitate should be denied access to public functions.	,092	-,043	-.072
11	Ethnically-based parties should be banned.	-,063	-,405	-.068
12	Romania should restore the monarchy.	-,116	,035	-.020
13	The Bucharest authorities have too much power to decide on matters in the rest of the country.	,006	,294	.008
14	Romania should cede more decision-making power to the EU.	,608	,230	-.190
15	Romania should improve its relationship with Russia.	-,055	-,054	.052
16	Romania should pursue reunification with Moldova	,283	-,315	.148
17	International partners (such as the U.S. or EU) have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Romania when they feel there is a threat to democracy.	,655	,152	-.056
18	Homosexuals should have the right to express themselves freely in public.	,170	,169	-.035
19	The church has too much influence in Romanian society.	-,025	,071	-.038
20	The death penalty should be reintroduced for heinous crimes.	,046	-,200	.201
21	The law should give priority to employees against their employers.	-,130	-,047	.684
22	Women should have the right to decide whether to remain pregnant.	,095	-,080	.030
23	Between kindergarden and first grade, children should go to a preparatory class at school.	,538	,042	.017
24	Small rural hospitals should be closed, and the state should invest in larger regional hospitals.	,561	,066	-.270
25	Hungarian politicians should cooperate more with the authorities in Budapest than those from Bucharest to meet the objectives of the	,122	,580	.090

	Hungarian minority in Romania.			
26	All Hungarians should be obliged to learn Romanian.	-,069	-,587	.221
27	A territorial reform should include the creation of an autonomous Hungarian region.	,097	,789	-.015
28	Cultural autonomy for minorities would constitute a threat to Romania.	-,147	-,458	.260
29	Minorities should have the right to education exclusively in the mother tongue, including at university.	,148	,687	-.005
30	The Roma ethnic population of cities should live isolated from the rest of the community.	-,029	-,026	.039

We ran a factorial analysis with Varimax rotation that yielded eight dimensions that had an Eigen values larger than a unity. We selected the issues with the loading coefficients higher than 0,4 and identified three dimensions with Cronbach alpha 0.759 , 0.722 and 0.708 showing robust internal consistency. Thus we selected the three distinct policy dimensions identified in this analysis with the reliability indicator higher than 0.7. The three dimensions are labeled in Table 1.

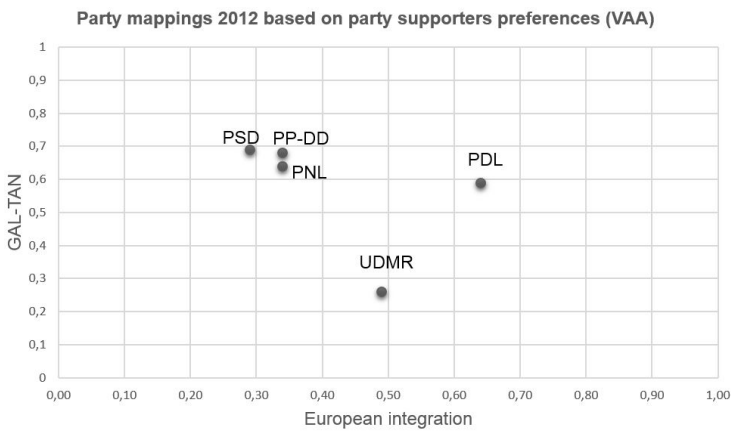
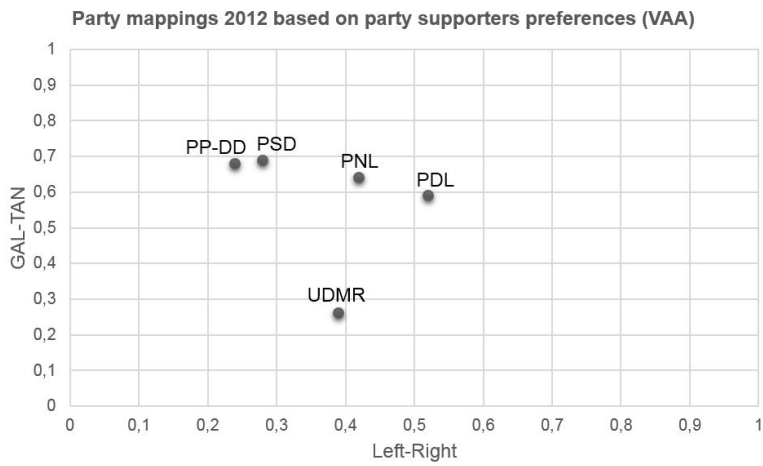
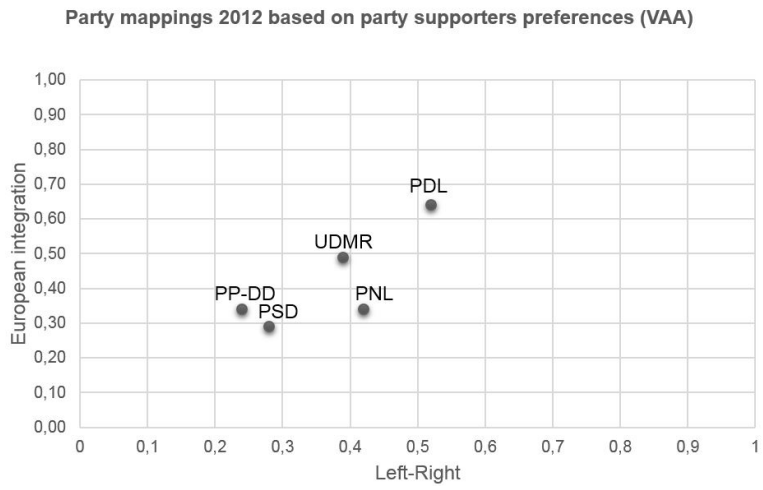
The first dimension loaded on a mixture of economic policies and preferences on the influence of IMF and EU. This includes attitudes towards foreign investments, cutting public funding by the decrease of salaries in the public sector, ceding decision-making to EU, accepting IMF and EU as protectors of democracy, closing down of hospitals and schooling six year olds. This is dimension that reflects the main issues present in Romania in 2012. In 2012 president Basescu was suspended by the parliament. A referendum was organized in order to support the Parliament's decision. The referendum failed to reach the 50% turnout required for the validation. The EU, IMF and Venice Commission issued several warnings to Prime Minister Victor Ponta and interim president Crin Antonescu not to influence the results of the referendum and respect the decisions of the Constitutional Courts. The other source for this dimension is the role IMF had on the austerity measures imposed by the government of Emil Boc. The most radical measures were the 25% cut of the wage of each public sector employee and firing 30% of the public workforce. We would call this the European integration and austerity measures dimension. We suspect that it is a transient topic that is connected to the context of 2012 referendum for the dismissal of the president and the economic crisis that made the austerity measures and relationship with IMF and EU salient.

The second dimension covers preferences on the legal existence of political parties, autonomy of a Hungarian region, cooperation with Hungarian officials on issues referring to the Hungarian community, cultural autonomy for all minorities and education in mother tongue. This issue is similar to the libertarian-cosmopolitan politics versus authoritarian particularist politics dimension identified by Herbert Kitschelt's party mappings of Eastern European (1992) dimension of party competition. We call this dimension Green-Alternative-Libertarian/Traditional-AuthoritarianNationalist GAL/TAN following Marks, et al. (2006) and Wheatley et al. (2012).

The third dimension includes preferences that refer to issues similar to the economic left-right dimension. States intervention to lower the price of basic foods, protection of the public pensions system and states protection of employees are topics that divide citizens on the economic left-right scale. We consider that the last two dimensions are more stable and explain party positions and shifts over time.

Next we mapped parties by calculating the average score a group of party supporters receives on the three dimensions and mapped the scores on pairs of dimensions.

Figure 2. Party mappings on three dimensions: European integration, GAL-TAN, economic left-right



The results of show that the five groups of supporters of parliamentary parties have distinct positions on the identified dimensions. The socialist PSD supporters, are left on the economic left right dimension compared to other parties. The party that is most leftist is the populist PPDD. The party's position according to expert surveys is distinct from the other parties. The supporters are close to the socialist and liberal parties.

PNL is considered a liberal pro-market party (Fesnic, 2008). The party mappings show that supporters are left wing, against the influence of IMF and EU and foreign investors. On left-right the party's position is leftist confirming the shift in ideology at the party supporter level. The liberal party joined a coalition with the socialists in 2011 and it won elections and formed the government together with PSD in 2012. Previous party mappings placed this party as the most right wing, anti-market and libertarian party (Grecu, 2003, Fesnic, 2008).

PDL is the party that is a former splinter from the socialist PSD. The party was in government from 2004 until 2012 when its two governments received votes of no confidence. PDL had to implement harsh economic reforms following EU and IMF recommendations. These included 25% cut in public sector wages and a cur of public workforce of 25%. Its government initiated several controversial reforms in education, health and public administration. The party mappings shows this party as most right wing on economic left right, and strongest supporter of IMF and EU intervention in the economy or country's decision making process. This is not a surprise. Earlier in 2012, the dismissal of the president, spurred worries at the EU level about the level of democratic consolidation and separation of powers in the country. EU official, the Venice Commission, the US Ambassador criticized the socialist government for pressuring the Constitutional Court to issue a decision through which the dismissal of the president would be permanent. PDL, a supporter of the president, pressed against the socialist government and encouraged its supporters not to turn out at the referendum organized to dismiss the president. This conflict between the government and president generated criticisms from the socialists and liberals addressed to European Union officials that were accused of interfering with national decision making. This was an unprecedented type of discourse coming from a country in which citizens and parties showed solid support for EU or the influence of the United States.

UDMR is the party that is most centrist on European integration and left right. The party is set apart from the other parties on GAL-TAN. UDMR is the party that represents the ethnic Hungarians. Its main goal is to ensure the representation of its minority. The party adopts centrist positions on the left right scale and on European integration and it is most open to rights accorded to minorities. The party's centrist character allowed it to be in alliance with both left and right wing parties from 1996 until 2012.

PNL, PSD and PPDD have similar positions on the austerity measures and the interference of EU and IMF in national decision making. These parties were especially vocal against the declarations of Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, and other officials that criticized Romanian officials with tempering with the independence of the Constitutional Court during the suspension procedures of Traian Basescu. The PDL electorate supported austerity measures and supported pro market policies. PDL's economic policies in 2011 and 2012 included austerity measures such as wage and benefit cuts taxation of pensions higher than 250 euro and increased VAT tax from 19% to 24%. It seems that a part of the Romanian electorate supported these measures.

The positions of party supporters on the three dimensions are somewhat different from the party supporters on the left right and GAL-TAN scales (fig.3). Huber and Powell (1994) legitimated the use of the left right scale for following the ideological switches of parties in Western Europe.

Figure 3 Party supporters position on the left right and GAL-TAN scales.

Party supporters positions on left right and GAL-TAN



The VAA data on Romania reveals important differences. It seems that all supporters view themselves as social liberal on the GAL-TAN unlike in the party mappings computed using preferences on issues. On economic left-right the most surprising position is of PNL supporters. They view themselves as supporters of market economy when asked to use the left-right scale and are at odds with the policy preferences they support (Fig2) and the position of their party (Fig. 1). While the party mapping of PNL by expert is closely matched by the mapping of policy preferences the left-right scale does not reveal such a shift. Party supporters see themselves as right wing social liberals at odds with the policy preferences they support. One reason for such a mismatch might lie in the lacking capacity of citizens to use the left right scale (Marian, 2012) as a proxy for identifying parties closed to them. Marian (2012) observed that since 1990 no more than 40% of citizens place themselves on the left-right scale, although data from 2012 shows that this percentage increased.

We do not have surveys from 2012 applied in Romania to test the external validity of our findings. However we use the Chapel Hill expert survey to compare the positions of PSD, PNL, PDL and UDMR with our findings. The expert data of the Chapel Hill survey confirms the ideological positions of political parties on the left right scale (table 2). The survey used the placement of political parties in Romania by 21 experts. They used a scale from 0 to 10 to place parties on the economic left right and GAL-TAN in 2010.

Table 2. Party positions on the left-right scale

Party label	Left-right	GAL-TAN
PSD	2.95	5.52
UDMR	6.1	4.9
PNL	6.5	4.2
PD-L	7,1	5.0

Chapel Hill expert survey 2010

The positions of political parties are similar. PDL is viewed as the most right wing party on the economy followed by PNL, UDMR and PSD. On GAL-TAN, PNL is most liberal, followed by UDMR, PDL and PSD. PNL has a different position than in our party mappings but this is possibly due to its recent ideological shift towards the left political spectrum. The

party mappings in the expert surveys matches closely the party supporters' positions on the left right and GAL-TAN adding to the validity of our results. Next the type of data the VAA allows the measurement of the level of consistency of policy preferences of party supporters on the three dimensions and the three ideological dimensions. Then variance of consistency will be explained by the amount of time it takes to fill in a questionnaire, education, left right placement and age.

IDEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY OF CITIZENS' OPINIONS

The ideological consistency score for the three pairs of dimensions and separately on each dimension were computed. The consistency score measures the total sum of differences between pairs of issues divided. For single domain consistency scores we added the differences between all possible pairs of responses that belong to that dimension. For the ideological consistency scores we added all the possible combinations of pairs of issues across the two dimensions. For example in calculating the ideological consistency score for GAL-TAN and Left-Right we paired one issue from the former with one from the latter dimension and added up all the differences that resulted from this combination. The scores were computed in such a way as they would vary from 0 to 1, 0 meaning perfect ideological consistency.

Table 3 Consistency scores of party supporters on dimensions of competition and ideological consistency

Mean consistency score on separate dimension(SD)			
Party label	Consistency score on European integration	Consistency score on GAL-TAN	Consistency score on left-right
PNL	.11(.09)	.11(.09)	.14(.12)
PSD	.11(.09)	.11(.09)	.14(.12)
PDL	.11(.09)	.11(.09)	.13(.11)
PP-DD	.12(.11)	.11(.10)	.14(.12)
UDMR	.12(.09)	.15(.08)	.14(.12)
Mean Ideological consistency scores (SD)			
Party label	Consistency score on European integration and GAL-TAN	Consistency score on European integration and left-right	Consistency score on GAL-TAN and left-right
PNL	.38(.22)	.18(.14)	.21(.14)
PSD	.47(.23)	.15(.11)	.31(.15)
PDL	.28(.20)	.20(.15)	.18(.13)
PP-DD	.41(.24)	.18(.16)	.33(.15)
UDMR	.25(.18)	.20(.15)	.16(.12)

We hypothesized that party supporters would be consistent on a single dimension compared to two dimensions. Table 3 confirms this hypothesis. The differences in consistency scores between the means on single dimensions and pairs of dimensions are quite high irrespectively of party supporters. Consistency scores on ideological dimensions are quite high confirming results of Converse (1964) and later Wykoff (1980) who considered that belief systems and

constraint are more complex. Thus a measurement of ideological consistency should include more dimensions.

Table 4. Regression model explaining ideological consistency

	GAL-TAN and left-right	European integration and left-right	European integration and GAL-TAN
Variables	Beta(S.E.)	Beta (S. E.)	Beta (S. E.)
Total time to complete the questionnaire	-.102*(.000)	-.021(.000)	-.027(.000)
Education	-.108**(.012)	-.118**(.013)	-.032(.372)
Economic left right	-.321**(.000)	.017(.000)	-.288**(.000)
GAL-TAN	-.085*(.000)	-.079*(.000)	.059(.000)
Age	-.019(.000)	-.064(.000)	-.061(.001)
Discuss politics	.034(.006)	.005(.007)	-.049(.010)
	Adj. R ² = .132	Adj. R ² = .015	Adj. R ² = .088

Table 4 tests the effect education, time of response, frequency of political discussion, age and left right have on ideological consistency. As expected the ideological consistency on GAL-TAN and left-right confirmed the hypothesis. The longer is the time of response the more consistent a person is. Having graduate studies improves the consistency score. Pro market right wing and social liberal ideological leaning improves consistency between GAL-TAN and left-right. Following these results we can speculate that the measure of ideological consistency at the individual level seems to have a certain level of validity. Next we discuss the implications of the findings, mention the limits of the study and suggest further routes to study party mappings and consistency.

CONCLUSIONS

VAA applications provide a unique opportunity for social scientists to map, test and analyze the programmatic thinking of citizens. Despite its limitations, it is relatively easy to obtain, the questionnaire contains a large sample of questions, and the number of respondents is high. In this paper the data obtained from Romania with the help of the VAA application “votulmeu.com” was used to test whether at the aggregate level we find a structuring of preferences that allows valid party mappings. Secondly the numerous questions on different issues allowed for the analysis of the structure of preferences on issues at the individual level and provided an opportunity to the validity of the measurements. The data obtained from the Romanian VAA is not representative of the whole population. As other VAA’s it is confronted with the problem of self-selection, it is biased towards citizens who use the internet, the highly educated living in urban areas. The biases are larger for Romania due to its low number of internet users (40% in 2012), the smallest figure in the European Union. There were above 16000 respondents that completed the survey. The number of respondents was small in comparison with other VAA’s applied in Europe but it was ten times larger than a VAA applied in Romania in 2009. The party mappings of preferences revealed that there were three important dimensions of competition. The first included a mixture of economic austerity measures and attitudes on foreign policy. This is a dimension that was particularly salient in 2011 and 2012. At the beginning of 2011, Traian Basescu, the president of Romania, announced the implementation of harsh austerity measures such as the raise of VAT from 19 to 24%, 25% of wage cuts in the public sector and 1 million public sector employees were to be fired. The IMF recommended some of these measures. Later in 2012 the president was suspended by a majority vote in parliament. EU officials reacted to the attempts of the socialist Ponta government to avoid constitutional rulings and dismiss the president. These

intermingling of international institutions' influence in the economy and the politics of the country affected the opinions of citizens. The second dimension identified was GAL-TAN with left wing parties being more conservative than the right wing. Thirdly the left-right dimension covered issues that have to do with providing protection for the pension system and protecting employees from employers. The mappings confirmed previous studies on the analysis of party programmatic competition in Romania. The validity of the results were tested by comparing the expert positioning of political parties in Romania by the Chapel Hill survey. The comparison showed that the National Liberal Party qualified as an outlier. On the expert survey and the mapping of party supporters preferences on the left-right and GAL-TAN showed that the experts and supporters viewed the party as a right wing pro market party. The party mappings based on preferences revealed that the supporters are closer to the socialist PSD than to the right wing PDL. It seems that the ideological shift of PNL was not reflected on the left-right or GAL-TAN scales. Next we looked at the structuring of preferences at the individual level by computing consistency scores on single dimensions and two dimensions that characterize ideological thinking. It is the latter form of consistency that comes close to what Converse conceptualized as consistency on two different abstract dimensions. We find that party supporters are very consistent on single dimensions of competition and less so on ideological consistency. The levels of consistency are quite high even when we combine two different dimensions confirming our hypothesis that party supporters will have higher consistency scores than on two dimensions. Finally we found evidence that ideological consistency varies with education, time of response, and right wing social liberal ideological leaning providing some evidence of validity of our measurement of individual level consistency. Studies of party mappings could include individual level structuring of preferences and provide support at the individual level for the aggregate party mappings. To conclude we find that VAA for Romania is a valid and cost effective indicator for party mappings. At the individual level structuring of preferences is surprisingly high providing support for the use of party mappings at the aggregate level and proved to be sensitive to higher levels of education, pro market social liberal attitudes. Finally the VAA data allowed the measurement of the time it took the user to respond to questions. We found that ideologically consistent individuals took more time to complete the questionnaire. Future studies could rely on panel data to capture the stability of the ideological structuring of preferences and answer questions about how new topics are incorporated in the ideological thinking. Comparative studies could provide evidence on whether consistency is influenced by the same factors in different contexts.

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Relative consistency to the party supporters median and the median and ideological relative consistency.