

ROMANIA IN THE THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRATIZATION

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Following the process of democratization at the end of the World War II and after the rising of new democracies in Southern Europe (Greece, Portugal, Spain) and Latin America, "the third wave of democratization" has risen considerably the interest of researchers in understanding the new political processes developing in Central and Eastern Europe. The main question asked was related to the capacity of the new democracies to consolidate in time and attract support from their citizens. More than eleven years after the fall of communism the question still remains essential and the present paper tries to deal with several aspects of the state of democracy in Romania and its foreseeable future. The main conclusion of this endeavour is that economic difficulties do not favour democracy, but neither prevents, in an absolute manner, its edification. On the other hand, the democrat regime has certain weaknesses that make it vulnerable any time, even in the countries with developed economies. Hence the need for a continuous study of the function of democratic institutions and of the measures required to improve their performance.

Introduction

In Romania, **post-communist transition** was strongly influenced in its early period by the manner in which the political regime was changed. As it is known, the communist regime was turned out by a revolution. It started as a popular protest and protestors' repression (1,050 death) created an explosive situation all over the country, which, in a matter of days, caused the disintegration of the communist regime and of the main state institutions in the end of December 1989.

Under the conditions of the sudden removal of the former regime and of the non-existence of an organised political opposition, provisory revolutionary leading was established: the Council of the Front of National Salvation, which assumed power in the state.

The process of democracy construction and consolidation went through several significant stages (Mărginean, 1997). The first stage (1990-1991) of the state of right institution edification was more tensed. The social and political debates have degenerated into violence. This stage, however, introduced essential measures for democratisation and free elections were organised. It ended with the adoption of a new constitution by the December 1991 referendum. The shift to governing came rather late, on the third round of

elections, in 1996 (after the 1990 and 1992 elections), which maintained a certain suspicion regarding the democratic character of government. Although later, the shift in power came through free elections organised regularly (at the constitutional term of 4 years). In December 2000, another shift in power took place. Romania had a social democrat governing (1990-1996), a centre-right one (1996-2000) and again a social democrat governing since November 2000.

Attempting a general characterisation we may say that eleven years after the first free elections (May 1990), democracy is a political regime with a wide popular legitimacy, consolidated by two shifts in power, with elections held at the right terms. On the other hand, we must note that the institutions of the state of right did not function as expected. Several negative phenomena such as excessive bureaucracy and corruption became reasons of concern and dissatisfaction. The economic difficulties, the stressed process of social polarisation and poverty deepening are factors feeding the discontent of population and the mistrust in the political institutions.

The **socio-economic changes** in Romania were radical related to the inherited legacy. No high rates of changes were yet observed, much less than some countries in the top of post communist transition. Transformation assessment is done in relation to the inherited legacy. Romania had a hyper centralised economy with generalised socialist structures of economy organisation, agriculture included. On the other hand, industry was strongly concentrated in large units directed mainly towards energy consuming sectors, with high consumption of materials and low efficiency, with masked unemployment by overstaffing. On a completely unprepared field, the economic reform started late (October 1990) by price liberalisation. During early 1990, priority was given to compensatory measures, of improving population's standard of living, which eroded massively during the last 10 years of communist regime by the accelerated pay out of the foreign debt (some 20 billion USD), a high rate of accumulation, the poor economic efficiency and the restrictive policy.

When the economic reform started, Romania had no foreign debt and no relations for international financing, the former socialist enterprises turned into commercial units, were de-capitalised. The economic actions were often hesitating, with a long period of establishment of the market economy and privatisation institutions, with high social costs. During 1990-1998, GDP decreased annually with an average 2.7%, the average inflation rate increased with an annual average of 101.7% (from 5% in 1990 to 256% in 1993, 32% in 1995, 154% in 1997 and about 40% during the recent years). The proportion of poor is close to 40% of the total population.

Currently, the private sector provides about 60% of GDP. It was generalised in agriculture but is still at a low level in industry. Starting with the year 2000, signs of decline stopping and economic revival were noticed, which

are expected to enhance during the next period, accompanied by the accelerated privatisation of the new industrial enterprises.

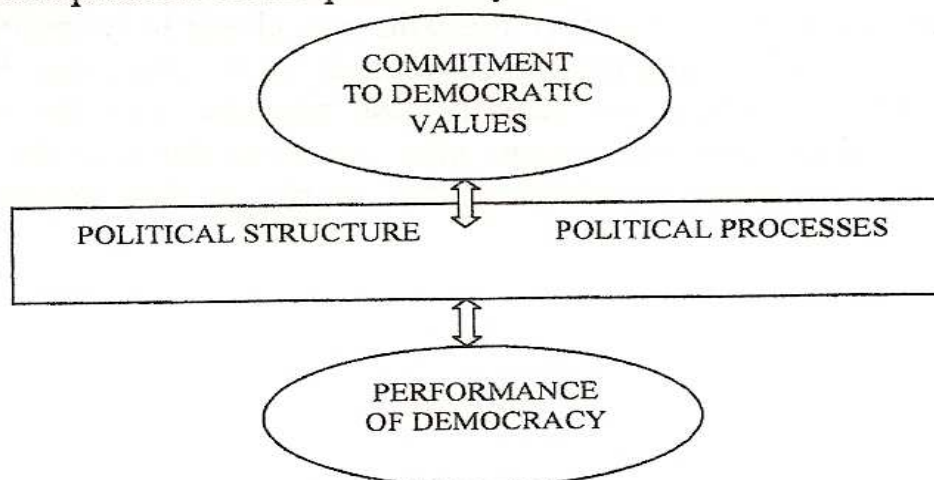
These will create favorable factors for Romania's joining EU, strategic objective with a wide popular support (In the last years, a constant rate of about 70% of Romanians consider that Romania's national goals would be better served by joining the EU - as indicated by Public Opinion Barometer – Open Society Foundation Romania, November 2000).

This study is part of a larger research project, "Value Systems of the Citizens and Socio-Economic Conditions – Challenges from democratization for the EU-Enlargement", co-ordinated by Prof. Dr. Detlef Pollack from Viadrina University – Frankfurt-Oder, Germany and integrated in the 5th EU Framework Programme. The international comparative research project is carried out by a team of sociologists, psychologists, political scientists and statisticians from the 13 countries included in the study: Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain.

The survey data we are analysing subsequently were collected in June 2000. For Romania, this period coincided with the end of the election cycle, under the conditions in which the government and the parties of the coalition in power had very low rates of popularity. Otherwise, the main party of the coalition (NPCDP - National Peasant Christian-Democrat Party) did not obtain afterwards the 5% threshold required to join the Parliament and other two parties (NLP- National Liberal Party and DP – Democrat Party) had very low rates, the votes going towards PSDR - Party of Social Democracy from Romania and GRP – Greater Romania Party.

Attitudes toward the political system

The general theoretical model adopted is a systemic model similar to the one elaborated by Almond and Powell (1996) which helps us to identify and analyze the components of the political system.



The political system is considered a set of institutions concerned with formulating and implementing the collective goals of a society or of groups within it. Political systems have institutions, agencies, or structures, such as political parties, parliaments, bureaucracies, and courts, which carry on specific activities, or perform functions, which in turn enable the political system to formulate and enforce its policies.

People's attitudes affect what they will do. The collective political attitudes, values, feelings, information and skills of the people in a society affect the way politics works in that society. To understand the propensities for present and future behavior of the citizens, we must begin with the distribution of political attitudes (their political culture).

Political culture does not explain everything about politics, but if we do not take it into account, our understanding will be seriously distorted.

The attitudes of citizens to the democracy in their country can be differentiated on two dimensions: the attitude toward democracy as legally defined (type of democracy), and the attitude to it as it actually operates (performance of democracy). This addresses the well-known distinction between constitutional norm and constitutional reality.

Having roots in Parsons' theory of social systems this kind of model has been used extensively by Almond and Verba to illustrate their theory of political culture. It is also specific to the work of Barnes and Kaase (1979) about the first wave of democratisation and to the most of the studies carried out on the second wave.

The analysis will follow this scheme in the attempt to point out specific aspects that democracy has in Romania.

Idea of democracy/socialism

The studies undertaken in Romania have shown a large social support for democracy as a political system (Marginean 1999). The representation toward democracy developed from an undifferentiated one ("democracy can solve every problem in society") to a more realistic one, closer to its political nature.

Despite the massive support for democracy as a value, the evaluations of the current political system are usually less positive. For this situation can account the fact that these evaluations take into consideration the current state of the system as well as the expectations that people develop toward it.

Table 1. Democracy as a value/socialism as a value**(%)**

	Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	DK/NA
The idea of democracy is always good	36.4	38.9	13.6	4.5	6.6
Democracy is appropriate as the general form of government	39.5	40.9	9.1	3.4	7.2
The idea of socialism is always good	7.4	18.2	31.2	33.6	9.7
Socialism is appropriate as the general form of government	6.8	15.8	22.6	42.5	12.3
Satisfied with the way socialism worked	12.9	25.4	27.2	27.3	7.1

A noticeable attitude among Romanian respondents is the wide attachment to the democratic type of social organization – as a value: three quarters (75.3%) of the respondents agree (“strongly” or “somewhat”) that “the idea of democracy is always good”. An even wider support exists for democracy as a principle of government: 80.4% of the subjects.

The disagreement to the idea of socialism is spread among 64.8% of total respondents.

The socialism as a form of government appears to be considered appropriate by only 22.6% of the interviewed persons.

Those satisfied with the way socialism worked is pretty high (38.3%).

We can notice that commitment to the value of democracy is high as opposed to the one of socialism.

Political performance

Table 2. Evaluations of the current political system / socialist system**%**

Evaluations	Positive	Neutral	Negative	NA	Mean
Current political system	31.1	14.9	36.6	17.3	-8.66
Socialist system	41.2	11.9	25.2	21.7	+8.40
Current political system in 5 years' time	41.4	11.4	15.3	32.2	+14.97

We can notice that a big share of respondents (17.3%) did not answer the question, along with 14.9% undecided. Only two thirds of the population actually expressed a certain opinion, which can be sure interpreted.

The performance of the current political system is evaluated overall poorly.

This could be explained by the fact that the post-communist transformations led to the growth of expectations in the population and the functioning of the new political system actually disappointed many people. We consider that would be wrong to conclude that these evaluations imply that the system is void from public support. On the contrary, hopes of benefits from the system in the future are associated with the present sentiment of disappointment.

Alternatives to the political system¹

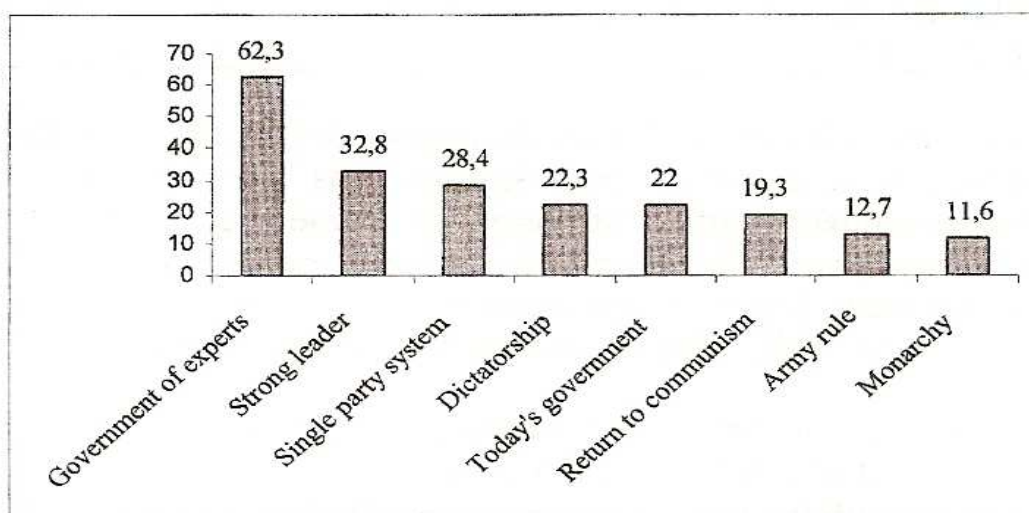


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents agreeing with the alternative

(Legend:

Government of experts: “The most important decisions about the development of our country should be made by experts, and not the government and parliament”

Strong leader: “Best to get rid of parliament and have a strong leader who can decide things quickly”

Single party system: “A multi-party system is designed to create chaos. All we need is a single party”

Dictatorship: “Under certain circumstances dictatorship is the best form of government”

¹ We have to draw attention on the high level of ambiguity of the pre-formulated answer categories.

Today's government: "Our country should be governed the way it is governed today"

Return to communism: "We should return to communist rule"

Army rule: "The army should govern the country"

Monarchy: "A return to monarchy would be better"

These indicators come in to reinforce the ideas we expressed so far.

The most desirable alternative to the current political system is that of a government of experts (62.3 per cent).

At the level of political structures, the preference for a technocratic government can be seen as a perception of the political elite as being characterised by a low level of competencies and especially an incapacity to cope with the transition's economic and political challenges.

The support for other forms of government, besides technocracy, ranges from one in ten (for monarchy) to almost a third (for "strong leader").

Is worth to notice that 4 possibilities (out of 8) are agreed more than "today's government": technocracy ("government of experts"), "strong leader", "single party system" and "dictatorship". An explanation resides with the fact that the survey was carried out at the end of an electoral cycle (1996 – 2000) characterized by a very low level of government accomplishments (by comparison to the high expectations people put in the center-right coalition in power).

The task of government was excessively politicized (this could explain the fact that people turn their preferences to technocrats). The image of a weak government (due to the slow decision process) could be taken as accountable for the preference of more authoritarian regimes. In explaining the preference for a "single party system" we have to note the existence of a negative image of many political forces competing each other (even they were supposed to collaborate) and failing to act as a consistent political power.

As survey data show, the idea of monarchy as a form of government in Romania is not popular. For this can account the fact that the former king Michael is not involved in political life. Recently, he got back some of the royal assets, in the process of restitution of the possessions abusively confiscated by the communist regime.

Interest in politics

Table 3. How interested are you in politics?

					(%)
Not at all interested	A little interested	Fairly interested	Very interested	Hard to say/NA	Mean
26.0	41.6	20.9	5.7	5.8	2.07

Only 26.6% of respondents declare themselves as being fairly and very interested in politics, the degree of interest in politics, as a mean, ranging value 2.07 on a scale from 1 to 4. The interest in politics is rather low at the end of a decade of restored democracy because the political system failed to meet people's expectations.

Trust in political institutions

Table 4. Trust in political institutions

	(%)				
	No confidence	Little confidence	Some confidence	Great deal of confidence	Hard to say/NA
Political parties	45.9	30.9	12.2	1.5	5.9
Politicians	50.8	28.4	12.1	0.7	8.1
Parliament	46.8	28.8	14.8	2.4	7.3
Government	43.0	28.3	16.2	4.8	7.7
Prime minister	42.9	27.2	13.9	8.1	8.0
President	20.3	18.5	29.5	23.5	8.1

The level of trust in political institutions appears to be very low, except the case of the President. This great level of trust in the President (53 %) can be explained by a specific situation: presented as a political self-sacrifice, the President in office at the time survey was carried out announced that he will not compete for a new mandate nor for any other official position.

In Romania, the lack of confidence in main political institutions reaches a high proportion of the representative sample (around three quarters). A low level of trust in political institutions represents one of the characteristics of even the western well-established democracies (see: Dogan 1999: 325).

The literature mentions a generalized crises of trust in institutions, which can be understood as a collective aspiration towards more democracy and not as a loosing of faith in democracy's fundamental values. "The erosion of trust is considered as a sign of political maturity". (Dogan 1999: 344)

Political rights

Political rights are part of the sphere concerned with democratic values. The basic rights that compose the definition of democracy are all evaluated as entirely guaranteed (the calculated mean for every aspect of a democratic life has a position on the positive side of a scale ranging from 1-"not guaranteed at all" to 7-"fully guaranteed"). The freedom of the religious belief and the right of founding a political party appear as being fully respected. Data show a consensus regarding the respect of the authorities for: minorities rights, free media, free elections, free opinion and speech, considered as achievements of the renewed Romanian democratic regime.

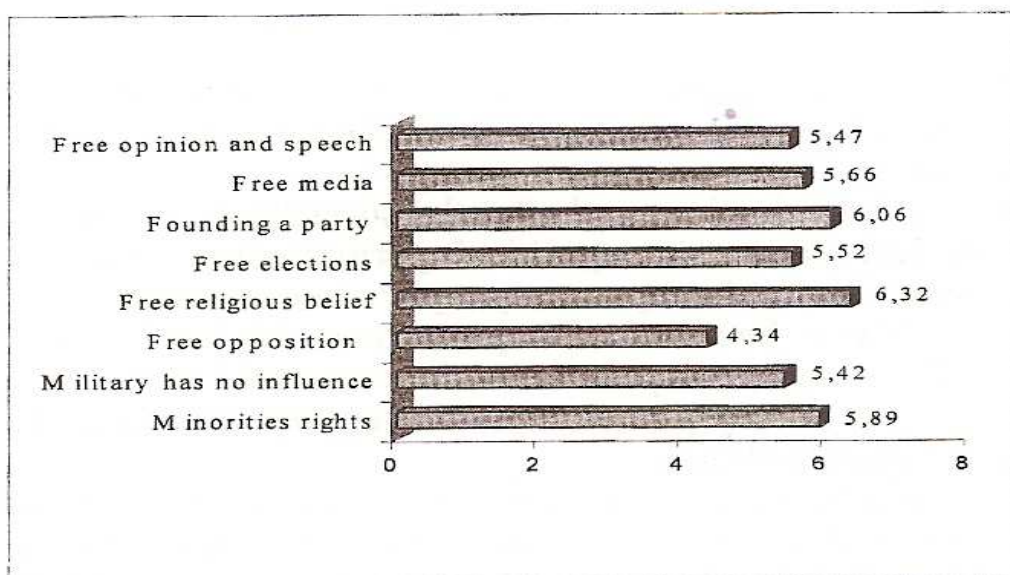


Figure 2. The degree to which political rights are guaranteed (mean scores)

The majority of the respondents agree that military has no influence on political processes (as a matter of fact, the activity of Romanian army forces was and is controlled by a civilian minister). The power of political opposition to check on the government is also positively rated.

Political efficacy, attitudes toward politicians/parties

Table 5. Attitudes toward politicians

	(%)					
	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	DK /NA
Politicians don't care about what the common man thinks	63.9	20.2	9.9	2.1	1.1	2.7
Politicians keep promises	4.3	8.2	20.0	25.6	37.7	4.2
Without professional politicians our country would be worse off	23.6	21.9	24.0	9.5	6.6	14.4
Most politicians are corrupt	58.3	24.1	8.8	2.3	0.8	5.7

Attitudes of the population about politicians indicate the presence of a real gap that separates political sphere from the rest of the society, together with the

absence of efficient communication channels between those who govern and those who are governed (84.1% agree that “politicians don't care about what the common man thinks”).

After several general elections and after the successive coming in power of all important political parties, the political performance remains relatively modest, without much desirable impact on people’s lives, - and this could be the reason for which citizens became unreceptive to politicians’ promises (only 12.5% of the sample consider that politicians keep their promises).

The results of this survey point out also the perceived need for a more professional way of doing politics.

The very strong adherence (82.4%) to the statement “most politicians are corrupt” demonstrates that the problem of corruption among public officials could be considered as an important barrier of democratic consolidation.

On the other hand, the improvement of the critical attitude of the people can be considered as a useful democratic practice.

Table 6. Attitudes toward political parties

	(%)					
	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	DK/NA
Different parties have different aims and programs and a citizen has a choice between alternatives	28.5	28.9	18.7	7.0	6.6	10.3
Every political party should have the chance to rule this country	18.5	14.5	19.8	16.9	17.7	12.6
Parties have too much influence in our society	33.0	29.0	19.5	5.3	1.7	11.5
Parties see the state as their private property	46.9	27.2	12.5	4.1	2.6	6.8

An important percentage of the representative sample (57.4 %) agree that diversity is preserved among the political forces, stating the existence of different political strategies and solutions to the problems that Romanian society encounters. In this way, the pluralism as a basic condition for the existence of a

democracy is considered an already accomplished feature of Romanian political reality.

The insufficient links between political parties and their supposed electoral base is indicated again by the strong agreement (74.1 %) on the opinion that “parties see the state as their private property”. With 62.0 % agreeing that political parties have too much influence in Romanian society, we can draw the conclusion that many citizens do not see themselves as being represented in an appropriate manner through the activity of political forces.

Table 7. Political efficacy

	(%)					
	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	DK/NA
I feel that I have a good understanding of the political issues	20.9	33.3	22.7	8.5	3.9	10.7
The average citizen has considerable influence in politics	10.9	11.9	19.9	23.3	24.6	9.5
Even the best politician cannot have much impact because of the way government works	34.1	24.2	17.5	7.9	3.0	12.2
People like me don't have any say about what the government works	50.0	17.8	14.1	6.9	4.5	6.6

More than half of the population (54.2 %) declares that they have a good understanding of the political issues.

The proportion of citizens considering themselves as having the power to give a significant input in political processes does not exceed a quarter of the total population.

Individual social and economic situation of the people

Economic situation of the household

The general economic decline of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe is well known and Romania makes no exception. This situation was reflected at the household and individual level by a deterioration of the standard of living.

Compared to the early 90's when the economic reform first started and took shape, the majority of the population (60.1%) considers that the economic situation got worse and only 20.7% of the respondents think that situation got better.

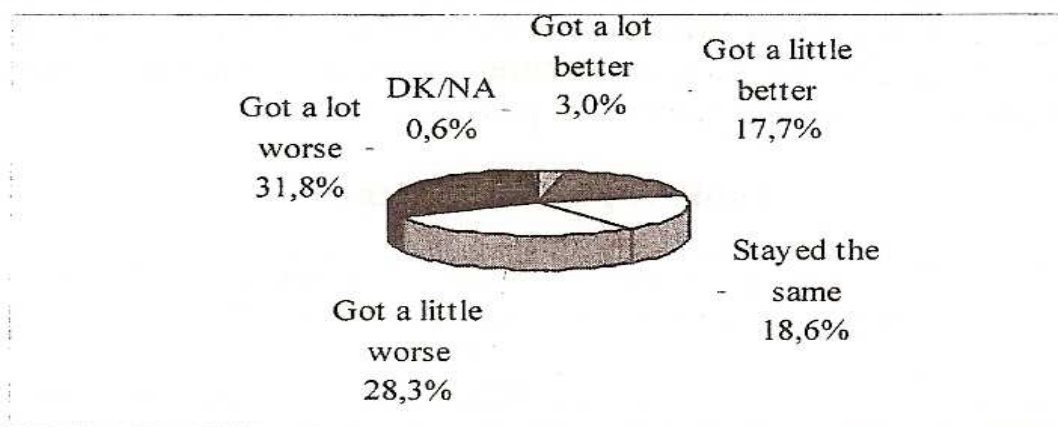


Figure 3. Economic situation of the household - comparison to the early 90's (%)

Present economic situation of the household

The analyses undertaken in Romania on poverty show a process of social polarization characterize by a big portion of the population living in poverty and another small part of population as rich.

The subjective data reflects partially this process. A share of 20.2% of the respondents considers the present economic situation as very bad and 35.2% as fairly bad. Only 1% of the subject considers the household economic situation as very good.

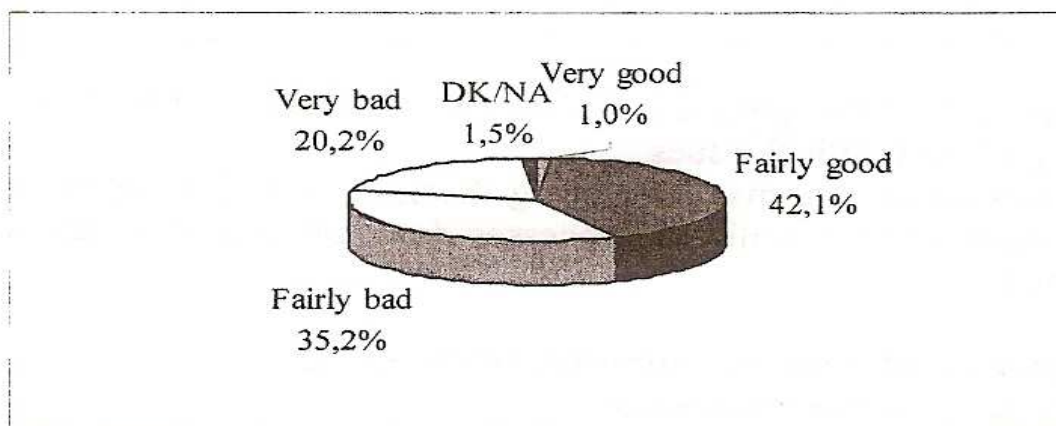


Figure 4. Present economic situation of the household

Satisfaction with life

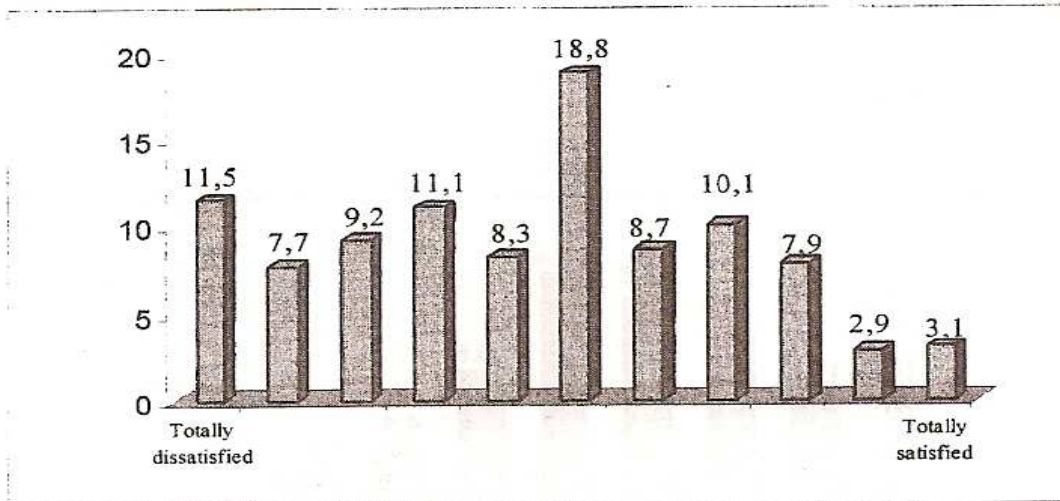


Figure 5. Satisfaction with life (%)

	Mean
Satisfaction with life	4.33

Considered in the literature as an output indicator of all the conditions in the society as well as of the person's values and expectations, satisfaction with life expresses synthetically a global situation filtered by personal values.

A significantly high proportion of subjects considers themselves totally dissatisfied with life (11.5%) in comparison to those who are totally satisfied (3.1%).

The mean ranges 4.33 on an 11 points scale which suggest a trend of general dissatisfaction with life.

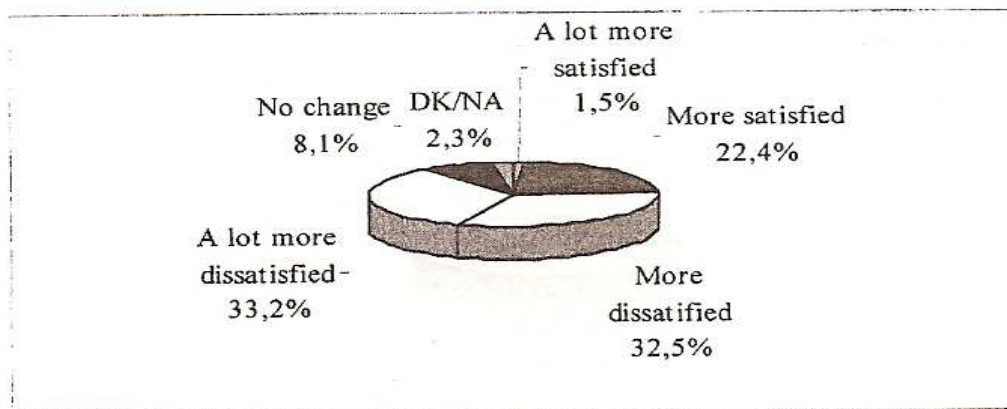


Figure 6. Satisfaction with life now comparatively to 1989

Comparatively to 1989, a vast majority of the subjects (65.7%) are less satisfied with life.

Social position in society

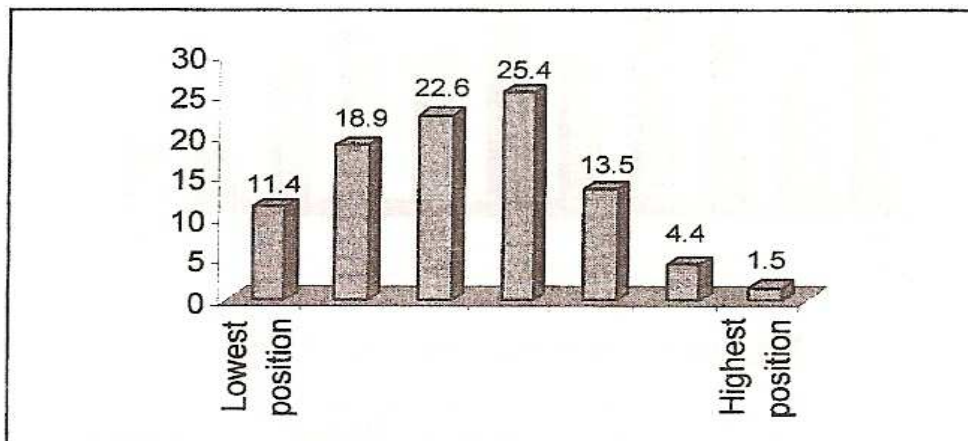


Figure 7. Social position in society (%)

The indicator “social position in society” reflects only partially the objective situation of social polarisation. A small part of population considers as having the highest social position (1.5%) and a significant bigger share of respondents thinks it occupies the lowest position (11.4%). The general trend noticeable is characterised by the placing of the majority on a low social position (52.9%) and situation of another important part of respondents (25.4%) on a middle position, even though the formation of a middle class in Romania is an undergoing process with less visible results.

To note that the subjective data follows their own logic with partial respect to the objective conditions.

Attitudes toward social inequality/justice

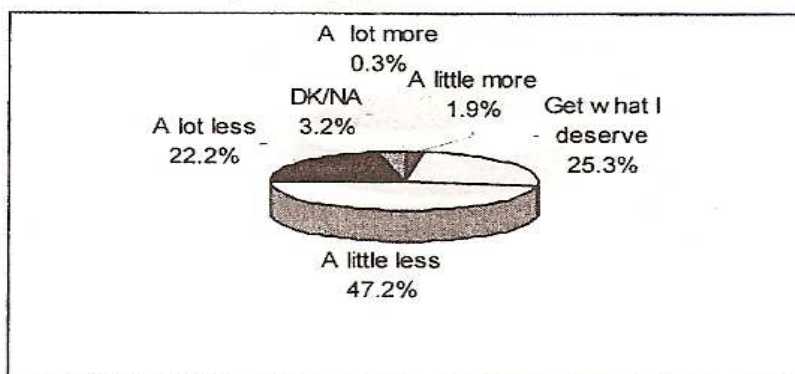


Figure 8. Compared to what others live, you get what you deserve, little more, a lot more, a little less or a lot less then you deserve? (%)

Data show an acceptance of the effects produced by the social differentiation process on the basis of personal capabilities (51.1 %).

A significant share of the respondents (40.3 %) reject the idea of imposing a political mechanism in order to regulate the big inter-individual differences in earnings.

Principles of justice

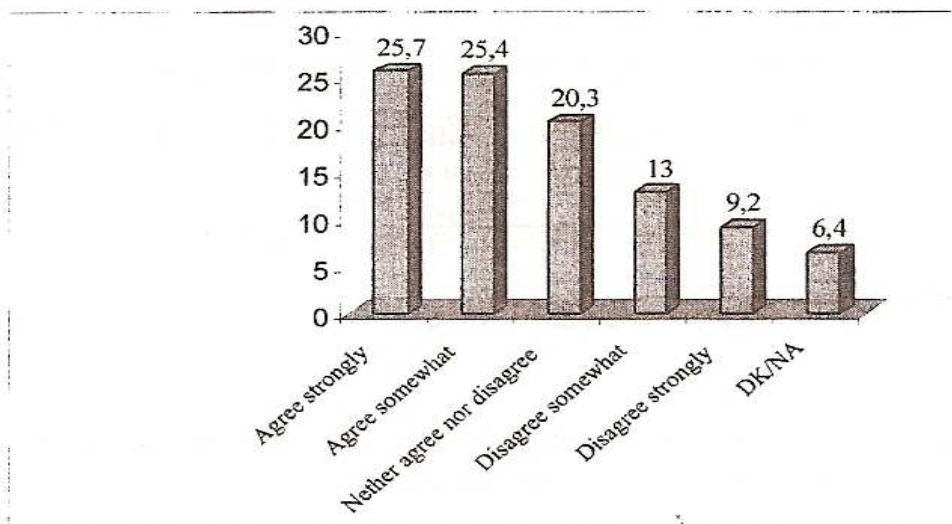


Figure 9. Social differences between people are justified because they express what one has made of a given chances of life (%)

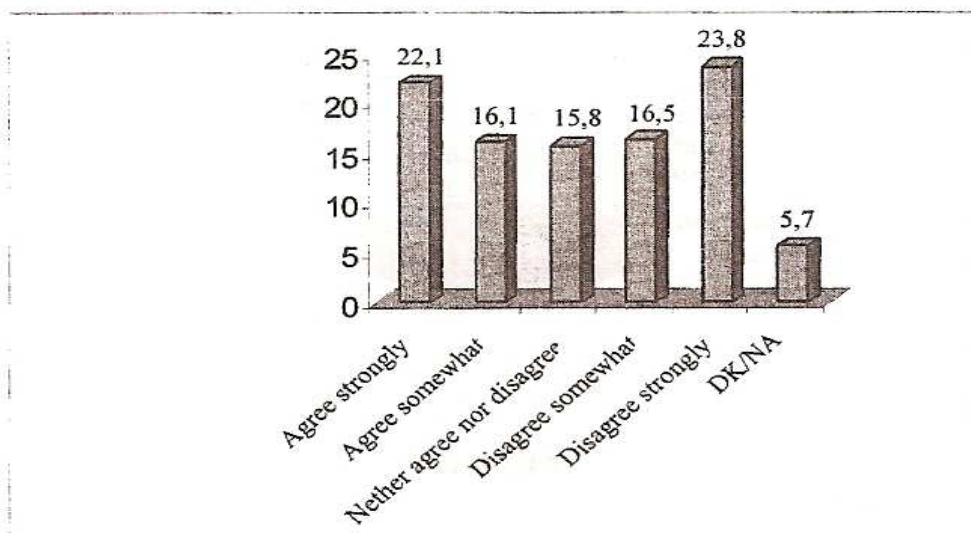


Figure 10. There should be a mechanism in our country which regulates income in a way that no one earns much more than others (%)

Data show an acceptance of the effects produced by the social differentiation process on the basis of personal capabilities (51.1 %).

40.3 % of the respondents reject the idea of imposing a political mechanism in order to regulate the big interpersonal differences in earnings, even the great majority (92.7%) of the population appreciates differences in income as being too large.

Evaluation of justice in society: now and in socialism

Table 8. Opinions on justice in society

	Very just	Rather just	Neither just or unjust	Rather unjust	Very unjust	DK/NA	Mean
Justice in society nowadays	1.0	9.2	28.9	38.4	18.8	4.6	3.69
Justice in socialist society	6.7	27.2	25.1	21.8	13.3	6.0	3.08

57.2 % perceive the actual society as unjust, comparing to 35.1 % of the sample that consider the socialist society as unjust.

Differences in incomes

The great majority (92.7 %) of the population appreciates differences in incomes as being too large.

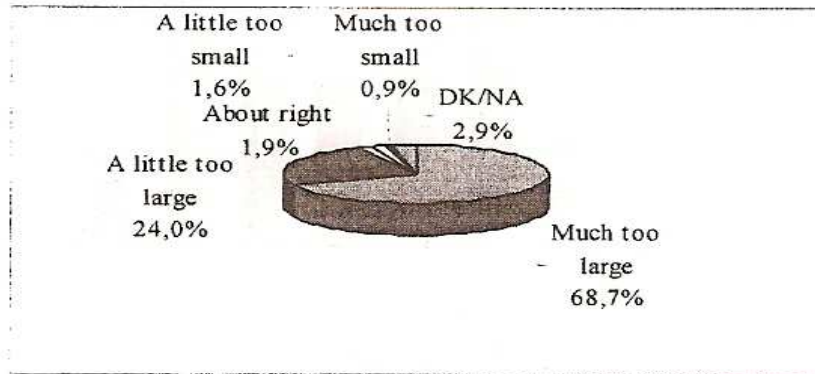


Figure 11

Attitudes toward the economy

Evaluations of economic performance

Table 9. Evaluation of socialist economy/current economic system

	Negative ranks	Neutral	Positive ranks	NA / DK
The socialist economy before '89	18.3 %	9.7 %	53.5 %	18.5 %
Current economic system	55.0 %	14.1 %	15.1 %	15.8 %

The data indicate a very low level of satisfaction with the present economic system, together with a rather positive evaluation of the former socialist economy.

Besides the cultural change, the economic development is also a basic factor underlying democracy. However, implementing and consolidating democracy does not result from economic development by itself (Welzel & Inglehart 1999: 5).

On a long term, though, a poor economic performance could prove as a serious threat to the stability of a democratic regime. Democracy implies a sort of moderation in the political attitudes of the citizens and a bad economic situation could lead to the pre-eminence of extremist attitudes.

Economic situation of the country compared to the early '90s

The great difficulties of the Romanian economy are shown not only by objective indicators, but by subjective perceptions as well: 81.7 % of the population think that the economic situation got worse.

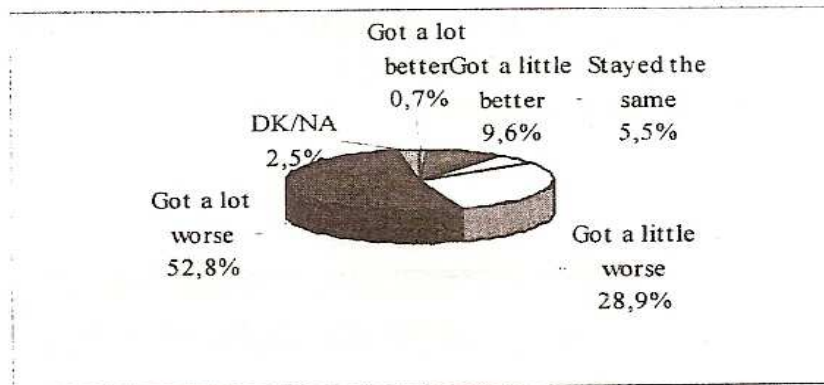


Figura 12

Expected development of the economic situation

The majority of the people consider that the economic recovery will take 5 years or more (70.1 %)

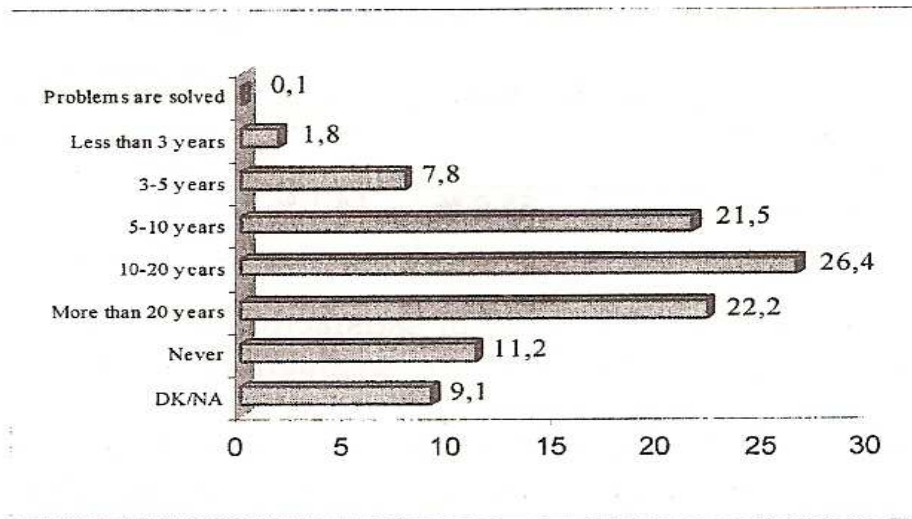


Figure 13. Expected development of the economic situation (%)

Evaluation of market economy

An evaluation of free market economy could not be unaware of the current economic situation of the country. Considering this, we can notice that the free market economy is perceived as rather chaotic one ("no care about rules means success" consider 71.2 % of the representative sample).

Here is again indicated the trend of social polarisation, 79.4 % of the people considering the gap between rich and poor people as getting deeper.

On the other side, an important percentage (64.8 %) of the citizens agrees that the market economy provide more opportunities to choose from than the command economy of a socialist regime.

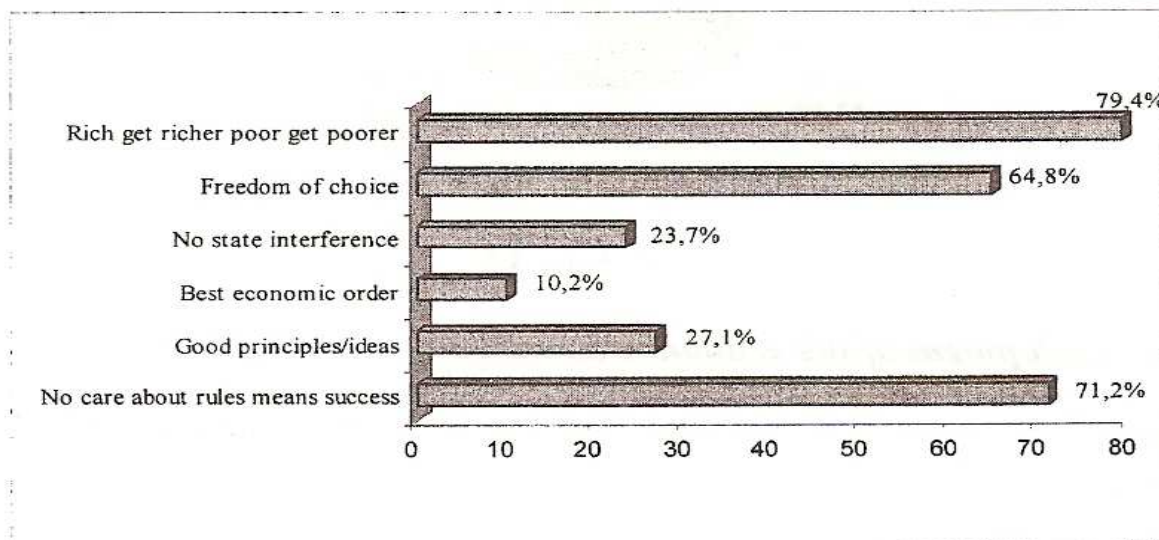


Figure 14. Evaluations of market economy

Directions of economic development

A mixed model of Western European "know-how" and new solutions adapted to a specific reality is taken into consideration by 44.2 % of the population. Reforms that have been made in economy under the label "following the western model" have not produced yet positive effects on people's lives. An insufficient adaptation of this model to the particular conditions of the Romanian economy is probably taken accountable for this failure.

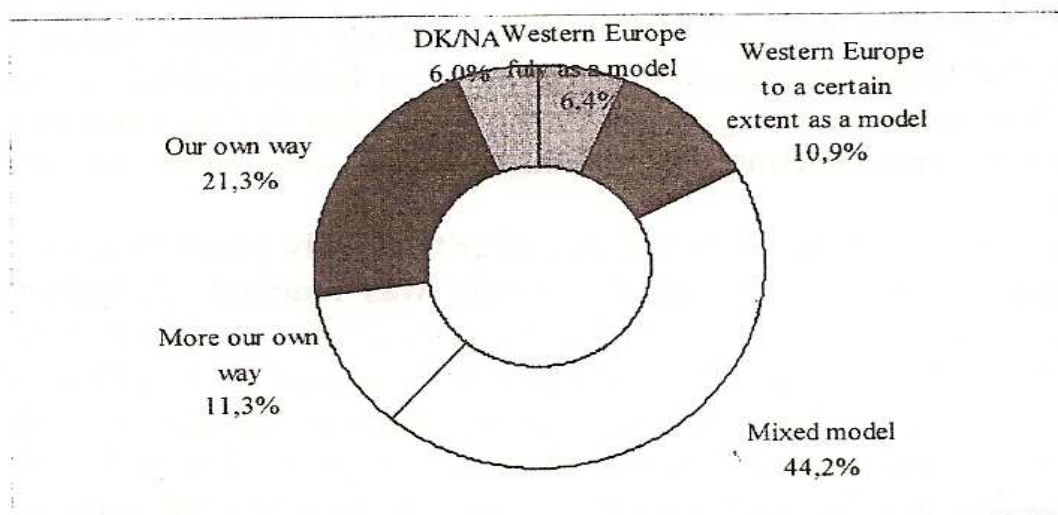


Figure 15. Directions of economic development

Privatisation

Table 10. Opinions on privatization

	Only privately run	Mainly privately run	Mixed	Mainly run by state	Only state run	DK/NA
Banks	14.9	10.0	22.9	20.7	25.8	5.6
Big companies and factories	15.2	15.0	27.4	16.9	21.6	3.7
Water and electricity	7.2	5.5	18.5	25.2	39.3	4.4
Railway	6.1	5.5	15.1	27.6	41.2	4.4
Media	28.1	18.6	24.6	8.0	14.8	5.8

The most favorable opinion is for a private run of the media (46.7%), followed by big companies and factories (30.0%), and banks (24.9%).

The ownership only or mainly by the state is seen as a good solution for railway (68.8%) and for water and electricity (64.5%).

Outlook

If in the political area Romania reached a level allowing us a favourable assessment of democracy, transition proved to be more difficult, longer and with higher social costs than foreseen by specialists and, particularly, by populations' expectations.

The lack, previously to the fall of communism, of measures for market economy introduction, the low economic standard of the population and the strong dependence on the owner state, ignoring the adoption as quickly as possible of changes in economy, the lack of capital investments and the low financing of restructuration process formed a complex of unfavourable factors of evolution in the Romanian society. Other adverse factors joined, concerning the manner of action and management of the problems during transition. The singular accent on macroeconomic stabilisation did not yield the expected results.

At the same time, it must be noted that after two early years that were more turbulent, a rather high level of social stability was reached. Despite several critical moments, the relations between the majority Romanian population (89% Romanians at the 1992 census) and various ethnic groups do not raise special conflicting problems. A difficult social situation concerns the Roma population, characterised by families with many children, poor social and economic integration due to a low level of education, lack of professional training, very low occupational level.

Solving these problems takes time and considerably material resources. It requires an overall approach by policies of family support, of access to education, of poverty control and job creation for the population in difficulty. Traditionally, a restrictive social policy was enforced in Romania, with low levels of social expenditure (16-20% of GDP). The pressure of social problems require the change of priority in spending the public money, by increasing the degree of coverage of the social programs, the amount of benefits and the social work network.

Another aspect is also particularly important for the consolidation of democracy. It concerns the inconsistency of analysis establishing a strict dependence between the current chances of democracy and several historical factors or cultural characteristics in a given country. We refer particularly to the attempts of establishing a hierarchy of the level of consolidation of the democracy according to GDP level, indicator designed to measure the economic development. The evolution of post-communist countries, and we refer mainly to Romania, invalidate such connections. Under the conditions in which GDP decreased by one quarter, between 1991-2000 the democrat regime and democratisation were consolidated. No doubt, the economic difficulties do not favour democracy, but neither prevents, in an absolute manner, its edification.

On the other hand, the democrat regime has certain weaknesses that make it vulnerable any time, even in the countries with developed economies. Hence the need for a continuous study of the function of democratic institutions and of the measures required to improve their performance.

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