

Romania's Parliament in the Interwar Period. Bases, Social Composition and Aspects of Political Culture

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Abstract: *Starting out from the main pillars of a parliamentary system of Government, this article concentrates on some theoretical and practical aspects of parliamentary procedure in Romania during the interwar period. First of all, fundamental texts, the Constitution, as well as the electoral law, are examined. In a next step, the intention is to show the social and political structure of Parliament with the main focus upon the legislative periods of the years 1934-1937. In conclusion, taking the example of the Rules of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, the rules of the game on both bodies, some examples of political culture are shown.*

Structural bases of the parliamentary system

If one wants to examine how parliamentarism or a parliamentary system of Government functions, it must rely on several main pillars: elections as the nodal point of political life, a system of political parties, a cabinet Government together with a head of state, as well as, of course, a Parliament.¹ The latter's way of functioning, in other words its political culture, is shaped decisively by the aforementioned factors. Therefore, in the following paper, apart from the constitutional and electoral bases of Romania's political system during the interwar period, the social and also political structure of the Parliament will be examined in order thus to allow the character of this body to emerge. In conclusion, the political culture will also be addressed. Here are the following aspects to be examined: What were the rules of the game, i.e. the regulations according to which the Parliament functioned and how did these prove themselves in practice? With regard to time, the Parliament of the entire interwar period, 1920-1937, will be taken into consideration, however, when it is a matter of putting cases into concrete forms, this will take place in the final functioning legislative period from 1934-1937.

The Constitution of 1923 formed the legal basis of Romania's political system during the interwar period. The fundamental changes after the First World War let a new constitutional order appear of necessity for Romania. But, despite the hint made by some political representatives of the ruling party, the National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național-Liberal [PNL]*), that the Constitution had emerged as an answer coming from different movements and ideas to a continuous state of agitation in a country divided into various regions², it must, however, be recorded that the new post-war Constitution closely

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¹ The following article is based on the results of my study: Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismus in Rumänien (1930–1940). Demokratie im autoritären Umfeld* (München, 1997).

² *Monitorul Oficial, Desbaterile Adunării Naționale Constituante ale Deputaților* [hereinafter: MO, DANCD], no. 43, sitting of 12 March 1923, 1128; MO, DANCD, no. 45, sitting of 14 March 1923, 1171.