

10.2478/nispa-2024-0015



Bureaucratic Polarization: Balancing Merit and Trust in the Romanian Senate

Catalin Raiu¹, Ionuț Ciprian Negoită²

Abstract:

This paper addresses the advisory arrangements within the Chancellery of the President of the Romanian Senate, examining in a comparative manner the profiles and roles of the two types of in-house advisors, tenured parliamentary experts and personal advisors, in designing and influencing the decision-making process. The article uses a complex methodology based on social network analysis, qualitative and content analysis of semi-structured interviews with former Chancellery directors, and quantitative analysis of personnel data in order to present a full picture of the internal relations and interactions between the parliamentary experts and personal advisors over the period from March 10, 2014 until July 29, 2022, covering seven different Romanian Senate president mandates. Our findings show that for tenured civil servants, activity within the Chancellery constitutes one of the most important periods of their professional career, while for personal advisors, the activity within the Chancellery is another window of opportunity to enhance their political network.

Keywords:

civil servants, personal advisors, policy advice, political patronage, Senate

¹ University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania.

² Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.

1. Introduction

Romania is a semi-presidential political system (Murphy, 2020) where post-election political party alliances usually form in order to convince the president of the republic to appoint the leader of the major political party from the coalition as prime minister (Gherghina et al., 2023). As a result of this structural political negotiation, the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber) and the presidency of the Senate (the upper chamber) are negotiated within the coalition to be offered to the other political leaders. For the Romanian top politicians, the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies represents the second most influential position after the prime minister; as for most important pieces of legislation, the lower chamber has the authority to change the decisions of the Senate. Nevertheless, on parliamentary grounds, Romania is characterized by an asymmetrical bicameralism (Vercesi, 2022), as the lower and the upper chambers are elected and formed similarly. However, they have the authority to overrule each of their decisions in different fields of the legislation-making process. In this context, the presidency of the Senate is negotiated and offered through the vote of the members of the parliament to the leader of the second political party from the government coalition in terms of number of parliamentary seats in both houses (Stan, 2012). Therefore, the position of president of the Senate represents a second-best for the second most influential and powerful political leader of the government coalition, and they use this position in order to (1) implement the public policies top choices of the coalition by following the government program; (2) to coordinate the Senate decisions with the vote of the members of the Chambers of Deputies and (3) to consolidate for their own political career a political profile for a future higher position such a prime-minister of president of the republic.

Therefore, the President of the Senate is simultaneously at the top of the decision-making process and a politician who has easy access to the resources to boost their career not only in terms of political power but also in terms of public image and expertise through its Chancellery. Concurrently, any President of the Senate typically maintains an informal network of advisers built through previous high-ranking political positions. This network, formed over time through loyalty, shared political views, mutual understanding, and friendship, is entrusted with confidence and often follows the President into the new role.

Therefore, the Chancellery of the President of the Romanian Senate represents where two influence networks compete to design and shape – to a certain degree – the decision-making process and the legislative procedures. The first is the structured, institutional and disciplined bureaucratic network, composed of tenured parliamentary civil servants appointed for life through a merit-based selection system. The second and most influential is the patronage or clientele system (Giugăl & Costinescu, 2020), organized by the personal advisors or collaborators of the President of the Romanian Senate, who constantly take action in order to control the bureaucracy, integrate new policies, and take decisions on the legislative structures.

The politicization and professionalization of the administrative apparatus have prompted continued interest in the academic literature and in the practice of management of institutions and public authorities (Cobârzan, 2008) not only for the advisers of the ministers or influential members of the parliament but also for the ministers themselves (Raiu & Mina-Raiu, 2023). Separate analyses of the two phenomena have revealed the characteristics and impact on the organization and functioning of the administrative apparatus (Haruță et al., 2009), while some of the scholarly has focused on post-Covid-19 resilience need for more professionalization of public servants (Nemec et al., 2020) or female representation in ministerial positions (Rashkova & Zankina, 2019). However, the relations between them have been analyzed rather tangentially.

Previous studies conducted in Central and Eastern European young democracies have identified several patterns in the field of politico-administrative relations: the politicization of senior civil service as a mode of governing the post-communist states (Meyer-Sahling & Veen, 2012), a delayed transition from personalized trust in politicians to trust in impersonal and professionalized bureaucracies (Bustikova & Corduneanu-Huci, 2017; Corboș, 2005), and more significantly lower merit-based recruitment of public officials in Central and Eastern Europe as compared to the Westminster and Napoleonic administrative traditions (Cooper, 2021).

This research paper will answer the following twofold research question building on these observations:

- Q1.** *How are the influence and power of institutional and patronage networks within the Chancellery of the President of the Romanian Senate defined and exercised?*
- Q2.** *How are the influences exerted by political and institutional networks harmonized and adapted to the roles and statuses of civil servants and personal advisers?*

The hypothesis is that within the Chancellery of the President of the Romanian Senate, the competition for influence between two distinct groups of advisers—civil servants, selected based on merit, and personal advisers, appointed based on trust—leads to bureaucratic polarization. This polarization manifests in conflicts over policy advice, where meritocratic expertise and institutional continuity are often in irreconcilable tension with the political and personal loyalty that governs trust-based appointments.

Two arguments support our hypothesis. The first one emphasizes the central role of the President of the Senate in balancing and adapting to the influences of political and institutional networks. The extent of this influence depends on the President's notoriety, involvement, and decision-making power. A President with strong political backing and stability in office adjusts their collaboration strategies to align with both political and personal interests. In this case, loyalty, trust, and political affinity become

key factors in shaping the President's actions throughout the mandate. On the other hand, a President with limited political support and a shorter mandate tends to rely more on institutional networks, adapting personal and political strategies accordingly. As the President's political and personal influence wanes, the role of civil servants in shaping decisions and strategies grows, impacting the behavior of the President of the Senate.

The second one suggests that the President of the Senate's strategies for recruiting and collaborating with public officials and personal advisers evolve in response to political and institutional changes. These dynamics range from periods of stability, where political agendas are clear, to times of political instability and bureaucratic polarization. A clear distinction is made between merit, trust, and loyalty, underscoring the importance of maintaining institutional stability while ensuring adequate political representation within the President's team. Separate strategies for recruiting and working with public officials and personal advisers highlight the necessity of integrating and harmonizing the influences of institutional, political, and personal networks.

2. Literature review

The rise of political meritocracy is ideal for contemporary political practices in consolidated democracies (Mijs & Savage, 2020). In the study "Diploma democracy," Bovens and Wille (2017) reported on the educational and professional path of policymakers and advisors to identify social trends and cultural attitudes around preserving and reproducing social status. The emphasis on university degrees restricts access to public and political offices for citizens without qualifications formally validated by belonging to the academic or intellectual elite. Educational stratification amplifies the "prejudices of exclusion" and political non-representation of citizens whose level of education and training does not correspond to the requirements of the "democracy diploma" (Bovens & Wille, 2017).

While academic and professional standards have established formal exclusionary criteria concerning the level of completed education and professional seniority, the political elite has used its recruitment criteria and mechanisms to preserve its power and strengthen its political influence (Staroňová & Rybář, 2023). Informally, critical positions in the organizational structure of institutions and public authorities are distributed to reward, negotiate, and trade influence and decision-making power. Often, it is loyalty, position of power, belonging to a political party, political activity, involvement in electoral processes, and personal relationships with political decision-makers that ensure inclusion in the political entourage (Aberbach et al., 1981; Hood & Lodge, 2006; Eymeri-Douzans et al., 2015). In order to have an overview of the political entourage, it is crucial to operationalize the concept concerning two key moments of the electoral competition: the "takeover" and the "loss" of power. Concerning these moments, we distinguish three stages (with possible cyclical potential): (1) preparation to take power, (2) the exercise of power, and (3) acceptance of the position and status of

opposition. The first and last stages are similar in the non-exercise of power, but they are distinguished by the psychological effect often created by the expectation to exercise power. The prospect of taking power in the near future mobilizes and motivates members of the political entourage, a stage in which political and personal relations are formed and strengthened. At the moment of taking power and throughout its exercise, the political entourage reaches the maximum level of expansion by “activating” the networks of patronage and clientelism. The rational dimension represented by the political stakes of reward and (re)confirmation of belonging to the political entourage provides common interests for those who exercise power and those close to politics. Power is “divided” by the political entourage so that it is not lost to those outside the political entourage without support and control. At the same time, the exercise of power also needs to be understood concerning the psychological component that becomes much more important at this stage – on a personal level – for decision-makers, members and supporters (Dima, 2014). Friendships, sympathies and dislikes, amorous and kinship relationships based on loyalty, trust, atheistic confidentiality, complicity, and mutual knowledge complete the rational criteria used in the “equation” of the exercise of power in post-communist young democracies (Iftimoaei, 2013). Among these characteristics, political trust plays a central role for politicians as the continuous negotiation of different public policies and political compromises must be hidden from public scrutiny and the eyes of political counterparts. Therefore, political trust is a product of long-term socialization based on prior exchanges (loyalty, votes, expertise, and the like) between the parties (Levi & Stoker, 2000), usually also involving a form of psychological attachment and having a forward-thinking assessment of the costs and benefits of trustworthy behavior for the partner (Schilke et al., 2021).

Political patronage is an external shock to the “bureaucratic rationalization process” (Weber, 1978; Silberman, 1993; Skocpol, 1985), as it undermines effective states and weakens the very foundations of democracy, especially new democracies. Quality (governance) and “government effectiveness” (Kaufmann et al., 2003) become vulnerable where the processes of training, retraining and promotion do not apply the criteria of political autonomy, ethics and integrity in the exercise of public functions; instead, emphasizing political activity, influence and loyalty. The existence of such internal promotional mechanisms used within political parties over “the state administration, the policy-implementing heart of the state” (O’Dwyer, 2006) leads to an arrangement where the political apparatus expands, and the administrative apparatus is restricted, often in contradiction to democratic norms and values. However, as many scholars suggest, patronage appointments do not necessarily lower the professional qualifications among civil servants and top officials (Bach, 2020) but often take the shape of “professional politicization” (Peters, 2013) by involving the recruitment of loyal and skilled individuals.

Patronage is mainly understood as offering senior positions in the state administration or other organizations controlled by the state, such as state-owned companies (Kopecký et al., 2022), and therefore becoming an electoral and

organizational resource (Kopecký et al., 2012). Staronova and Rybář (2021) have further analyzed the career path of politically appointed advisers when ministers are replaced by explaining that in Central and Eastern Europe, patronage can be seen as a power resource of influential ministers exercised somewhat separately from the political parties. On the other side, political clientelism refers to a long-term relationship between parties/politicians and voters, based on robust organizational networks and state resources, involving a politician holding a superior position grants different favors to another actor in a subordinate position (the client) in exchange for the client's political support (i.e., electoral mobilization) (Higashijima & Washida, 2024).

Although patronage and clientelism have different meanings, this article uses these concepts as patterns of weaknesses of a democratic regime and professionalized state apparatus. The problem with both patronage and clientelism is that they lead to the recruitment of advisers with less experience and doubtful capacities, which lowers the morale of long-serving officers and reduces the department's overall expertise (Etzioni-Halevy, 2024).

A relevant standard for good governance, that is, civil service isolated from political interference (Dahlström et al., 2012; Raiu, 2015), has become a necessary condition for ensuring high-quality public services (normative argument) (Peters & Bianchi, 2020). Nevertheless, often, the relationship between the tenured civil servants and the political advisers is described as a fertile tension generating better decisions and legislative outcomes (Snagovsky et al., 2022; Niklasson et al., 2019). In order not to undermine the performance and functioning of the institution from within, uncertainty about the exercise of power in the future leads policymakers to isolate the institution's internal professional structures from political influence (Moe, 1989; Stephenson, 2008). Gailmard and Patty (2007) highlight the importance of discreet behavior by bureaucrats and civil servants to not exert their influence on political competition. The erosion of the meritocracy-based system through politicizing it needs to be understood in relation to the mechanisms used by political actors to influence and control the work of the public administration; this is achieved by rewarding and sanctioning recruited personnel in order to shape their behavior, to boost the entire institutional configuration towards the realization of policies and political objectives (Bach et al., 2015; Peters & Bianchi, 2020).

Networks of patronage and clientelism act strategically to manage the power economy (Foucault, 1982) rationally and to comply (formally) with the minimum requirements of legality. Depending on the fragmentation of the political spectrum, stability in office and political competition, the holder of power balances the need to fulfill their political commitment with the functioning of the institution they head (Radu & Radu, 2019). This balance between maximizing one's political interests and pursuits in managing human and institutional resources requires adjusting the overlap of patronage and clientelism networks over the organizational structure of the administrative apparatus.

However, the apparent universality of patronage is nuanced in terms of its

quantitative levels, especially in management positions within public administration and the government apparatus (Peters & Bianchi, 2020). Social and cultural domination shapes the dimension of patronage through the political, moral and integrity standards to which citizens, the media and the political elite relate (Hustedt et al., 2017). While the emergence of patronage is a predictable consequence of the interest the political class has in controlling government institutions and public policies, the acceptance, institutionalization and legitimization of patronage and clientelism are more often identified in political regimes reinforced by strong cultural patterns resistant to public administration reform (Peters & Bianchi, 2020).

3. Methodology

Identifying and explaining the workings and informal practices used within the Chancellery of the President of the Senate, along with the assessment of the influence exerted by the institutional and patronage network on the organization of the Chancellery, requires a complex and tailor-made methodology centered on collecting and processing sensitive, and often less public, information. To this end, we used a diverse range of research methods and tools to analyze personal and institutional behaviors and practices demonstrated by seven different holders of the mandate of President of the Senate, who benefited from the political support of the essential political formations represented in the Senate from March 10, 2014, until July 29, 2022. We refer to this timeframe to analyze two different periods: the first representing stability in office (5 years and six months under one President), followed by a period of successive and relatively short-term changes in the role.

With the help of social network analysis and qualitative and content analysis, we analyzed and evaluated the mechanisms and strategies used throughout each office term: an approach that helped us identify the relationships between the institutional network of tenured parliamentary experts and the patronage network of personal advisors. We conducted six semi-structured interviews with the directors of the Chancellery, selected according to their level of representativeness, professional experience, and influence exercised during the mandate. In an informal setting, we conducted a case study on the Chancellery of the President of the Senate by directly involving the staff and decision-makers to obtain the necessary information and data. In addition, we added a quantitative dimension to the research through the statistical analysis of the office term and number of Chancellery directors, civil servants and personal advisors employed during the reference period (March 10, 2014 – July 29, 2022).

Presenting the image of political or personal influence relationships within the administrative and institutional apparatus requires a methodological framework for the informal and cultural practices that shape status and power relations (Goffman, 1951; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In order to produce a complex and faithful analysis of the mechanisms of recruitment and collaboration with the staff employed in the

Chancellery of the President of the Romanian Senate (civil servants and personal advisors) between March 10, 2014, and July 29, 2022, we structured our research concerning influence networks and pressure exerted on the President of the Senate. Social network analysis (Burt, 1992; Degenne & Forsé, 1999; Carrington et al., 2005) has helped us identify and operationalize the dimension of institutional and patronage networks that overlap and often come into conflict over control and influence within the organizational structure. On the one hand, we refer to the social and political dimension, the stake of the influence relations exercised within the group, to preserve and (possibly) expand the network characterized by shared values, interests and objectives (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). On the other hand, we consider the psychological aspects of power represented by personal influence within a social group (Brass, 1984), ego manifestations (Everett & Borgatti (2005) concerning the structure and dynamics of personal relationships (Davis & Leinhardt, 1972).

The micro-level analysis of the organization and functioning of the Chancellery of the President of the Senate is relevant and crucial to understanding and highlighting both the general trends and specific particularities for the personal, political and institutional “models,” practices and strategies that shape and influence the activity of a small-sized structure of the administrative apparatus. Nevertheless, this is also important due to the position and attributions conferred by the legislation in force and the internal operating regulations applied to the Chancellery of the President of the Senate and subordinate structures. For this reason, our analysis involves a prominent qualitative element (Miller & Yang, 1999), achieved through the use of content analysis (Bowen, 2009; Gouglas et al., 2017) and case study (Garson, 2002).

For each presidential term, we conducted six semi-structured interviews with representative directors from the Chancellery. One exception was the mandate of an interim President of the Senate, who did not opt for appointing a director within the Chancellery. We selected the interviewees based on their relationship and involvement during the mandate, both with the President of the Senate and the team of informal advisors and civil servants. The data were collected and processed in compliance with the requirements of ethics and protecting the identity of the respondents, with the research tools adapted to the mechanisms and informal practices that define the organization and operations of the Chancellery. In order to obtain relevant information regarding the size and dynamics of institutional and patronage networks, the approach to sensitive issues was carried out in an informal setting to ensure a favorable environment that would encourage respondents to answer openly. During the interviews, the issues addressed were: (1) evaluation of the level of collaboration with civil servants and personal advisors of the President of the Senate; (2) involvement of the Chancellery staff in the current activities; (3) the criteria for the recruitment of personal collaborators; (4) source of recommendations for hiring personal collaborators; (5) the option and reasons for retaining or transferring civil servants; (6) previous collaboration with the personnel employed within the Chancellery; (7) evaluation of the relationship of cooperation or competition between civil servants and

personal collaborators; finally (8) staff reorganization in order to make the Chancellery's activities more efficient.

We completed the qualitative analysis with the operationalization of the mandate of the President of the Senate and the team of personal advisors and civil servants with the help of quantitative analysis (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001; Gray et al., 2007; Groeneveld et al., 2015) to track general macro-level trends regarding stability and changes in function, as well as the influence exercised by each of the two groups of advisers based on the feedback given by the Chancellery directors. We use a 5-step interval scale (very high, high, moderate, low, non-existent) to measure the degree of influence that institutional and political networks have on the mandate of the President of the Senate. This scale helps assess the President's role and power dynamics. When the influence of political or institutional networks is high, recruitment and collaboration with advisers or civil servants are based strictly on political or professional criteria. As this influence decreases, the criteria for recruitment become more diverse, with broader requirements for collaboration throughout the mandate. In these cases, belonging to the President's entourage helps complement or balance recruitment strategies and collaboration with personal advisors and civil servants. Without influence from political or institutional networks, recruitment and collaboration processes are free from political or professional pressures.

However, the quantitative analysis does not accurately and comprehensively represent the level of expertise or educational and professional training of personal advisors and civil servants. The methodological limits derive from the database's low level of completeness, which is why we could not create and process a complete set of quantitative data in the absence of data available online.

4. Results

In the exercise of power relations between the President, directors, civil servants and personal advisors to the President, the special regulation of the State of the civil servant on the guarantee of stability in office has placed the officials in a position of independence from those appointed to office for a certain period. The awareness of this aspect on the part of all the members of the Chancellery has been manifested by the recurrent practices and mentalities that influenced the collaboration during each mandate: "The Presidents, the Ministers, the Directors come and go, we are still here!" (Director 1 President Chancellery). Concerning this mindset, the evaluation and collaboration with the civil servants were influenced somewhat by the personal relations and the duration of the President of the Senate's mandate, starting from the premise that each mandate comprised a period of accommodation, knowledge and establishment of collaboration relations.

In their short tenures in office, some of the civil servants were perceived to make "an act of presence" and to have "a different agenda from the President". It is essential

to understand the contextual meaning of the concepts used by the respondents in the conducted interviews. For example, the “functionality” between the President’s Chancellery and the departments in the structures of the Senate was defined in terms of the blockages or delays occurring in the work as a result of the “instant amplification of the ego and the level of superiority” of the officials and collaborators who “arrived in the large and beautiful offices of the Senate Chancellery” (Director 1 President Chancellery).

In order to identify and understand the expectations of civil servants and personal advisors and harmonize the interactions within the Chancellery later on, the directors took into account their “human quality” and the recommendations they had received, in addition to their professional skills. For the personal advisors, there was “a claim to more involvement and loyalty” throughout the exercise of their term in office. Even though their political affiliation and activity were not considered the exclusive criterion in recruiting personal advisors, “it mattered how they thought concerning the ideology and political intentions of the party” (Director 2 Chancellery President).

The principles pursued in the management of relations with the President of the Senate were based on three main pillars: the quality of the person, the “full trust of the President” towards the staff employed, and shared political options and guidelines (Director 3 Chancellery President). Regardless of the professional training of the civil servant, “the establishment of a relationship of total trust” with the President and their team is considered to be a “quasi-utopian” objective (Director 3 Chancellery President). The collaboration with the civil servants was instead an “exception.” In contrast, the collaboration with the team of personal advisors represented a continuation of the activity carried out in the public institutions and authorities led by the President of the Senate prior to the exercise of the mandate (at the Government and ministries) (Director 3 Chancellery President).

Changes in the organizational chart, personnel replacements, and the establishment of a new way of working are all aimed at alleviating any tensions between the employees and following an agenda harmonious with that of the President. At the same time, emphasis was placed on maintaining a “permanence” at the Chancellery, which is necessary to preserve and benefit from the institutionalized knowledge of the institution’s functioning, its mechanisms, and legislative and administrative procedures. However, this approach was accompanied by the goal of forming the elected official’s team. The activities of the employed personnel were carried out in a chaotic manner, especially during the short mandates exercised by the Presidents of the Senate, as a result of non-fulfillment or exceeding their duties – by participating in “actions and activities to which they did not have the right without informing in advance” (Director 2 Chancellery President). The above prompted relocations or removals of staff “at any cost,” and the collaboration between the parliamentary civil servants and the personal advisors of the President “was quite frail and inconclusive” (Director 2 Chancellery President). In situations where there was a lack of “minimum trust” as a result of suspected personal relations between the civil servants and the former Presidents’ staff,

in order to prevent either the emergence or continuation of conflict, the dominant approach centered on the option of “separating friends” (Director 3 Chancellery President). Instead, the expertise of some civil servants was significant “in a field that mattered at that time” (Director 3 Chancellery President). “But there is no outstanding civil servant that everyone can trust! We are talking about public communication; we are talking about political opinions. None of them think wrong, but we think differently” (Director 3 Chancellery President).

In order to avoid conflict and competition between personal advisors and civil servants, a former director of the President’s Chancellery proposes to replace the entire staff at the time an elected leader takes over the management position of the institution, supported by a majority in the Senate, suggesting that there should be no permanent civil servants within the Chancellery. In this proposal, we recognize the tendency to fully recalibrate the personal and patronage networks by collaborating with loyal, trustworthy staff and like-minded in terms of the ideology and politics of the party. The “support group of the President of the Senate” should have “trust and personal affinity” to the President and a personal motivation compatible with the “political career of the President” in the absence of elements of continuity (Director 3 Chancellery President).

In order to better understand the choices and strategies pursued within the mandate of the President of the Senate, it is essential to mention that the respondents to the interviews referred (indirectly) to the leadership mandate and the Chancellery from a markedly pragmatic perspective. In general, this key role within institutional and constitutional architecture is not the first position in the career of a political figure. However, it represents a continuation of their activity and validates the recognition and political support acquired over time. Starting from the premise that before exercising the mandate of the President of the Senate, they had exercised other important functions at the central level (in the Government and in the ministries), the likely scenario of personal and political strategies can be predicted based on their entire professional path. For this reason, while exercising the mandate of the President of the Senate, the holder of the position continues to follow both the recommendations, requests and pressures from the party and the alliances that offer him political support and also the personal network with which they had previously collaborated and maintains personal relationships consolidated over time (Directors 4, 5 and 6 President’s Chancellery).

The strategies used to recruit personal advisors, retain civil servants and collaborate with the two categories of staff during the office term illustrate the existence of two main approaches, determined by the influence exerted by two distinct informal networks, namely: (I) a patronage network built in relation with the political and personal entourage of the President of the Senate, consolidated over time according to their political and personal career through the formation of relationships of trust, loyalty, mutual knowledge and friendship; and (II) an institutional network focused on preserving the professional experience and expertise of civil servants, which offers them a premise for stability within the Chancellery, to the extent that they do not enter into political or personal disputes and conflicts with the President’s team of personal

advisors the Senate. The first network is vital for recruiting personal advisors, and the second network is used to keep in the Chancellery those civil servants whose expertise is necessary to ensure the operation and efficiency of the administrative apparatus subordinate to the President of the Senate.

Table 1:

The size of institutional and patronage networks during the seven terms of the Presidents of the Senate (March 10, 2014 – July 29, 2022)

President of the Senate	Term in office	Number of Chancellery Directors	Number of parliamentary civil servants	Number of personal advisors	Collaborating with parliamentary civil servants	Collaborating with personal advisors	Personnel changes made	Influence exerted by institutional network	Influence exerted by political network
P.S.1.	5 years and 6 months	2	7	5	Good	Better	Yes	Low	High
P.S.2.	5 months	1	6	3	Good	Weak	Yes	High	Low
P.S.3.	2 months	0	5	0	Weak	It was not the case	No	High	Non-existent
P.S.4.	9 months	3	5	3	Good	Satisfactory	No	High	Moderate
P.S.5.	11 months	3	3	10	Satisfactory	Very good	Yes	Moderate	Very high
P.S.6.	7 months	3	3	8	Very good	Very good	Yes	Moderate	High
P.S.7.	Currently in office	3	4	7	Good	Good	No	High	High

Source: author's own, 2024

Table 2:

General characteristics of the human resource management strategies employed at the Senate Chancellery during the exercise of the President's mandate

President of the Senate	Mandate	Influence in the political party	Influence in the political alliance	Previous collaboration with personal advisors	Political influence exerted on the recruitment of personal advisors	Civil servants recruited during the term of office	Personal advisors replaced during the mandate	Domains of collaboration with civil servants	Domains of collaboration with personal advisors
P.S.1.	Full/voted	Very high	Very high	Yes	High	6	3	Technical, administrative, institutional speeches, relationship with the press	Political, depending on individual specializations
P.S.2.	Full/voted	Weak	Weak	No	No	1	0	Technical, administrative	No collaboration
P.S.3.	Interim	Weak	Weak	It was not the case	It was not the case	0	0	Minimal, during the state of emergency	It was not the case
P.S.4.	Interim	High	Moderate	Yes	Moderate	0	0	Institutional speeches	Political and administrative
P.S.5.	Full/voted	Very high	High	Yes	High	1	0	Institutional communication	Political and administrative
P.S.6.	Full/voted	Very high	Very high	Yes	High	2	0	Full collaboration of all domains	Full collaboration of all domains
P.S.7.	Interim	High	Moderate	Yes	High	1	0	Full collaboration of all domains	Full collaboration of all domains

Source: author's own, 2024

Table 3:

Peculiarities and common general trends specific to strategies for organizing and managing human resources within the Chancellery

General trend for civil servants	General trend for personal advisors	Particularities of the entire mandate of the President (P.S.1., P.S.2., P.S.5, P.S.6.)	Particularities of the interim mandate of the President (P.S.3., P.S.4., P.S.7.)
Keeping civil servants with expertise, commitment and trust, except for those involved in personal or political conflicts and disputes. In general, there was a reluctance to involve civil servants in the political activities of the President of the Senate, with the exception of building, over time, relationships of mutual respect and trust, even if they were of a moderate extent.	Replacement of the entire team of personal advisors on assuming the mandate. Recruitment based on previous collaboration, recommendations from the political party. Trust, knowledge and friendships prevailed over professional expertise and experience. In general, there was a collaboration with personal advisors prior to the election as President of the Senate.	There was a clear specialization of expertise and delineation of duties and responsibilities. A personal advisor was the spokesperson (P.S.1). Occurrence of tensions in the political party (before or during the President's mandate) (P.S.2, P.S.6). The absence of previous experience in managing and organizing the administrative apparatus, accompanied by a general state of conflict between civil servants and the team of personal advisors since taking office (P.S.5).	Exercising the mandate of the President during the state of emergency in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and remote working activity (P.S.3. and partially P.S.4.). Defining the role of civil servants in relation to the activity of personal advisors. Depending on the profile, level of studies, and expertise accumulated in their fields of activity, civil servants have the role of supporting the personal advisors of the President. Decision not to make changes until the mandate of the interim President is clarified (P.S.7.).

Source: author's own, 2024

The general trends and individual particularities for each of the seven analyzed strategies illustrate the placement of the institution of the Chancellery of the President of the Senate (in the light of its importance and the role it plays in the institutional architecture of the Senate, through the coordination of the structures and departments subordinate to the President of the Senate) at the “intersection” of the three interests pursued by the network of patronage and the institutional network:

1. Politicization of the administrative apparatus - through placing party members in important positions within the Chancellery to exercise power in terms of the ideological and political direction assumed by the President of the Senate.
2. The personalization of the Chancellery - results from promoting staff loyal to the President, the central figure in relation to whom the qualities and character of personal advisors and civil servants are evaluated.
3. The institutional resistance - reflected in the culture of civil servants, validated also by their relocation across other departments subordinate to the President of the Senate.

5. Discussion

We distinguish two different periods regarding the stability in the office of the President of the Senate, which directly influenced the recruitment strategies of personal advisors. Regarding the fragmentation of political formations and the stability of the parliamentary majority, we identify different approaches to managing the mandate by the President of the Senate. Political activity influenced the agenda of the President of the Senate to a moderate or considerable extent, depending on the political context (Iancu, 2023). The emergence of new parliamentary political parties fuelled the negotiations involving the distribution of critical functions within political alliances (Prime Minister, President of the Chamber of Deputies and President of the Senate), which is why the political dimension has become much more prominent, as an expression of belonging to the parliamentary majority. Appointments were used in the logic of full exercise of power, reflected mainly in recruiting personal advisors.

The change of the parliamentary majority, together with the governmental instability, was therefore reflected in the organizational structure of the Chancellery of the President of the Senate. The central premise relates to the prospect of replacing personal advisors after the changes made to the leadership of the Senate, especially in the context of a shift in the political structure of the parliamentary majority. At the same time, in order to counterbalance the tendency to modify the structure of the team of personal advisors at very short intervals of time, the influence and political pressure exerted by the political entourage and staff centered around the President of the Senate aims to seize public functions in order to reward political fidelity and loyalty, but also to control, in the long term, the activity of the administrative apparatus.

Belonging to a consolidated and stable parliamentary majority, superimposed on the cohabitation of the executive and legislative power, allowed the President of the Senate to politically benefit from the function and role exercised by the “second man in the state” (Anghel, 2018). More precisely, the work of the Chancellery was engaged in the personal and political stakes and objectives of the President of the Senate. The recurrent activities managed and organized by the team of personal advisors and civil servants have become integrated into the political strategy of the President mandate (Griglio & Lupo, 2021) in order to capitalize on and manage the visibility offered by participation in the Senate events and meetings.

Simultaneously, the personal and professional strategies of civil servants and personal advisors became centered on collaborating with the staff of the Chancellery and the President of the Senate to preserve their positions within the Chancellery. Career choices aimed to stay in office and strengthen personal relationships by belonging to the political entourage in power. The ascension to office depended on the loyalty to the President of the Senate, the influence exercised within the entourage network, and requirements completed with the eligibility criteria regarding professional competence in order to contribute effectively to the activities carried out at the Chancellery of the President of the Senate.

A President, exposed and visible in the public space, needed a “strong” Chancellery

organized according to political and professional criteria. The organization and efficiency of the Chancellery represented genuine support for the President, who was firmly anchored in political disputes. By ensuring the efficiency and optimal functioning of the administrative apparatus, the President was less involved in the management and organization of administrative activities. The overburdening of the activity of the Chancellery thus conditioned the holder of the mandate of the President to achieve a (strategic) compromise between the politicization and professionalization of the Chancellery due to the need to respond to political expectations and institutional needs simultaneously.

The frequent changes of the parliamentary majority reflect on the leadership of the higher chamber, accentuating the politicization of the function and the role exercised by the President of the Senate. The predictable prospect of being replaced in leadership positions at short and regular intervals influences the political and personal strategies of the officeholders; the most common option is to place loyal people in stable positions with whom the President of the Senate collaborates during the office term. The stakes and personal and political objectives of the President of the Senate prevail concerning the desire to ensure the efficient functioning of the administrative apparatus and to protect it from the interference of the political factor.

The high level of fragmentation of the parliamentary parties, together with the ad-hoc reconfiguration of the parliamentary majority, require a high level of political competition, which is why the political control exercised over the public authorities is a vital tool to harness the potential represented by the political capital. Therefore, the political strategy of the holder of the mandate of the President becomes the main direction they seek to impose directly (personally) and indirectly (through personal advisors). While the President of the Senate is exposed to the highest level of political pressure from the political entourage, civil servants resist the political influence, aware that their office is stable, and the leadership of the Senate is exercised temporarily based on the political support of a parliamentary majority subject to continuous reconfiguration.

The excessive politicization of the administrative apparatus through personal advisors is a prerequisite for reducing the efficiency of the Chancellery (Grube, 2023) through the *de facto* “rift” between the category of civil servants and personal advisors. The political strategy of the holder of the mandate of the President is not compatible with the recurrent activity of the administrative apparatus as a result of the fact that there is no clear delimitation and division of tasks and responsibilities within the Chancellery, a similar phenomenon to Sweden and Denmark (Öhberg et al., 2017). Moreover, the efficiency of the Chancellery and the Senate’s entire administrative apparatus is not the top objective for the President concerning the management of pressures and influences exerted by the political entourage.

In this scenario, civil servants’ personal and career strategies differ from those of personal advisors, resulting in a low level of collaboration within the Chancellery. The

interests and influences exerted by the political entourage do not significantly impact the career choices of civil servants. Stability in office, correlated with the prospect of replacing the President of the Senate at short and regular intervals, limits the impact of disciplinary sanctions and (temporary) transfer applied by the mandate holder. At the same time, the formation and strengthening of personal relations with the President of the Senate and their personal advisors is not an (absolute) priority for civil servants due to the low potential of gaining political and social capital. The patronage network is not attractive in terms of preserving independence and a neutral position within the Chancellery that would later be used to preserve the position after the replacement of the President of the Senate. Therefore, civil servants and personal advisors will follow different strategies for obtaining or maintaining an office, with professional competence being the main criterion for civil servants and belonging to the employer's network – the recruitment criterion for personal advisors.

A President of the Senate supported by an unstable majority seeks to have a moderate presence in the public sphere to avoid exposure to political polemics and conflicts that could generate discontent within the parliamentary majority. The continuous political negotiation of the President's position motivates its holder's total involvement in satisfying the requests from the political entourage, even if the pressures affect the efficiency and functioning of the administrative apparatus. The strategic compromise is centered exclusively on politicizing the Chancellery; the institutional needs are given second place in terms of political expectations.

The short-term management of the political and administrative apparatus compromises the team's unity and cohesion. It is dominated by a race to roles and functions according to the individual ambitions and interests of personal advisors and civil servants. Faced with the lack of a guarantee of professional, political and financial stability, personal advisors become dependent on the patronage network to continue their activity in various public administration structures.

6. Conclusions

The political and personal entourage of the President of the Romanian Senate, supported by a network of patronage and clientelism, remains faithful to the informal practices and mechanisms used by the President throughout the exercise of power in order to reward and control the human resources that gave them confidence, support and loyalty. This strategy adapts to the institutional and political context, represented by (minimum) legal standards and the perspective of stability in office. At the same time, the institutional network often acts in the direction of preserving the positions occupied by civil servants to the extent that their relocation and transfer within other departments reduces the institutional knowledge localized at the level of the Chancellery of the President of the Senate.

From the moment of taking office, the President and the team of personal advisors (as a rule) demonstrate their attitudes regarding the institutional organization and activity of the Chancellery. Throughout the mandate, the informal practices promoted and supported by the political and personal entourage constantly aim to capitalize on the network of patronage and clientelism. This strategy consolidates, over time, an approach that overtakes the aim of efficiency and functionality of the administrative apparatus, which triggers or sustains structural problems concerning the desired depoliticization and depersonalization of public institutions and authorities. At the same time, the team of civil servants form, over time, their mindsets and approaches to the interference of the political factor, which enables internal conflicts and blockages.

In this context, the Chancellery of the President of the Senate (as an institutional structure in the organization of the Senate) has a constant and specific identity regarding managing administrative duties. This identity reflects the homogeneity and parliamentary expertise of the group of civil servants, characterized by a discreet, minimal presence to avoid conflict with the President of the Senate and their team of advisors. To use the earlier metaphor, “Caesars without power,” civil servants have an administrative influence thanks to the accumulated experience in the Chancellery of the President of the Senate. On the contrary, those who claim and exercise the view of “Caesars with (almost) full power” (even if for a relatively short period) particularize the (continually changing) identity of the Chancellery. The vocation and political legitimacy conferred by the mandate of the President (together with the team of personal advisors) are inevitably reflected in the valorization of the position by emphasizing the political dimension.

The significant difference between civil servants and the President’s personal advisors is represented by the mechanisms and standards for recruitment into the position, but above all, by varying strategies regarding professional and political careers. On the one hand, for civil servants, activity within the Chancellery constitutes one of the most important periods of their professional career in the absence of a political career, which is why their main objective is to maximize their stability in an office within the Chancellery. On the other hand, for the personal advisors, the activity within the Chancellery is only a temporary stage on their professional path. This political career step is why their priority is to maintain personal and political relations with the President of the Senate and be part of their personal and political entourage. As a result, the Chancellery of the Romanian Senate is instead an illustration of bureaucratic polarization where, albeit having shared tasks, two different groups (the institutional network of tenured civil servants and the personal and political advisers) challenge each other in order to gain different political or professional benefits.

References

- Aberbach, J. D., Putnam, R. D., & Rockman, B. A. (1981). *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674020047>
- Anghel, V. (2018). “Why Can’t We Be Friends?” The Coalition Potential of Presidents in Semi-presidential Republics—Insights from Romania. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 32(1), 101–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325417722829>
- Bach, T., Hammerschmid, G., & Löffler, L. (2015). *More Delegation, More Political Control? Politicization of Senior Level Appointments in 18 European Countries*. EGPA 2015 Conference.
- Bach, T. (2020). Top Officials’ Careers and the Relationship Between Politics and Administration. *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 13(2), 35–48. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nispa-2020-0013>
- Balnaves, M., & Caputi, P. (2001). *Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods: an Investigative Approach* (1st ed.). Sage.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Bovens, M., & Wille, A. (2017). *Diploma Democracy: The Rise of Political Meritocracy*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198790631.001.0001>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/qrij0902027>
- Brass, D. J. (1984). Being in the Right Place: A Structural Analysis of Individual Influence in an Organization. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 29(4), 518. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392937>
- Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*. Harvard University Press.
- Bustikova, L., & Corduneanu-Huci, C. (2017). Patronage, Trust, and State Capacity. *World Politics*, 69(2), 277–326. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0043887116000265>
- Carrington, P. J., Scott, J., & Wasserman, S. (2005). *Models and Methods in Social Network Analysis*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511811395>
- Cobârzan, B. (2008). Special Advisers to the Minister in Romania: Carriers of Political and Administrative Roles. *Politico-Administrative Relations at the Centre: Actors, Structures and Processes Supporting the Core Executive*, 293–307.

- Cooper, C. A. (2021). Politicization of the Bureaucracy across and within Administrative Traditions. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 44(7), 564–577. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2020.1739074>
- Corboș, R. A. (2005). The Professional Competence Chain, an Administration Model for Human Resources. *Economia. Seria Management*, 8(1), 62–74.
- Dahlström, C., Lapuente, V., & Teorell, J. (2012). The Merit of Meritocratization. *Political Research Quarterly*, 65(3), 656–668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912911408109>
- Davis, J. A., & Leinhardt, S. (1972). The Structure of Positive Interpersonal Relations in Small Groups. In J. Berger (Ed.), *Sociological Theories in Progress* (Vol. 2, pp. 218–251).
- Degenne, A., & Forsé, M. (1999). *Introducing Social Networks*. Sage.
- Dima, B. (2014). The European Models of Semi-Presidentialism: the Peculiarity of Romania's Post-Communist System of Government. *Revista Română De Drept Comparat*, 01, 60–82.
- Etzioni-Halevy, E. (2024). *Political Manipulation and Administrative Power: A Comparative study*. Taylor-Francis. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003519898/political-manipulation-administrative-power-eva-etzion-i-halevy>
- Everett, M., & Borgatti, S. P. (2005). Ego Network Betweenness. *Social Networks*, 27(1), 31–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2004.11.007>
- Eymeri-Douzans, J. M., Bioy, X., & Mouton, S. (2015). *Le Règne des Entourages: Cabinets et Conseillers de L'Exécutif* (1st ed.). Presses de Sciences Po.
- Foucault, M. (1982). Afterword: The Subject and Power. In M. Foucault, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (pp. 208-226). The Harvester Press.
- Gailmard, S., & Patty, J. W. (2007). Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(4), 873–889. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00286.x>
- Garson, G. D. (2002). Case Study Research in Public Administration and Public Policy: Standards and Strategies. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 8(3), 209–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2002.12023551>
- Gherghina, S., Tap, P., & Farcas, R. (2023). Informal Power and Short-Term Consequences: Country Presidents and Political Parties in Romania. *Political Studies Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14789299231187220>

- Giugăl, A., & Costinescu, I. M. (2020). Small-time Clientelism: The Rising Fortunes of the Romanian National Liberal Party, 1990–2016. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 53(2), 25–46. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48610573>
- Goffman, E. (1951). Symbols of Class Status. *British Journal of Sociology*, 2(4), 294. <https://doi.org/10.2307/588083>
- Gray, P. S., Williamson, J. B., Karp, D. A., & Dalphin, J. R. (2007). *The Research Imagination: an Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Methods*. <http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ref/id/CBO9780511819391>
- Griglio, E., & Lupo, N. (2021). Parliamentary Administrations in the Bicameral Systems of Europe: Joint or Divided? *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 27(4), 513–534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2021.1953268>
- Groeneveld, S., Tummers, L., Bronkhorst, B., Ashikali, T., & Van Thiel, S. (2015). Quantitative Methods in Public Administration: their Use and Development through Time. *International Public Management Journal*, 18(1), 61–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2014.972484>
- Grube, D. C. (2023). Politics and Politicisation: Bane or Boon Companion? In *Handbook on Ministerial and Political Advisers* (pp. 352–364). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800886582.00035>
- Gouglas, A., Brans, M., & Jaspers, S. (2017). European Commissioner Cabinet Advisers: Policy Managers, Bodyguards, Stakeholder Mobilizers. *Public Administration*, 95(2), 359–377. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12301>
- Haruță, C., Radu, B., & Radu, L. (2009). The Ruling Political Class? A Theoretical Analysis of the Political Actors' Role as Major Decision Makers in the Context of the Politico-administrative Relations. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 5(27), 71–88. <https://www.rtsa.ro/tras/index.php/tras/article/download/249/243>
- Higashijima, M., & Washida, H. (2024). Varieties of Clientelism Across Political Parties: New Measures of Patron–client Relationships. *European Political Science Review*, 16(2), 260–280. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755773923000309>
- Hood, C. C., & Lodge, M. (2006). *The Politics of Public Service Bargains: Reward, Competency, Loyalty - and Blame*. Oxford University Press.
- Hustedt, T., Kolltveit, K., & Salomonsen, H. H. (2017). Ministerial Advisers in Executive Government: Out from the Dark and into the Limelight. *Public Administration*, 95(2), 299–311. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12329>

- Iancu, A. A. (2023). Romania's Parliamentary Administration. In *The Routledge Handbook of Parliamentary Administrations* (pp. 403–412). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003181521-34>
- Iftimoaei, C. (2013). Problems of the Democratic Consolidation in Post-communist Romania. *Scientific Annals of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iași. #TAB# New Series Sociology and Social Work Section*, 6(2). <https://85.122.27.161/index.php/asas/article/view/47>
- Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2003). Governance Matters III: Governance Indicators for 1996–2002. In *World Bank policy research working paper*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-3106>
- Kopecký, P., Mair, P., & Spirova, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Party Patronage and Party Government in European Democracies*. Oxford University Press. <https://academic.oup.com/book/34696>
- Kopecký, P., Meyer-Sahling, J., & Spirova, M. (2022). (Extreme) Political Polarization and Party Patronage. *Irish Political Studies*, 37(2), 218–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2022.2045143>
- Levi, M., & Stoker, L. (2000). Political Trust and Trustworthiness. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3(1), 475–507. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.475>
- Meyer-Sahling, J., & Veen, T. (2012). Governing the Post-communist State: Government Alternation and Senior Civil Service Politicisation in Central and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics*, 28(1), 4–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279.2011.635651>
- Mijs, J. J., & Savage, M. (2020). Meritocracy, Elitism and Inequality. *The Political Quarterly*, 91(2), 397–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.12828>
- Miller, G. J., & Yang, K. (Eds.). (1999). *Handbook of Research Methods in Public Administration*. M. Dekker.
- Moe, T. M. (1989). The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure. In J. E. Chubb & P. E. Peterson (Eds.), *Can the Government Govern* (pp. 267–329). Brookings Institution.
- Murphy, A. (2020). Semi-Presidential Reform and Referendums in France and Romania. *European Journal of Comparative Law and Governance*, 7(4), 384–407. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134514-00704001>
- Nemec, J., Drechsler, W., & Hajnal, G. (2020). Public Policy during COVID-19: Challenges for Public Administration and Policy Research in Central and Eastern Europe. *NISPACEE Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 13(2), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nispa-2020-0011>

- Niklasson, B., Christiansen, P. M., & Öhberg, P. (2019). Speaking Truth to Power: Political Advisers' and Civil Servants' Responses to Perceived Harmful Policy Proposals. *Journal of Public Policy*, 40(3), 492–512. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0143814x18000508>
- O'Dwyer, C. (2006). *Runaway State-Building: Patronage Politics and Democratic Development*. John Hopkins University Press.
- Öhberg, P., Christiansen, P. M., & Niklasson, B. (2017). ADMINISTRATIVE POLITICIZATION OR CONTESTABILITY? HOW POLITICAL ADVISERS AFFECT NEUTRAL COMPETENCE IN POLICY PROCESSES. *Public Administration*, 95(1), 269–285. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12253>
- Peters, B. G. (2013). Politicisation: What is it and why should we care? In C. Neuhold, S. Vanhoonacker, & L. Verhey (Eds.), *Civil Servants and Politics: A Delicate Balance* (pp. 12–24). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137316813_2
- Peters, B. G., & Bianchi, C. (2020). Patronage and the Public Service: A Dynamic Performance Governance Perspective. In C. Bianchi & L. F. Luna-Reyes (Eds.), *System Dynamics for Performance Management* (pp. 215–236). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42970-6_10
- Radu, B. V., & Radu, L. (2019). Rolul Consilierii Demnitarilor în România: între Expertiză și Rol Politic. *Revista Transilvană De Științe Administrative*, 21(44), 66–77. <https://www.rtsa.ro/rtsa/index.php/rtsa/article/download/580/577>
- Raiu, C. (2015). An Ontology of Good Governance. A Political Theory Approach. *Revista Romana de Economie*, 40(1), 154–169.
- Raiu, C., & Mina-Raiu, L. (2023). Who Runs Public Administration? A longitudinal Study of Technocratic Ministerial Appointments in Post-Communist Romania (1991–2021). *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 70 E, 109–127. <https://doi.org/10.24193/tras.70e.6>
- Rashkova, E. R., & Zankina, E. (2019). Ministerial Politics in Southeastern Europe: Appointment and Portfolio Allocation to Female Ministers. *Politics & Gender*, 15(2), 211–239. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1743923x18001071>
- Schilke, O., Reimann, M., & Cook, K. S. (2021). Trust in Social Relations. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 47(1), 239–259. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-082120-082850>
- Silberman, B. (1993). *Cages of Reason: The Rise of the Rational State in France, Japan, the United States, and Great Britain*. University of Chicago Press.
- Skocpol, T. (1985). Bringing the State back in: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research. In P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol (Eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*

(pp. 3–38). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511628283.002>

- Snagovsky, F., Taflaga, M., & Kerby, M. (2022). Responsive to whom? Political Advising and Elected Careers in Institutionalized Democracies. *Party Politics*, 29(3), 435–447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13540688221079299>
- Stan, L. (2012). Witch-hunt or Moral Rebirth?: Romanian Parliamentary Debates on Lustration. *East European Politics and Societies*, 26(2), 274–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325411403922>
- Staronova, K., & Rybář, M. (2021). Personal or Party Roots of Civil Service Patronage? Ministerial Change Effects on the Appointments of top Civil Servants. *Administration & Society*, 53(5), 651–679. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399720956996>
- Staroňová, K., & Rybář, M. (2023). Comparing Ministerial Advisers across Politicization Settings: Still Hiding in the Shadows? *Governance*, 37(1), 201–219. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12760>
- Stephenson, M. C. (2008). Optimal Political Control of the Bureaucracy. *Michigan Law Review*, 107(1), 53–110.
- Vercesi, M. (2022). Democratic Stress and Political Institutions: Drives of Reforms of Bicameralism in Times of Crisis. *Representation*, 58(1), 85–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2019.1635195>
- Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815478>
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). University of California Press.