

## **Year 2004 – The Romanian Elections**

### **INTRODUCTION**

After the 1989 Revolution, 2004 was the fifth electoral year of Romania. Since 1992, every four years, local, general and presidential elections were organized, the last two being simultaneous. According to the new Constitution adopted in 2003, the presidential mandate is valid for five years and the parliamentary one only for four, hence there will be a gap between the parliamentary elections and the presidential ones.

Although the local poll from June 2004 was organized for the mayors and for the local and county councils to be elected, in fact it proved to be a noteworthy test before the general elections from autumn.

The main contenders were the government Social Democratic Party, the DA<sup>1</sup> Alliance NLP+DP (formed of a liberal party and social-democrat one), the Party of Great Romania (a national party with communist affiliations), the Humanist Party of Romania (a center party focused on the small enterprises) and the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania, an ethnic party with a constant electorate of approximately 6-7% concentrated on ten counties from the center of Transylvania. In 2000, SDP obtained about 40% in the general elections, NLP and DP each obtained 7%, HDAR also 7% and the Party of Great Romania got 22%. The Humanist Party of Romania went in the elections on the SDP's lists and they came to government together but in 2003 they left the coalition and entered the opposition.

The social-democratic government was characterized by political stability, by an unprecedented economic growth during the post-revolutionary period and by diplomatic accomplishments (accession to NATO, completing the integration negotiations with EU, the annulment of the visas for the Schengen space) but there was also a lot of corruption, as well as accusations of violation of free expression rights. The SDP electorate was concentrated especially in the countryside and in the peripheries of the urban areas and its average age was of over 45 years.

The DA Alliance was formed of two parties that had survived the government of 1996-2000, which had been drastically sanctioned in the 2000 elections (Christian Democratic National Peasant Party, the leader of that coalition, had not acceded in the parliament consequently). The DA Alliance's message was exclusively focused against corruption, being significantly supported by the majority of media and of civil society structures.

The Great Romania Party had been the surprise of the 2000 elections when its performance soared from a standard score of 5-6% to over 22%. The national message combined with the radical, redeeming and sometimes violent xenophobe speech faded out immediately after the elections and the PRM leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor even tried a controversial reconciliation with the Jewish minority from Romania and with the international sionist movement. 6 month before the elections, CV Tudor also decided not to use any longer the violent language that rendered him well-known. The outcome was a massive drop out in the electoral support and the majority of those lost electors embraced the DA Alliance.

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<sup>1</sup> D.A – a pun. In Romanian, "da" means "yes", but D and A are also initials of the words "dreptate" (justice) and "adevar" (truth)

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Although the HDAR was backed up by a stable electorate, the Hungarian population from Romania, the party was confronted with a scission inside its political structure that led to the emergence of a new organization of the Hungarian minority called the Hungarian Civic Union. Hence, both organizations were threatened by the prospect of not entering the parliament. With a representation threshold of 5% in Romania, the Hungarian minority electoral potential is of maximum 7.5%.

The Humanist Party of Romania had never obtained electoral results on its own. It had always entered the Parliament or the Government only through alliances that were generated not by its political potential but by the media trust owed by its president. In 2004, when the general elections took place, HPR (Humanist Party of Romania) decided to try its hand all by itself acting as an opposition party and also benefiting of some strong local branches stolen from other parties.

## LOCAL ELECTIONS

*In Romania, the local elections had balanced returns. SDP maintained its sway over the majority of the cities (with 1685 mayors from the total number of 3137 localities) and succeeded in obtaining a score similar to the one from 2000. The opposition (the NLP-DP Alliance) succeeded in balancing the political scene obtaining a tight victory regarding the political vote (33,85% instead of 32,68%).*

### - **The Bucharest Campaign Role**

The election campaign from Bucharest had a major influence on the way in which the contenders had been perceived all over the country. In Bucharest the opposition leader and incumbent mayor Traian Băsescu, and namely the minister of foreign affairs Mircea Geoană contended. Given that most of the electoral advertising space from the central mass-media was taken up by the candidates' messages for the capital's mayor position, the electors from other localities voted mostly influenced by the electoral campaign from Bucharest.

### - **The Bucharest effect extended over other localities**

The fact that some well-known political leaders in the big cities ran for office extended the effect that the popularity of the Bucharest townhall candidate already had. An eloquent example is the case of the Cluj-Napoca, the biggest city from Transylvania. The opposition's success in the two cities and also in other large localities created the impression that the government party lost the local elections, although it had obtained good results all over the country as well as in some big cities (Iasi, Constanta, Galati, Craiova, Ploiesti).

### - **The subjects of the campaign**

The main polls underlined the population's fears and the discussion subjects from the electoral campaign. A distinction has to be made here. The population had a different agenda from the media agenda and the parties' agenda. For mass media the main subjects were corruption and the lack of efficiency of the administration (dominated by SDP when the elections took place). For the population, the main issues were related to their own lives and not to the functioning of the state institutions. The parties oscillated between those subjects. But the performance of the personalities involved made the difference.

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### - The elections' stake

The interpretation key of the opposition's successful message during the election campaign is to be found not only in the content, message and in the actual communication means used during the campaign but also in the positioning decision. In the spring of 2004, DA Alliance took the positioning initiative of the main political forces, by defining the electoral situation not as a confrontation between two parties but as a struggle between a party (DA Alliance) and a corrupted system. One of the most efficient ways to enforce this disjunction was a strong personalization of the political confrontation and especially of the main competitor: SDP was restricted to the image of the local barons<sup>2</sup>. That happened through three categories of campaign instruments: the proper messages delivered by the central and local leaders of the Alliance, the analysis and commentaries published in the press by the main opposition voices of the civil society and actual campaign products (the most important one was a newspaper ad containing a message signed by the co-president of the Alliance, Theodor Stolojan, that urged the population to vote against the local barons).

### - Traian Bănescu's campaign for the capital's townhall

Traian Bănescu's electoral success depended to a great extent on this positioning as an anti-corruption leader. He (a person with exceptional merits) had to face the mechanism of an entire party (SDP).

Traian Bănescu's campaign was built up on two types of contradictions:

1. *The "leader/team" contradiction.* The main resource of the Alliance's campaign was Traian Bănescu himself. Nevertheless, an important element of the Bucharest campaign was the team. The team was made up of his proposed candidates for the sectorial townhalls of the capital, and included young leaders, completely unknown to the public, for whom Bănescu offered a „guarantee” and asked the citizens for a blank vote of confidence.
2. *The contradiction of the simultaneous campaigns.* Being aware of the fact that he has to catch the electorate's attention by a serious message and at the same time to reconfirm the style that made him famous (style that is characterized by a “colourful” manner of communicating, with surprising accents), Bănescu resorts to a double language characterized by aggressiveness and playful elements in the campaign products and at the same time by seriousness, even diplomacy in the broadcasted shows and in some electoral commercials. The campaign materials of the Alliance's leader had all been marked by the “chilli pepper” symbol meant to emphasize his main quality, namely that of being inconvenient to the system. But, at the same time, both his broadcasted video materials and his speech were dominated by messages relating to his future technical, feasible and very concrete projects for the capital.

Another risk element included in the campaign's plans was “asking for more”, asking the electorate to vote not only for him but also for his team (the sector mayors and the local council). Using a very bold slogan “Everything or Nothing”, Bănescu requested the citizens of Bucharest to provide him with all the instruments for an efficient administrative activity: “I can do a lot by myself, but with a city council I can do everything”. The novelty was the fact that a candidate *asked* for something instead of offering something, which

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<sup>2</sup> Local baron – a pejorative term, meaning a group formed of many chiefs from SDP local branches, who became notorious for their discretionary, ruling and controlling behavior over the counties they represented, being often accused for trying to subordinate the authorities.

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normally was a detrimental political strategy; but this was neither a normal contender nor a normal situation as the person who made such a gesture was very popular, with no strong challenger and who also benefited of exceptional political circumstances. His competitor - Mircea Geoana of the SDP - neither did rise to his level nor was he considered to be a real rival by the Alliance's candidate.

*"I can do a lot by myself, but with a city council I can do everything"*  
*"EVERYTHING OR NOTHING"*



*"Vote for him!"* Poster with the chilli pepper symbol

### - The battle from Bucharest: Mircea Geoana

Although the last moment run for the Capital's townhall of the popular minister of foreign affairs Mircea Geoana was a surprising gesture of the government party, meant to break the popularity monopoly gathered by Traian Basescu, it proved to be an unsuccessful strategy.

The polls before the elections showed that Traian Basescu would win from the first round, which was confirmed by the final results.

Geoana's late candidature resulted in an improvised, non-personalized and unconvincing campaign. Although the advertising products were very well conceived from a technical point of view, they were not sufficiently developed and diversified in message. They have not delivered essential elements, like a project for Bucharest of the candidate Mircea Geoana. His campaign was dull with no colourfulness and he resorted too little to the unconventional communication means. By comparison, Traian Băsescu's campaign was more dynamic and it scored by strongly using the internet, even monopolizing it, thus attracting youth support.

### - The battle from Bucharest: other contenders

Beside the main contenders for the Romania's capital townhall, other candidates with no chance joined the race. Nevertheless, they played an important role in discrediting Mircea Geoana. Therefore, instead of focusing their attacks on the acting mayor - Traian Basescu who represented the Bucharest's administrative power, they trained their cannons at Mircea Geoana (the goal of the other contenders was to damage the general image of the government party as much as possible).

### - The other parties had very poor campaigns

Except for the SDP and the DA Alliance, all the other parties had simple and rather weak campaigns from a professional point of view. The lack of quality campaigns did not mean the absence of the results. A good example can be HPR that obtained rather good results in many geographical areas, although its campaign was sometimes rather amusing (they

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had cheap commercial promotional materials that suggested both lack of imagination and inadequacy). HPR attracted by positioning, directing its message to an electorate discontented with the government party, but not inclined to choose the right side.

*The final impression of these elections is the following: the SDP starts to decrease very much and on the other hand DA Alliance increases its power sufficiently for a clear win of the general elections. But this tendency was not confirmed later on.*

## SUMMER PERIOD

During the first month after the elections, the DA Alliance which was seen as the winner of the balloting had an advantage (fact that could also be remarked in the polls which indicated for the first time that the Alliance had an advance against SDP). The scenario of each electoral year started to stand out as the local election victory led to an almost categorical victory in the general elections for the opposition forces.

### - **The inactivity of the DA Alliance**

Paradoxically, the favourable perception was not supported by any political or image strategy of the Alliance which did not know how to profit by the risen opportunity. The Alliance did not succeed in enforcing the "change" as a main characteristic/ concept of the public debate. The main cause of this step behind was that the main image vector of the opposition, Traian Basescu was forced to come out of the Alliance current events forefront, after winning the town hall elections.

In the context of the general elections, the new "locomotive", Theodor Stolojan (a balanced and cerebral character) proved to be unable to impose a strong image for himself. Not only did he not take advantage of the winning wave (as the 1996 opposition did) but also for many months, the Alliance did absolutely nothing, leaving the opposition message to be carried on by the mass media only.

### - **The new SDP**

All this time, the SDP attenuated this favourable trend for the Alliance through a powerful and rapidly outlined image strategy that allowed it to take the initiative and to enter the electoral race with an advantage. Beyond the public perception, the local elections brought an important political victory for SDP that obtained the same number of votes as in the 2000 local elections and much more mayor offices. That was an excellent political foundation for acting at national level. The first measure was to continue the internal cleaning campaign of the SDP by suspending the local barons. Then the introduction of the preliminary elections established as a method for choosing the candidates for parliament. Those were an image hit with one strong message: the democratisation and modernisation of the SDP were not just idle talk. The action brought about the seizure of the political agenda for a long time, thus contributing to the legitimacy of the whole "**New SDP**" message.

The central management was replaced with a new reduced leadership team formed of "clean" leaders placed under the aegis of the same reforming leader, Adrian Năstase. He adopted a different manner of behaving, as he went on a long tour of unconventional visits in the country, with no protocol or media involvement. All that triggered many potential voters according to the polls.

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The last step of the strategy was the foundation of the SDP + HPR National Union. The partnership with HPR, a party that disputed SDP in the local elections had a strong political importance; it was meant to avoid the perception that SDP was isolated; it enforced the idea of a coagulant factor on the political scene and also allowed the entrance of the SDP in the electoral race with a new name.

*All those SDP actions strengthened by the Alliance's lack of initiative led to the overthrow of the early summer trend. The electoral campaign promised to be far more interesting, as the struggle between the two teams was more balanced.*

## THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

As a result of the excellent pre-campaign carried on after the local elections, the Social Democratic Party inverted the favourable trend of the DA Alliance and entered the parliamentary campaign as favourite. That was confirmed by all the public opinion polling institutes.

- Under these circumstances, the sole chance for the DA Alliance to come back on top was to develop an exceptional electoral campaign (which was not possible because of the lack of resources) or an event with a maximum media impact, an electoral shock that would cut the SDP's wings and allow the entrance in campaign from equal positions.
- The evident impossibility to build a classic campaign that should be sufficiently strong and superior to the SDP's campaign, led to the other solution: a shock event meant to overthrow the political scene. The best solution was to **change the presidential nominee Theodor Stolojan** with the popular mayor of Bucharest Traian Basescu. The Alliance's representatives motivated Theodor Stolojan's drop out by underlying his poor health which did not allow him to continue the race. The candidate's replacement was part of an emotionally strained event marked by the new presidential contender's unrestrained tears that generated a strong controversy for the public opinion.
- Up to now, in Romania there has been a tight relationship between the parliamentary campaign and the presidential one, meaning that a great part of the parliamentary campaign communicational effort was focussed on the presidential contender. This tradition was also confirmed to the November 2004 elections. Both main contenders had the role of a head communication vector and encouraged the vote for the party. In DA Alliance's campaign case, the relation was stronger for two reasons: the lack of resources imposed their concentration on the presidential candidate and his charm helped at the increase of the parliamentary score.
- Nevertheless, the initial calculations were partially invalidated by the balloting results. The excessive accent on the presidential campaign caused an insufficient supporting of the parliamentary campaign, which could be noticed in the final results of the balloting that rendered SDP successful with an advance of a few percents over the DA Alliance.

- **The positive message**

The positive message was very little promoted, being preferred especially by the party in office. The DA Alliance chose to support a rather negative message even on TV. SDP wanted to display its achievements during the governing mandate, a powerful social

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message, and the description of its own team. Backed up by good government results, SDP came to monopolise the positive speech, leaving the opposition with no solutions. The sole concrete constructive element of the Alliance was the fiscal reform proposal on liberal line, reform that was disputed at the popular perception's level.

As for the promotion of its own candidates, both parties had a positive message but the SDP's structure team, built on three generations (Iliescu, Nastase, Geoana) was very interesting.



*"Together for the Romania's future. SDP+HPR"*

Poster with the main image leaders of SDP: the president in office Ion Iliescu, the prime minister Adrian Nastase, the minister of foreign affairs Mircea Geoana

## ELECTORAL NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN

2004 was the year with the most powerful and virulent negative campaigns from the last 15 years. The regulations that forbade the audio-visual electoral negative campaign led to the creation of a great variety of alternative means: posters, fliers, billboards, speech elements, press articles, shock accusations and disclosures. After the campaign, the majority of accusations have disappeared and the penal route was eluded through more or less direct apologies. But the electorate was influenced, particularly because there were no direct methods to efficiently counteract the attacks. Most of attacks were supported on a local level (and very little in the central mass media). The majority of attacks were launched during the face-to-face meetings and speeches.

- The negative SDP campaign focused on two main attack directions: **on the DA Alliance's lack of team and competencies** in the fragile context created by Romania's proximate accession to EU on January 1, 2007 and on the association with the poor outcome of the 1997-2000 government in which the two parties of the DA Alliance had taken part.
- Those attacks were also backed up by strong speculation and **promotion campaigns for the blunders made by Traian Basescu**. It was all about new themes emphasised during the campaign, as for instance supporting the same sex marriages in a 90% orthodox country, harsh criticism against the Church, the explicit ignoring of the rural

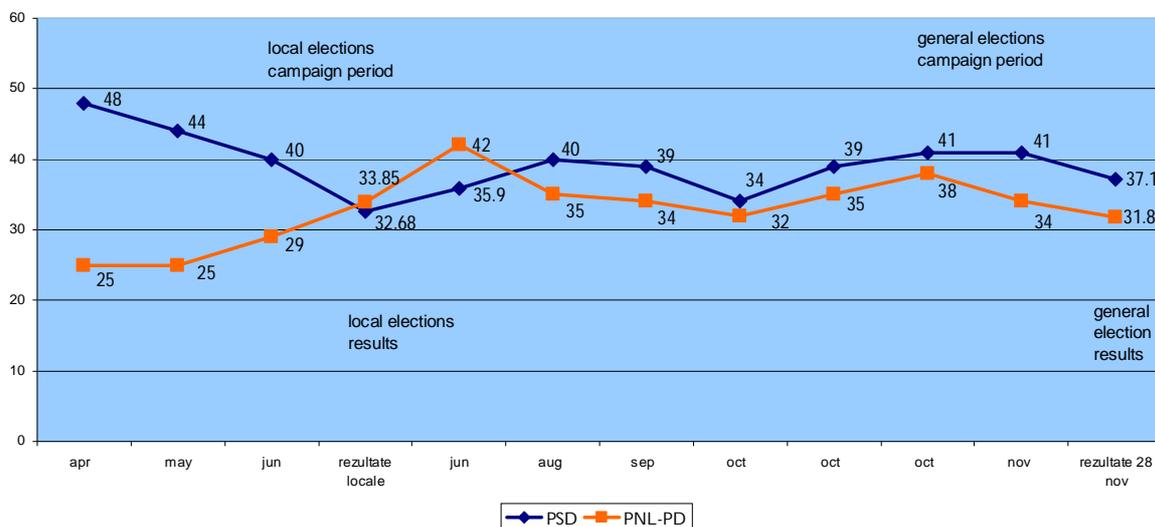
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and assisted electorate who was even offended directly. Those blunders were decisive for the DA Alliance's decrease and for losing the elections.

- As for the DA Alliance negative campaign, it was focused on the corruption accusations brought against some SDP representatives, on exaggerating the dimension of poverty from the country and on verbal assaults. There also were made "disclosures" about the family of the SDP presidential candidate and speculations on his homosexuality.
- An original direction of negative campaign was initiated by some organisations of the civil society reunited in the **Coalition for a Clean Parliament**. In a nutshell, the Coalition distributed leaflets containing corruption accusations against some contenders for parliament, whose names appeared in the central and local press in course of time. As a result of the fact that the majority of the names that appeared on the Coalition's list were from SDP, many observers considered that it was a hidden form of the opposition negative campaign. As a matter of fact, the civil society partisanship was evident during the entire year of 2004. The NLP-DP Alliance was strongly supported by the most well known structures of the civil society as well as by a majority of the written mass media. A proof of this partisanship was the naming of two outstanding members of the civil society in minister functions in the new government.

Another special case of negative campaign was the elections fraud idea that had been emphasised by both the Alliance and Basescu after having found out about the loss of the parliamentary elections. Staking on a similar situation that happened in Ukraine, Basescu requested repeating the balloting even if he neither produced any evidence nor was he supported by the international institutions (OSCE, EU). But Basescu's scandal generated visibility and mobilisation for the Alliance's electorate. The second round campaign started with a big advantage for Basescu (Nastase had to justify the manner in which he had organised the elections). Not only Basescu's irresponsible message was not sanctioned, but it also led to the winning of the elections, as there was no neutral civil society.

### Party trends in polls



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Polls performed by the respected polling institutions from Romania: CURS, IMAS, GCS

### PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

#### - - The definition of the elections: change vs. stability

The campaign was a classic one. The Alliance asked for change and SDP demanded stability. This axis was reinforced by another one: rational message vs. emotional message. Basescu tried to counteract the lack of foundation in the rational sphere (no team, programme and competence), relying on emotional instruments. He sustained an emphatic message with shocking moments of show, in this way hoping to attract the irresolute electorate by using a different channel than the ideological one. Next to the image of Nastase's continuous and successful governance, Basescu played a character that, even in making blunders, was more charming than the cold and boring efficiency of his contender.



*I have led Romania towards Europe  
Facts are my politics.  
"I have led Romania towards Europe".  
General slogan: "Facts are my politics"  
Adrian Nastase promotes the continuity  
on the basis of good results.*

The corruption metaphor:  
Romania as an area stung by mosquitoes  
Solution: the DA Alliance



#### - Target audience – the electorate's segmentation

Quite from the start, each candidate identified its own electorate. Basescu aimed at the urban population, at the youth and at the middle class (at the beginning of the campaign he declared resolutely that he would ignore the rural environment). On the other hand, Nastase turned to the assisted population (pensioners, rural inhabitants, workers, families with children, the poor). Employing a classic social-democratic speech, Nastase wanted to maintain that electorate on his side (electorate that proceeded from the former president Ion Iliescu's people) promising the continuity of the support offered during the last years. Basescu disregarded the governmental message and guided his

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actions by an anti-system message, cultivating a certain approach of the extremist electorate of the third contender Vadim Tudor (making plans for the second round).

Basescu staked on the circumstantial wave that provided him an important support in elections, with no regard to what would happen subsequently.

Adrian Nastase staked almost nothing on another type of target public, hence he limited his options for the second round and also lost the elections (the exceptional mobilisation of the Basescu's electorate from the second round was not matched by a similar mobilisation for Nastase).

Traian Basescu's slogan: *"Have a good life"*

*YES for welfare*

*YES for dignity!*



Slogan Adrian Nastase for the second round 2:

*"We go on together!"*

There was also a paradox of the presidential elections. The most educated electorate chose the most inconsistent contender at the message level, while the less educated electorate chose the candidate who adopted a more elaborate and rational message. The intellectuals refused to sustain Adrian Nastase's message and preferred Basescu's anti-system message (with an activism difficult to explain).

### - The presidential character

Adrian Nastase resorted to a campaign meant to confirm the loyalty of Ion Iliescu's electorate, personalising it at the same time by making use of the argument of his own efficiency as a prime-minister. The result was the presidential character that embodied a strong leader, a team co-ordinator capable of obtaining favourable results who laid stress on the people's welfare and mainly on the disadvantaged categories (the president who "listens, understands and solves the people's real problems"). His main proposal was to continue all the positive actions started during his governance.

Traian Basescu focused entirely on the idea of separation from the classic image of the president (inactive and a weak factor in decision making), simultaneously challenging the presidential portrait designed by his contender but also the acknowledged image of Ion Iliescu. Basescu positioned himself as the leader of the entire change wave system. To

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the end of the campaign, his authoritative speech and the stinging accents were completed by a warmer sub-campaign oriented towards target social categories, with the following slogan: "Have a good life"

### - **The presidential project**

The National Union SDP+PUR candidate powerfully promoted two main action directions: decreasing the poverty of the country and the good EU integration. Both types of messages were strongly people-oriented; Nastase adopting the image of the empathetic presidential candidate, focusing his speech on the addressee ("you", people) and not on himself. His goal was to rivet the assisted electorate who was dependent on the state's support and who was frightened by the possibility of the old system disappearance once the integration in EU took place.

On the other hand, Traian Basescu oriented his entire presidential project towards fighting against corruption and leading the state's institutions in the citizens' service. In this context, he tried to accomplish two objectives: to reveal the poor performance of the institutions and to warrant his direct involvement in amending this situation. He also benefited by the fact that corruption had been a public agenda priority for a long time.

### - **The specific elements of the electoral campaign**

The campaign products that Basescu displayed were less coloured and spectacular than those he accustomed the public opinion with, this time he opted for temperance doubled by a sharp manner of expression. But he was consistent in accentuating more the form and less the substance. The publicity campaign was weak and uninspired and the artificiality of the candidate's pictures was especially obvious. The website had a lot of colour elements but it often pointed to a lack of seriousness. The video strategy was a success as the televised feature reports presented the contender among people, thus underlying a direct communication with the electorate.

Adrian Nastase chose a calm, serious campaign dwelling ostentatiously on his governmental achievements. The sententious tone and his self-bragging utterances during the publicity campaign laid stress on one of his well known features, namely the arrogance, that was contradictory to the other aspect which founded his campaign – the warm, humane, popular appeal. His TV ads were very technical, very serious, and often difficult to follow. On the other hand, although, the website was full of information, and also benefited by colour accents such as details about his family which contributed to the character's humanisation.



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Unconventional poster: Adrian Nastase with his wife and the two children  
*"Romania needs a president who loves his family, is respectful of the Romanian tradition and appreciates the orthodox values"*

The televised debates emphasised the features already displayed through the campaign speech: Nastase concentrated on the substance trying to send out concrete, but intricate messages and Basescu who staked everything on his communication qualities and on the direct approach with general non-specific messages.

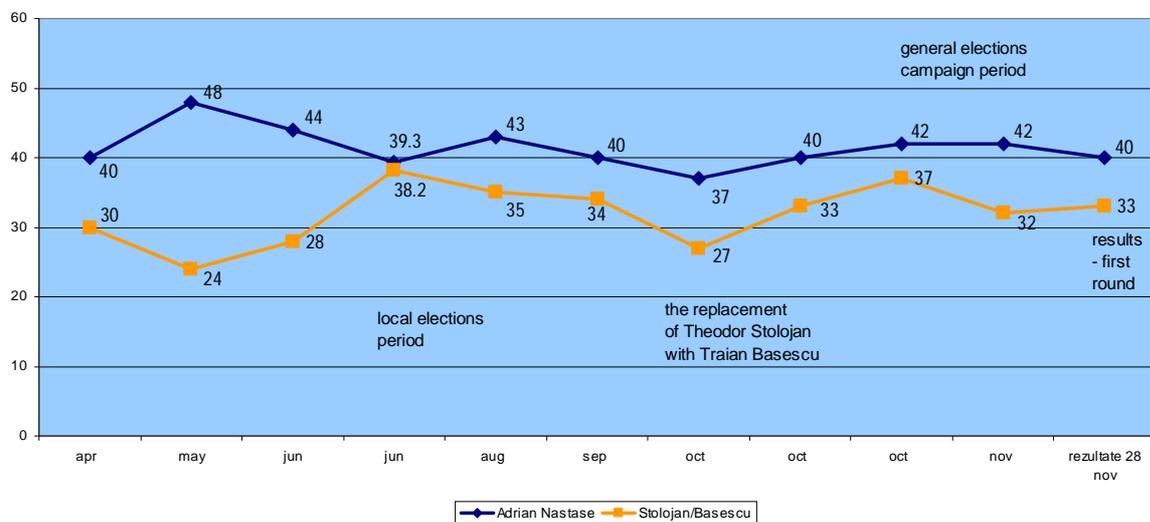
A special mention for one of the most important elements of the Alliance candidate's campaign – the civil society, that was mobilised and active, made propaganda almost outspokenly for Basescu, especially in the written press.

### - Other presidential contenders

Corneliu Vadim Tudor entered the campaign, being very confident that he would surpass his performance from the 2000 elections when he entered the second round together with Ion Iliescu. His campaign was much weaker in all aspects than the one from 4 years ago. Moreover, the resource the Great Romania party's candidate counted on, namely his good performance during the televised debates, did not work out any longer. In this context, for the first time, Corneliu Vadim Tudor obtained a smaller score than the one of his own party.

Another noticeable contender was Gheorghe Ciuhandu, mayor of the municipal town of Timisoara and the representative of the Christian Democratic National Peasant Party, an extra-parliamentary party around which the coalition that governed Romania during 1997-2000 was built. Although many analysts appreciated Ciuhandu's speech and attitude, he was not considered a revelation, thus his objective to lead the party to parliament was not fulfilled.

### *Presidential candidates, in polls*



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Polls performed by many respected polling institutes from Romania: CURS, IMAS, GCS

### - **What happened between the first round and the second round?**

As he won by far the first round and was the leader of a winning party in the parliamentary elections, Nastase built for the second round a campaign meant to strengthen the messages that had been transmitted, all emphasized by a victorious tone. On the other hand, during those two weeks Basescu had only one goal: to attract on his side the electorate of Vadim Tudor, by dramatically radicalising his own message. Although, at first sight it was a risky bet, the action proved to be successful. The main resource for that attitude was the subject Basescu generated - being massively backed up by the civil society - the election fraud by SDP and the first round returns dispute. Therefore, the defeat supposition assured the strong mobilisation of the Alliance's electorate while the protesting message attracted Vadim Tudor's electorate. That also happened because Nastase had received the Hungarian party's support.

*The National Union SDP+PUR with a result of 37% won the parliamentary elections and the NLP-DP Alliance was on the second place with 31%. The presidential elections were won, after the second round by Traian Basescu (the DA Alliance representative) with 51% versus the 49% obtained by Adrian Nastase (SDP's candidate).*

## Conclusions

### - **The Romanian elections have generated a special political balance.**

At present, there are parliamentary forces that can decide the government's dismissal if a major mistake is made. The winning of the presidential elections by Traian Basescu has led to the annulment of the SDP's parliamentary elections winning. Through political pressures, the new president has announced that he will force the formation of an Alliance minority government. Being entirely an image product, on the helm of the state, Traian Basescu will have to prove that he is also endowed with other leadership qualities.

These elections have proved the great balance that exists between the political action and the image campaign. The negotiations between parties and not the image campaign have determined the winner of the presidential elections. But, at the same time, the electoral performance of one single man has succeeded in entailing an opposition structure that seemed to have small chances a few months ago. Just as he had won the sector town halls of Bucharest with unknown people, **Traian Basescu succeeded in offering victory to a bunch of unpopular leaders who had governed the country between 1996 and 2000.**

After a predictable defeat in the local elections from Bucharest, SDP succeeded in arresting the apparently imminent decline and in competing from equal positions in the parliamentary elections. **It was the first party from Eastern Europe who succeeded in winning more votes than it had won at the beginning of the mandate.** That was one of the important outcomes of the campaign, because it helped diminish the erosion; the campaign was greatly prepared by the adaptation of the party during the last year, which prevented the party's collapse.

## **Elections in Romania. 2004**

*January 2005: the DA Alliance's team leads Romania. Although SDP has won the parliamentary elections, the presidential victory of Traian Basescu has triggered the establishment of a NLP-DP government. This government has been voted by the Parliament with a fragile majority and it has already been disputed. Being deprived of great personalities and of a solid support, this government has the difficult task to integrate Romania in the European Union.*

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