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COMMUNITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

SOCIETY AND STATE

TRANSGRESSIVE TACTICS THROUGH MARGINALITY AND HYBRIDITY

SOCIAL PRACTICES AT THE INTERSECTION OF INDIGENEITY, GENDER AND CLASS IN THE ANDEAN COMMUNITIES

Șerban Văetiși

Introduction: questioning the success of indigenous movements

The ratification by the constitutions of Peru (2008) and Bolivia (2009) of the status of plurinational states and the election to high political offices of representatives of indigenous populations in these states, including the first indigenous Latin American president, Evo Morales (2006–2019) in Bolivia, the influential congresswoman Hilaria Supa Huamán in Peru (2006–2011) or various women of indigenous Aymara and Quechua origins in charge with authority positions in the Bolivian state between 2006–2014, crowned a series of popular movements that swept the region since the 2000s.

The most obvious characteristic of these movements was that they were organized as civic actions and were led by indigenous groups, who claimed, among other demands, those of increased recognition, autonomous control of resources of their lands and improvement of the living conditions of their communities, predominantly rural and poor. What was noted, somewhat later, in the bliography dedicated to this phenomenon was the central role played by women in these movements (Rousseau–Morales Hudon 2017). There are a number of factors that can explain this fact: indigenous women have been, since the colonial period, more mobile, socially more active, than men – the latter being tied to works on plantations or mines (Rodríguez García 2010: 42–43). Then, unlike other patriarchal societies, women in this region were more involved socially in transactional practices and contributed to various types of connections between different levels of society and economy (Kellogg 2005: 129). These roles continued in the post-

colonial period and developed throughout the 20th century, in diversified forms of intrasocial activities useful to their communities and families, while playing important roles for connecting them with state institutions and the markets.

As a result, from the marginal positions, which were reserved to them for a long time in history by colonial and post-colonial conditions, the indigenous people, including their activ women, gradually managed to create positions of negotiation and pressure, which brought them towards the end of the century in places of maximum visibility and political power never known in modern history since the Spanish conquest. In the process, their marginal position was put to work together with certain forms of hybridization (such as rural-urban, customary-emancipated, oldfashioned-innovative) that transgressed traditional roles into forms accepted by modern society and politics.

Women played a central role in these tactics (Dangl 2019; Zúñiga 2021). Interestingly, we can link these forms of emancipation and political interplay of Andean women, not necessarily to feminism, through ideology, activism and political action specific to Western feminism, but rather through activities born from the social skills experienced in their long history of marginalization and deliberate relations, at the intersection of public and private, tribal and the state, mediating and resistant roles. Their strength as a civil society was decisive for the achievement of the indigenous movements, which ultimately led to these successes (Matos–Kambiwá 2021).

On the one hand, indigenous movements have illustrated how popular movements and civil mobilization can determine political evolution in states with fragile democracies. On the other hand, the tendency to present these movements as beneficial and desirable developments in these societies with high percentages of indigenous or *Mestizo* population, have created forms of politicization of indigenous movements and identities (Raymond–Arce 2013). Thus, among the criticisms of these movements, and of the plurinational state project itself, were those which interpreted their expansion as attempts to fracture the unity of the national state (Cruz Rodríguez 2010). In contrast, their success remains relative and we can see how many of these communities continue to live in poverty, at the margins of modern society and infrastructure, and not necessarily granted with decisive political power, while indigenous women continue to be affected by discriminations and injustices. There is still another paradox herein, because, as some analysists observed, the indigenous movement was far from being a homogeneous one during this period and was not able to secure stable alliances with political parties (Cruz Rodríguez 2013). It remained substantially a social movement, for which the civil society component could not be eliminated either by the cultural component (with its institutionalizations, including patrimonialization), or by the administrative-political one (with its governmental or administrative enrollments). Nevertheless, some ambiguities in this respect remain to be clarified.

As for the central role of women in these movements, it has acknowledged an interesting turn in recent years: the versatility given by the transgressions through which they asserted themselves made them attractive for the market of ethnic objects

and images. Thus, paradoxically, although these women campaigned against liberal policies that exploited their land and resources, their visibility in these movements made them publicly exploited by the global market of ethnic products and world culture.

We will try to detail these interesting developments and clarify these paradoxes, further, with the help of analyzes that will seek to go beyond the simple exposition of the facts, towards an in-depth interpretation of these phenomena and, finally, through the proposal of an analytical model, beyond the identitary, intersectional and postcolonial ones (through which these social movements and political developments have been often analyzed until now).

The paper is based on an extended bibliography review and a critical interpretation of some expositive models offered before in interpreting these developments of civil society in the region. Adopting a cultural model of explaining social practices and tactics, our analysis ultimately proposes a paradigm of "mode of production" of transgression. Accordingly, the study opens up some innovative suggestions aiming at explaining additionally the social-political patterns and evolutions in the area: (1) an interpretive model (matricial interpretation) diversifying and refining the cultural paradigm within which some social practices in the region were previously analyzed; (2) an interpretive model contributing to explaining social-political developments as well as other social institutional and informal practices in countries in the region; and (3) a theoretical model of social production of adaptative and tactical practices, extended from what apparently appears as useful for a specific and isolated group only, valuable for further analyses on how ambiguous or limited resources may impact on society. The paper engages with recent contributions to the role of civil identities and actors in Andean societies, paying close attention to local, Latin American regional, Spanish-written studies.

The meaning of indigeneity and its uses

The concept of indigeneity has received considerable attention in anthropological, historical and political bibliography throughout such areas as Canada, USA, Australia and obviously Latin America. In Latin American contexts it was considered particularly important in works dedicated to indigenous traditions, indigenous population and indigenism, from illustrations of the destruction (Ginzberg 2018) or the persistence (Albó 2009) of indigenous cultures, to analyses of indigenous identitary constructions (Arnold 2009) and involvement in social, political and economic movements and affairs (Yashar 2005; Cott 2008; Madrid 2012). The Andean region (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador) and Mesoamerica (Mexico and Guatemala) were the prominent regions where this topic was, due to demographic reasons, mostly studied.

Several aspects justify this interest: the indigenous element was the most evident feature affected by the colonial history (Dangl 2019); politically, it was involved

in the anticolonial struggle, civil rights movements and citizenship, ethnic mobilization and revival, empowerment and emancipation, and postcolonial alternatives for development (antiglobalization, post-exploitative, post-extractive economy and post-developmental economy) (Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2006; Silva 2015; Dulfano 2017; Escobar 2019); and, theoretically, it was involved in postcolonial analyses, in the decolonial project, and in a series of analytical paradigms and terminologies highlighting the hybrid, intersectional, mediating, oppositional, tactical or fashionable characteristics of it (Haynes 2013; Burman 2016; López Nájera 2018; Babb 2018; Oyhantcabal 2021).

Indigeneity, at its origin a reference to the native (the "Indian"), extended its tribal, communal and (more or less) isolated meaning towards encapsulating a larger ethnic or cultural specificity or pride that was applied to a broad category, such as the mestizo (the mixture between indigenous and European origins) or national. As such, it even received, in some discursive contexts, a meaning closer to the regional or national character of some regions or countries, where the indigenous populations were/are more consistent in number or more actively politically (such as Chiapas/Southern Mexico or Bolivia). This process of transformative meaning triggered or overlapped some other transgressions as we will discuss further. As for its rationale, it was favored by a series of factors, among which notably the romanticization of the Indian figure – which began already in the 19th century in the context of revolutionary independentist movements, and received significant appeal throughout the whole 20th century from both popular culture and various eventual revolutionary movements and discourses – and the various interests, from political to economic and cultural, articulated by both indigenous people themselves or non-indigenous agents.

Technically, indigenous people may be defined according to the United Nations Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities as "peoples and nations which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, considered themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them" (United Nations 1987, para. 379). The process of *mestizaje* (interracial mixing, miscegenation) complicated the acceptance of official designations and self-naming, together with that of *blanqueamiento* (whitening) of indigenous people (Safa 2005), while in many political analyses dedicated to indigenous people they were also considered together with the other major discriminated ethnic group, the Afrodescendant populations, in themselves subjects to various forms of hybridization across history. But, ultimately, these intersections, contextual categorizations and instances of varied ways of belonging nurtured some strategies that these populations adopted for their benefit.

Thus, despite ambiguities and stereotypical representations which assumed that these people are confined to rural homelands and fixed to conventional statuses (Brablec 2021), they are knowingly playing with these "identities" and are increasingly mobile, active and connected to the modern society and politics.

They ultimately participate in a fundamental relationship between local and global aspects (Merlan 2009) and vigorously illustrate how institutional or legal outcomes can be generated from social and community levels (Alvarez 2017). Not surprisingly, therefore, indigenous movements have been increasingly associated in Latin America less with cultural traditions, but with social change, and "social movements", as a generic concept, was commonly associated with indigenous uprisings and indigenous civic actions in some of its countries: "A number of scholars have paid close attention to the institutional and constitutional changes that have affected Bolivia as its political structures becomes increasingly affected by the rising indigenous tide. Still others have looked specifically at the role of indigeneity as a mode for expressing a desire for social change as articulated by indigenous leaders" (Canessa 2007: 198). Accordingly, we may talk about more than a simple "indigenous awakening" (Stavenhagen, 2002), but rather about a phenomenon and a political change driven by both common members of these communities and political leaders raised in the middle or influenced by their struggles. As for our next considerations, we will give more weight to the civic dimensions of these movements at the expense of their political component, as explained further.

This relation is however more complicated, and will be discussed in the next section with the help of other components which are met within several of its intersections, including gender and class.

Indigenous women and the challenges of intersectionality. The *Chola* case

The intersectional approach of social actors, relations or processes has become an overarching analytical tool in recent times. It includes a variety of intersections between marginalized or discriminated social categories, mostly determined in terms gender, race and class, but also age, ethnicity, nationality or disability and any kind of minority (religious, sexual, immigrant, rural, regional) in given contexts (Hill Collins–Bilge 2016). It was promoted by such influential paradigms as feminism or critical race theory, and ended up by being gradually incorporated into mainstream sociological analyses. In order to keep its critical value it is important to identify through its perspective, beyond its simple descriptive nature, the power relations or imbalanced positionings established in history, culture or society in the case of some disadvantaged or inferiorized groups or individuals. For such purposes, the intersection of indigeneity, gender and class in a postcolonial context, as illustrated by the indigenous women in the Andean region is a relevant intersectionality for not only identifying some forms of marginalization in the poor rural areas where indigenous people mostly live or in the processes of rural-urban migrations that indigenous women experience, but also for critically evaluating the hegemonic feminism that analyze such local relations according to Western patterns of gender inequalities (Moore Torres 2018).

In the Andean region, as in some other indigenous contexts, women used to play central, not marginal roles in their communities and manifested overt opposition against the colonial rules (Federici 2009: 229–231). Nevertheless they assumed a sort of marginality due to their class and indigeneity in the processes of postcolonial national state formation, rural-urban migration, social emancipation and involvement in social and political struggles (Marcos 2017). Their capabilities and manifestations were forged through their experiences and skills developed in their own communities. As such, if we were to name such emancipatory practices "feminism", then, it is suggested, we should call it unlike the "ideological feminism" articulated in the West (such as, for example, "communal feminism" – emphasizing its social roots), that in the end would help us to "decolonize" our Western perspective on it, as an alternative epistemology: "Decolonizing Feminism implies the internal critique of "Western hegemonic feminisms", and especially the way in which these theoretical and political approaches discursively produce "women of the Third World" as monolithic and ahistorical subjects. […] Is in this tension that some feminist thoughts and practices from Latin American indigenous worlds can be located. In particular, it is interesting to analyze the communal feminism, since it is located beyond the postcolonial critique" (Moore Torres 2018: 238).

Indigenous women of the Andes, socially, play important mediating roles; economically, they are heavily involved in the urban informal economy; and, politically, they are very active, among others, in politics of work, tourism and cultural identity (Babb 2018). These intersectoral, mediating and active positionings of indigenous women in the Andes is best exemplified by the so called *chola women*. We will keep a focus on this relevant case study as follows.

Originally, *cholo* (feminine: *chola*) was an insulting term addressed to urbanized Indians of Bolivia, typically Aymara Indians (Federation of Women Workers 2018: 339). It was gradually extended towards naming other indigenous groups throughout the Andes and, more recently, generalized for any Indians and even mestizos found in urban setting, not necessarily urban dwellers, such as street vendors coming to cities to sell agricultural products from their rural homelands. In this processes of social change and identity construction it have become more salient its feminine utilization, on one hand, due to a key element of identification of feminine sort, that made women more visible than men, a typical colorful pleated skirt that these women use to wear (*pollera*), and on another hand, because women were mostly involved in these latter transitory activities of rural-urban informal economy. Interestingly however this process of gender focusing also resulted in a reconsideration of its initially derogatory utilization. *Cholas* today are rather neutral references or at least ambiguous, and when used in diminutive form (*cholitas*) or in marketing discourses acquire even positive appreciative meaning (Weismantel 2001; Rodríguez García 2010; Soruco Sologuren 2011).

F*rom the nineteenth century on, the term chola has served as an important, generally negative, cultural marker. It signifies a fundamentally indigenous but fluid urban female identity. Seen as both a "dark-eyed temptress" who is also a "dirty*

Indian", cholas are most identified with markets. Whether the marketplace is in the capital city or in smaller provincial centers, it constitutes the border marking the separation between the urban and rural spheres and the nexus in which they intersect. That border, so often crossed by female sellers and shoppers, mediates many other divisions in Andean societies, especially upper class/lower class, clean/dirty, non-Indian/Indian. The chola women who fill the markets, clean and cook for the houses, and pose for the postcards and covers of travel magazines and cookbooks for the middle and upper classes of the towns and cities across the Andes […] have a long history of working, participating in the public and political life of their communities, and shouldering responsibility for the maintenance of family, kin groups, and communities. Women have also played an important role in the resistance of indigenous and peasant peoples to ongoing modernizing and nationalizing projects that result in the impoverishment and weakening of the region's indigenous identities. Women's work has played a key role both in maintaining indigenous communities and in negotiating and ameliorating many of the sweeping economic, political, and cultural changes faced by rural communities. (Kellogg 2005: 129)

Basically involved in informal small-scale economic practices of vending domestic products, actually they fulfill a range of activities, functions and social needs situated at the interstices of family, domestic economy, market, administrative institutions, civil rights and the state. Due to their marginality, as we may see from the fragment above, they are ambiguously perceived in society, at both the symbolic and social status levels, as either: "dirty" or "clean", rural or urban, traditional or emancipated, completing women's or men's roles, representing a given community or eluding such representativeness etc. Interpretively, this ambiguity and resulting hybridization, appear thus as best suited for transgressions, adaptative strategies of survival and civic struggles, and not fixed or prescriptive roles – very efficient in both communities of origin and the broader space of social and political activity.

This anthropological interpretation can be further conceptualized as *transgressive negotiation*, mostly collaborative, benefiting from the mediating roles resulting from the dualisms above. Ultimately, this may be exposed as a model of performative culture, within which the centrality of bodies, social practices, informal urbanism, subsistence economy, exchange and socio-economic rituals are emphasized in order to reveal the imaginative and adaptative practices of this form of civil actorness, albeit not in the form of organized civil groups, but with major (and in some aspects more significant) impact on society (than regular civic organizations).

Accordingly, their tactics were eventually transferred between the social and political fields. For example, in La Paz they organized themselves in a system called *maestrazgo* through which they struggled to obtain the rights to sell products on the streets (Arnold 2009: 499–500). This is a well-organized system, based on yearly elections and a personnel structure helping the 40.000 street vendors in the capital city of Bolivia (of whom 80% are women) to develop their work.

They ended up to participate and offer their social and negotiating skills to the many women movements, but they nevertheless remained outside the political enrollment, and this may be regarded as a tactic continuing the mediating position and negotiating strategy, on the background of revival of Andean indigenous identities in contemporary political organizations (Cánepa 2008). Since the relationship with government bureaucracy is difficult in the activity of union groups, many associations were specifically founded to collectively negotiate the terms that regulate the work of street sales with the local government (Hummel 2015: 336). One of the most important such organization in the Andean region is the *Confederación de Trabajadores Gremialistas, Comerciantes Minoristas, Artesanos y Vivanderos* (National Confederation of Street Vendors Unionists, Retailers, Artisans and Street Food Sellers) of Bolivia, much animated by women participation, including in their preoccupation with struggling gender discrimination in leadership, legislative practices and administrative decisions (Hummel 2015).

At the political level, indigenous movements have taken advantage of the weakness of traditional parties and party systems to carve out a space for themselves as leaders of (or partners in) coalitions against neoliberal reform and corruption (Cott 2004). They organized themselves as political basis of the left-wing MAS party (Díaz Carrasco 2014) which led Evo Morales to his presidency, but also remained active in the civil society for actions outside the authoritative political mechanisms (Escárzaga 2014; Espinoza 2022).

These intersectoral challenges supplement the already existing hybridizations and unclear statuses of indigeneity discussed in the previous section. These aspects combined favored, on one hand, the development of some transgressive tactics by the indigenous women themselves, for their social, economic and political purposes and, on the other hand, due to their increasing agency and visibility, the commodification of their identity on the global market (McDonough 2019). We will discuss this interesting, yet paradoxical, evolution in the next section.

Hybridizations, transgressions and paradoxical outcomes

Transgression of indigenous condition and in indigenous movements was theorized by various authors, notably in Australian contexts (Macfarlane–Hannah 2007). In Latin America it was studied more vigorously by Rousseau and Morales Hudon (2017) as ability to be between different worlds, to transgress borders and possibility to transform social conditions and movements. It can be regarded as part of a broader theorization on hybrid identities or hybrid cultures (Iyall Smith–Leavy 2008), typically evolving and analyzed in colonial and post-colonial contexts. But, more than a simple hybridization, transgression implies deliberate action towards managing conflictual views or actual segregations and conflicts in society. It puts at work distinct and mixed elements, such as apparently separate (and even opposite) cultural elements, social standards or discursive representations existing in

a given context for given individuals, in order to produce connections, mediations and solutions for improvement.

The original derogatory term *chola* gradually received attention and appreciation in society and social commentary because of some functions and practices that indigenous women themselves developed. It is illustrative for that genuine feminism discussed above, but also for a form of transgression and negotiation in the sense suggested here, when closely examining their roles in the formation of civic action, generally speaking, civil society. It is important to notice that these women are subject to many inferiorized and socially marginal categories: they are poor, they are indigenous and women, living in the countryside, the majority of them illiterate, but somehow managing to integrate and succeed and even intermediate between different categories and agencies, and capable to negotiate for their own interests and their family and community interests: *"in the daily activities, their racial identity as cholas allows them to intermediate between other categories, for example between Indians and mestizos as well as between rural and urban areas. In practice, however, these vendors strategically appropriate these job, place of residence, and race/ethnicity categories imposed by others, and do so for their own advantage"* (Arnold 2009: 145).

They were also subject to a historical process of reconsideration in both their relation with the state and the market, that created conditions for an interesting evolution towards incorporating them in the global markets as icons of ethnic fashion. As such, from the "prostitute" in the creole narratives of the 1900–1930, chola transformed into the "symbolic mother of the Bolivian nation" during the 1950–1980 when the mestizo ideal, of humble condition, was ideologically imposed in the country (Soruco Sologuren 2011: 81, 129), and thereafter as "fashion trend" in the global garment and entertainment industries (Haynes 2013; Calderón-Douglass 2015).

The summarizing figure below highlights this evolution as a useful informative diagram for our next considerations.

Figure 1. Historical processes through which chola women evolved

processes:	*relation with the state*	*relation with the market*
colonization	dirty Indian	traditional street vendor
modernization	national symbol	emancipated intermediator
globalization	fashionable image	icon of fashion–tourism industry

There are several studies on *chola,* pinpointing both the representative (let's call it the first level of analysis) and the performative level (a second-level type of analysis) developed at three major stages of identity construction and action: descriptive, relational and tactical *(see Figure 2 below*).

As illustrated and grasped in the following fragments, we may further understand their involvement and connections with issues of identity, modernity, development, racial, ethnic, class and gender relations or social-political organization:

The term "cholo", of widespread use in contemporary Peru, refers to the status of an individual who is seen as having an indigenous cultural background and yet has adopted some or many dominant Western cultural practices. The cholo is envisaged as an individual "in transition" according to the racialized modernization paradigm. Being cholo is being in a situation of upward social mobility, and thus a cholo identity has now become predominant in many popular sectors of Peruvian urban areas. (Rousseau–Morales Hudon 2017: 146–147).

The population of Aymara origin cannot be considered as a monolithic block, since they present important differences. The most appropriate thing is to consider the Aymara immigrant population not as a solid configuration, but as a process of constant differentiation and remodeling. […] The rural Aymara presence is not the only one, since there is also the presence of the urban Aymaras, that is, of migrants already long settled in the city who have gone through processes of appropriation, adaptation, readjustment and reinvention that give them a different profile. (Arnold 2009: 492, our translation)

At the same time, it would not be possible to see the pollera women as a monolithic block, since the pollera not only expresses ethnic categories, but relationships within the group have become more complex in such a way that there are also class, prestige and status differences among the women who wear them. Particularly feminine spaces, filled with polleras, are the markets and the commercial streets. [...] It is also a fundamentally daily job that makes the city buzz from early in the morning until late at night with a fairly sophisticated union organization. (Arnold 2009: 499, our translation)

Drawing on a suggestion that such an indigenous identity is based upon the mixing of the rural and the urban and a state of being "in between" the two, and that this in-betweenness is a powerful mode of acting (Lazar 2007: 253) we suggest that several other in-betweenness, highlighted so far throughout our paper, fit this paradigm. *Indian-mestizo, men-women, "dirty"-"clean", traditional-emancipated, lower class-middle class, oldfashioned-innovative* etc. appear thus, not as mere mixed influences or hybridizations, but as paradigmatic features of actors assuming this transgression and tactically acting according to it. This in-betweenness results, therefore, as a paradigm continuously constructed and hybridized, and this continuous social production is important to be active, to be permanent and permeated, as a fluid, adjusting status, in order to be effective for negotiations and social, economic and political benefits.

"Recently, the *pollera* has become a symbol of political activism as a number of left–leaning female *parlamentarias de la pollera*, wear the garment in the Peruvian and Bolivian legislatures" (Middleton, 2018: 99). In a more informal manner, cholas' voices has become active on the social medias, as typified by the Youtube influencer Yolanda Mamani (Gutiérrez 2019) and their image has been globalized

through "Latino imageries" in the North American entertainment industry (Calderón-Douglass 2015).

This agentive process ultimately becomes a performative culture in which elements of language and bodily postures or items of dress and manner constitute signals of both identity and transgression. Nevertheless, these are not simple markers of identity transgressions (of ethnicity, class or gender), such as in the frequent cases of cholas who amalgamate Indian and Spanish words, or combine traditional indigenous clothing items with modern ones, or mix women's garment with men's garment (Weismantel 2001: 110–111), but actual transgressive tactics of performative hybridization and mediation, done for gaining advantage in several forms of interaction and transaction. This fluidity (Marcos 2017: 17, 35), actually, makes them more intelligible and connect their daily strategies with their social, familiar presence and symbolic representation persisting in various discourses about them.

We talk about a popular aesthetics (Sánchez Patzy 2014) and familiar actors of high social visibility who, just when they act oppositionally or collaboratively, they cross the borders (Marcos 2017), and elude fixed ascriptions, going beyond conflicts and opposition, and beyond smooth alliances, managing to mediate and negotiate for their benefit, in a genuine non-Western, non-capitalist, non-politicizing way. This ultimately illuminate "the unintelligibility of the cholo" (Soruco Sologuren 2006) making them not only evident and meaningful performers of the social relations at the level of an entire region, but definitive agents of a mode of identitary and transactional production of "cholas", part of a complex phenomenon identified as *cholification* (Rodríguez García 2010). We will address this aspect in the last, conclusive section.

Figure 2. Forms of identity construction and action at representative and performative levels in the case of chola women of the Andes. Summarizing analytical matrix based on bibliography review

forms:	first level analysis (representative)	second level analysis (performative)
descriptive	*indigenous, women, poor*	*marginal, intersectional, active*
relational	*in-betweenness (Indian-mestizo, men-women, rural-urban, "dirty"-"clean", traditional-emancipated, lower class-middle class, oldfashioned-innovative)*	*collaborative, oppositional, negotiative, mediating*
tactical	*fluid, hybrid*	*transgressive*

Conclusions: cholification as a transgressive tactic in Andean societies

According to the summarizing matrix sketched above the transgressive tactical approach in Andean indigenous women results from a deep analysis of various aspects characterizing their condition, possibilities and actions. One of the reviewed authors considered indigeneity as a mode for expressing a desire for social change (Canessa 2007: 198). This may suggest how this transgression is articulated but also replicated when others attempt to adopt elements of their culture, including hybrid formations. This will result, in a final matricial analysis, emphasizing the element of transgressive negotiation, as the actual outcome of the abovementioned tactics (*see Figure 3 below*).

In this vein, cholification may be regarded not only as part of the process of Bolivian (Rodríguez García 2010) or Peruvian (Lynch 2014) identity construction, as "cholo politics" (Albó 2019), but more specifically as a "mode of production" of continuous hybridization and transgressive negotiation between symbolic figures, actual social actors and social, economic, political and cultural needs of a region.

This argumentation may explain, firstly, the fluctuating roles, participation and success of indigenous people and indigenous women in politics, despite rhetorical prominent references to them. Secondly, it may explain several paradoxes of their involvement in society, regional, national and global affairs, such as those highlighted in the article, together with the indigenous people constant return to community and society, resisting complete assimilation into the hegemonic national culture or the world of modern, Westernized politics. As such, even when this cholo politics is exemplified in international indigenous movement or when cholas' images are integrated in the global economy, this appears rather as a globalization from below (Hernández Castillo 2010; Hill Collins–Bilge 2016: 140), retaining its social and cultural localness and evolving from the level of social agency.

Finally, our analysis draws attention to the transgressions existing between levels of society and identities, but also between roles and functions assigned to these actors. Some of these transgressions are tactically put forward by (some) indigenous people or movements themselves, whereas some others are out of their control, being forms of manipulations of their images, bodies, languages, material culture, cultural practices, social-economic needs or political goals. Ultimately this call attention about the continuing role and necessary involvement of social activities and reactions by these (still) marginal groups in order to avoid politicization and commodification, especially when talking about such appealing and fashionable aspects as "indigeneity" for populist (Albro 2000) or marketable (McDonough 2019) objectives.

In the case of Andean indigenous women, through emphasizing the illustrative case study of Bolivian and Peruvian cholas, we were able to address from such key topics in social-political bibliography as social mobilization of indigenous women (Zúñiga 2021), indigenous feminism (Matos–Kambiwá 2021), anti-globalization indigenous feminism (Dulfano 2017) or decolonial feminism (Oyhantcabal 2021) to

refined analyses that called attention about the chola revolution (Espinoza 2022), chola's emblematic identity (Díaz Carrasco 2014), populist chola (Albro 2000), chola aesthetics (Sánchez Patzy 2014) or global chola (Haynes 2013).

After this critical review, we may conclude on three general characteristics, previously little discussed together (as relevantly connected) in the topical bibliography: (a) the pre-formative function for civil society of social traditions existing in isolated or marginalized communities; (b) the mediating, integrative and creative functions of hybrid social identities existing and constructed in the social relations of these communities with the rest of society and established political mechanisms, and (c) the major social impact of actions apparently functioning at the level of isolated/marginal communities or just within some social, economic or cultural niches for a variety of larger and more complex political, social, legal or economic purposes. This may ultimately explain the centrality, the exuberance and the elusiveness of indigenism in the Andean region, contrasting with the more isolated one in the Amazonian region and the more politically active and globally connected one of Southern Mexico. On the other hand, our synthetical analysis may help contribute to explaining future social and political evolutions in the Andean region and Latin America as a whole, from the social and cultural perspectives put forward herein. We integrate the considerations made in this section together with the summarizing table sketched before in a conclusive analytical matrix:

Figure 3. Matricial analysis on the descriptive, relational and tactical forms of interpreting the chola in the case of some specific types of studies considering indigenism in the Andes.

	communal/ indigenous feminism	decolonial theory	globalization from below	*cholification*
descriptive	social skills	naming uncertainties	folk/world culture	discourses
relational	state, market	Western paradigms, hegemonic culture	local-global economy	representation, construction, production
tactical	ambiguos relation with political organizations	performative culture	global movements	continuous hybridization, transgressive negotiation

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"PRAISED BE THE WOMAN!" OPINIONS OF THE ALLIANCE FOR THE UNION OF ROMANIANS' VOTERS ABOUT THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN

Sergiu Mișcoiu–Ana Gabriela Pantea

Introduction

The paper analysis the perception of the voters of The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) party related the social expectations towards and the political representations of women. The party had become, since 2020, the fourth-largest political force of the country, having an ethno-nationalist, familist and ultra-orthodox agenda, as well as a clear anti-empowering discourse regarding women. By focusing on the specificity of the Romanian populist movement, we are going to explore the construction of the voter's response on gender issues. As data shows, AUR had been voted predominantly by men, with post-secondary level of education, members of religious communities (Pora 2020), our research attempts to understand how the electorate absorbs the genderized discourse of the party.

The premise of the argumentation is sustained by the view that populism is a thin-centred ideology that separates society into two antagonistic groups, "us" and "them", arguing that politics should return to its initial mission, namely, the expression of the general will of the people. (Mudde–Kaltwasser 2017) While populism preaches structural societal changes, it is technically not inclusive, politically naïve, and conspiratorially suspicious of the established machinery of democratic structures. (Feldman–Jackson 2013, 3) In addition, the purposefulness of populist discourse claims the elimination of the gap of representation that exists between groups and the exercise of power, through establishing an internally homogeneous nation-state, without the need to embrace pluralist standpoints.

As such, populism, in the Romanian and largely European ideological landscape, entails the construction of the identity of "self" in contradistinction to the "other" – for example, the image of traditional wife versus the empowered woman. The dogmatic conservative value system, as well as the ideological mélange of the ideology of AUR (Gherghina–Mișcoiu 2021) moves the perception on women in a new, apparently contradictory, direction. On one hand, women are prized as docile wives, mothers, and silent companions, and on the other hand, as Jeanne d'Arcs who are supported to fight in the public arena for the traditional family values.

Following this seeming duality, our qualitative research had confirmed – through semi-structured interviews conducted with voters of The Alliance for the Union of Romanians party – an urge of the voters to identify with the party`s mission to restore the heterosexual, familialist anti-emancipatory principles. Or formulated in other terms: to return to "the natural place in society and politics of women" (T.D., m.). In addition, the same voters see the importance to struggle for the traditional social values and gender roles in the public life by men and women in an equal manner. As mentioned during an interview: "the whole family has to fight for our values" (C.M., f.), which signifies the potential role played by women in the movement.

Context and research design

The perceptions of the voters of the populist parties on gender has remained an understudied aspect within the growing body of research on populism (Abi-Hassan 2017, Ajanovic et al. 2018; Kantola–Lombardo 2019; Saresma 2018). As such, the present study is focused on the role played by voters' representation on gender, more specifically on women's role, in the case of the populist politics of The Alliance for the Union of Romanians. The framework argument is that populist parties' discursive construction of "the people" against "non-people" is a gendered process, in which gender operates as a constitutive element for determining who is included in or excluded from "the people" (Serder 2023). The reasoning is not used by the voters or the leaders of the party as the fight for traditional gender role, rather is more a precondition for their electorate preference. Populism manifests itself in its inclusionary and exclusionary tendencies (Mudde–Kaltwasser 2013) – in which the discursive understanding of "us" is constructed by empty signifiers (Laclau 2005) – as such we analyse in the background perceptions which articulates the construction of "the people" and the "non-people" – who might be immigrants, ethnic or sexual minorities, political opponents, or emancipated women.

Studies of gender and populism have primarily focused on the programs and main policies (Akkerman 2015; De Lange–Mügge 2015) or on the relationship between different forms of national populisms and gender politics (Abi-Hassan 2017; Kantola–Lombardo 2019; Mudde–Kaltwasser 2015; Soare–Tufis 2022).

In addition, many feminist scholars have analysed the ways in which the principles of gender equality and sexual minority rights are being heavily incorporated into otherwise conservative right-wing populist strategies to demarcate the divide between immigrants and native Christians (Ajanovic et al. 2018; Akkerman–Hagelund 2007; Hadj-Abdou 2019; Mulinari 2016). In many circumstances gender serves as a "meta-language" and a central arena of polarization for recasting power in the existing struggles over hegemony and resources (Dietz–Roth 2020, 8).

In our study, we will follow three main argumentative lines highlighted by AUR voters on the gender roles and the possible answer to AUR's rise in the voting preferences: 1.) According to the AUR voters, is there a natural place in society and politics of women that is different to that of men? If so, should AUR restore this traditional division of roles within the Romanian society? 2.) Is there a preferable profile of the female politician and more generally of the female decision-makers? What are the main expected characteristics of women in politics? More precisely, do the Christian faith and the fact of being mother count for electing and appreciating a women involved in politics? 3.) What are the main threats against the Romanian society's moral integrity? To what extent do homosexual relations affect our society? Do gender studies and gender identity issues represent a danger in the Romanian society? And women called to counter such "deviations"?

This qualitative research was conducted during the second half of December 2020 and the first three weeks of January 2021. It consisted in 21 interviews with AUR voters (12 men and 9 women). The selection of the interviewees was made based on a randomized process and, even if it is not statistically representative, the panel of interviewees can be qualified as being diverse in terms of age, geographical distribution, milieu of residence, religion, and level of education. Fifteen out of the 21 interviews were taken face-to-face, while the remaining others were taken online. The average length on an interview was 49 minutes. A table with the profiles of the respondents who specifically asked for anonymization (consequently whose initials have been changed) can be found in *Annex 1.*

The success of populists in Romania

The extended theoretical repertoire on the topic (Donnelly 1856; Canovan, 2018, Manow 2020) confine the thesis that populism, as an ideology, is a set of ideas characterized by the Manichean distinction between "the people" and "the elite", having the core principle that politics should be about acting in concordance with popular sovereignty. "Seen in this light, populism has a democratic thrust as it is inclined to be at odds with any type of independent and unelected institution that puts limits on the will of the people." (Kaltwasser–Taggart 2015: 2) As such, populist movements advocate unorthodox democratic politics that are anti-elitist and call for protest and personal involvement which are less characteristic of established parties.

"At its best, populism reminds democratic politicians that they are beholden to their electorates, and it demonstrates that collectively engaged, grassroots activism can be a time-honoured method of reform. At its worst, populism is xenophobic, politically naïve, and stubborn, and at the extremes, conspiratorially suspicious of the established machinery of democratic governance." (Feldman–Jackson 2013, 3)

Such extended spectrum of characteristics, however, points out that populist actors or parties should not be seen automatically as authoritarian forces; and many of the issues raised by populists are legitimate, although the solutions they propose are frequently either controversial, or unpractical.

According to the ideology of AUR (Stoica et al. 2021) reactionary populism is generally a collision between the reactionary, sometimes xenophobic or racist conceptions of the majority and the liberal and tolerant ones of the progressive elite. As progress involves an elitist component, the emancipatory mission towards others, the populist movement reacts firmly against it. However, since there is no single elite and even less a monolithic people, the conflict only rarely takes acute forms. Romania embodies, for example, populist nationalism at the level of identity discourse, but ait is permissive towards change and desirous of "progress" (Soare –Tufiș 2021). According to discourse theory, the collapse of a holistic discourse supported by a repressive apparatus, led to hegemonic tendencies.

On contrary, the populist political parties in France or Netherlands are dominated by anti-immigrant discourses (Meijers–Zaslove, 2021). Some of the conceptualizations about the definition are illustrated in the attempt to underline the features they have in common. Regarding the meaning and heterogeneity of discourse, Parker (1990) describes the idea of meaning. Instead of being a purely individual activity or a reaction to environmental factors, Fairclough views it as a type of social practice.

The Alliance for the Union for Romanians addresses "the people". Depending on the context and their objectives, the discourse method used by the AUR addresses the whole population (to isolate the reactive parties from unnecessary divisions), which separates society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" (the victim of an elite interested only in preserving privileges) and the "corrupt elite", foreign interests and their exponents inside. The populist assault on institutions ultimately generates political instability and confusion, the apparent cohesion beyond classes and particular interests actually means the weakening of the social fabric. (Dumire 2012).

The Romanian political spectrum is X-rayed by the populist discourse, and yet, it is not the clothes that make the man, nor the rhetoric that makes the populist. The analysis of the discourse risks diverting the understanding of Romanian populism (Mişcoiu–Gherghina 2010 136). However, the conflict is more vivid in political discourses. (Kucherkov–Masolletti, 2021) The key elements for AUR discourse, is, the position against domination and the antagonistic view of the relationship between the "elite" and the "people". Both groups have different characteristics:

while the "people" are presented as a superior entity, which transcends different classes and social groups, the "elites" are corrupt and morally inferior to the people. Rephrased, populism is characterized by a "positive valorisation of the people and a denigration of the elites". In addition, the anti-domination rhetoric, in combination with the special relationship with "the people", tends to transform the populist language into a simplified one. Political struggles are presented in a dichotomous framework, radical solutions being proposed without judicial constraints or economic theories. However, as a political, electoral, and parliamentary project, narrow ideology alone continues to be seen as ineffective and unsuccessful. in most cases, populism is just one of the many features that characterize a political party. The narrow ideology of populism needs joining ideological projects. (Loew–Faas 2019).

AUR as social movement, political response, and a (quasi)moral framework

After winning almost 10% of the votes in the 2020 parliamentary elections, AUR became the fourth largest political force in Romania's parliament with a conservative, ultra-Orthodox and nationalist agenda. The party's chairman and founder, George Simion, began his political career as an activist in Moldova, where he founded several trade union youth groups. Unlike previous nationalist parties in Romania (Great Romania) or similar European nationalist parties today (National Assembly, Freedom Party, Alternative for Germany), AUR is willing to share national sovereignty with transnational powers such as the European Union or NATO.

The party does not currently question Romania's European way, but according to its manifesto, the party's main task is to unite Romanians from all over the world. Therefore, the focus is on the unification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova. The unionist agenda was central and the main trigger for AUR's success in the last parliamentary elections, as it was able to win votes for Romanian-Moldovan dual citizens (Pantea–Mișcoiu 2022).

The party has very effectively capitalized on the awakening of the political climate and desire for nationalism, preservation of the conservative gender roles, as well as the rise of religious conservatism. Other factors that contributed to AUR victory in the last election included the COVID pandemic crisis and the role of social media in promoting the party. But above all, AUR can be seen as a container of nationalist hatred, providing cultural and psychological preparation for xenophobic behaviour, including targeting minorities and claiming traditional gender roles in the Romanian society. As we are going to show through the interviews in the second part of the article, the concerns expressed by voters lie in the party's conservative familyist ideology, which regards emancipatory discourses (in terms of gender equality or LGBTQ+) as problematic or harmful.

In the case of AUR, the ultra-conservative component of the discourse is visible, in a similar way to what we see in the discourse of Polish populist parties like Law

and Justice or The League of Polish Families, or in Austria in the case of the Freedom Party. Populism and conservative ideology are closely related. Both are about building an antagonism between the people and the power holders.

In addition, as Della Porta notes:

"Populism and social movements both tend to be rooted in representational failures that trigger non-institutionalized patterns of popular subjectivity. This subjectivity can take alternative plebiscitary or participatory forms that are inevitably in tension with one another, even when they coincide in hybrid political expressions […]. This tension lies at the very heart of the debate over the meaning of populism and its essential characteristics. (Della Porta, 2015: 13)

Contrary to the pluralist view that not every citizen can share a restrictive understanding of the nation-state, the populist view emphasizes belonging to an imagined "us" and the principle of homogeneity, which inevitably leads to exclusion (us against them) — and in some cases, this may be based on race, religion, or racial criteria.

As The Alliance for the Unity of Romanians can be labelled an ultra-conservative party which "brings together some people whose history is linked to the late period of communism. Its candidates are experts in propaganda, intellectuals with more or less open sympathy for legionnaires and legionary or pro-legionary intellectuals, businessmen and itinerant politicians who wander from one radical party to another." (Schmitt 2020)

Since 1989, the Romanian political system has been dominated by the two three parties – PSD, PNL and UDMR – and smaller political (populist) formations. The corruption scandals eroded the general support for the mainstream politicians, in Romania as well as in other parts of Europe.

Therefore:

"Essentially, Romanians had to choose between three scenarios in December 2020. They could vote for the existing political class, vote for an anti-system party or ignore the polls entirely. Exactly 535,828 (9.08 percent) Romanians chose to back anti-system groups, giving the AUR enough votes to get into the parliament. Although the group's success is not necessarily linked to the poor performance of the other parties in the electoral campaign, it can be attributed to the fact that many voters just wanted to show their contempt for the old political class."

(Demianenco 2021)

Scholars have extensively debated the relationship between moral principles (and aven more religion) and populist politics. (Hadiz 2018, Zuquete 2017) Some theorize that populist movements politicize moral values and religion by connecting the ethical concepts to their political views, as others believe that populist movements sanctify these values by connecting political concepts to religious concepts. According to Marzouki et al. (2016), sui generis, the state that the populist

right uses morality and religion to push for their nationalistic agendas. The same scenario can be applied to the case of AUR. The Romania populist party respond to an electorate for which institutional and social secularization is far beyond the Western European societal principles. Which means a more internalized religiosity and need of the electorate for ethical discourses. Nevertheless, the AUR party leaders undue use of symbolism of moral and religious superiority makes them credible for their voters (Mișcoiu et al. 2022).

Gender roles and populism

As populism demands exceptional people to lead the most ordinary people, it can be difficult for women to fit this role. This contradiction is resolved in different ways for male and female populists. Male populists often emphasize their masculinity, while female populists use their power to speak in a way that is more credible. (Löffler et al. 2020). In Europe, there is a type of populist politics that is oriented towards the idea of a moral distinction between "honest people" and "corrupt leaders." (Subedi–Scott 2021).

Many advocates that the current social structure and empowerment movement is against the interests of women, such as restricting women's rights (Nienke 2020), or on contrary, as being beneficial for them (Kahn 1996). Populism, as social movement, focuses on the needs of the majority and has to face this challenge. In Europe, populism has had a massive impact on gender politics (Sacco 2007) questing the main assumption of the emancipation movements. The European Union, through the gender quota, expanding civil rights, equal parental leave system etc., contributed to societal change. (Kittilson 2016). This has made it harder for radical movements to take hold, since these parties don't have a strong political base to start with.

For sure, in the last twenty years, it had become difficult to reconcile this viewpoint with the radical right-wing views of populists. (Betz 1993). For example, when it comes to issues life-work balance, the populists initially viewed it through traditional lenses, but then shift to a more liberal position that includes accepting women into the workforce and defending the rights of women. In contrast to classical populism, which mainly focused on voting rights and the acceptance of woman into public sphere, the new populism had to address both the commitments of the first wave (legal and public rights) and the issues of the second wave of feminism. (Sanja 2021).

This new wave of populism has also relied heavily on personalist politics due to changes in the political economy in the region, which have reduced the ability of leaders to implement patronage policies (Dona, 2020). While populists in Europe have been persistently engaged in gender issues throughout the course of their political careers, they have tended to act from a welfare state and redistributive standpoint that has characterized them in various periods of their history. (Kováts–Pőim 2015) Populist parties of the radical right in Europe are markedly different

when it comes to their base of support, while Romania exhibits a similar gender gap in political participation, AUR's rhetoric relies heavily on religious scenography.

Accordint to right-wing populist, women are seen as having a traditional responsibility to the public good, based on their roles as mothers and educators. (Topic 2021) Some woman candidates in leadership positions in the AUR consistently talk about women's roles in politics as if they are just extensions of their traditional roles in the home. This is strange, because there is a lot of variation in how populist movements around the world are structured.

The present study shows that there is a variation in how AUR approach gender issues. As the party is exclusionary towards "others", who include ethnic minorities, feminists, the LGBTQ+ community and political opponents at large, unlike Western European populist parties, the exclusionary discourse of AUR does not primarily target immigrants or refugees. Gender plays a central role in the exclusion of groups as "non-people" from the category of "the people" in the non-Western world. (Serder 2023) As such, in Romania, AUR adopted the anti-empowerment discourse in opposition to gender equality and feminism as a strategy by which the defenders of gender equality are symbolically ostracized. The discourse is presented as a religiously informed authentic alternative to gender equality, which is considered an imposition of the Western elites.

Voter perception on female candidates

Gender plays an important role in the far right's male dominated AUR, where we notice the promise of a homogeneous, heterosexual, and Orthodox word. In the European populist parties, masculinity is celebrated as well, and the parties often promote traditional sexist practices and misogynistic messages through their program. (Blee 2020) The politicians want to focus on limiting pro-LGBTQ+ and pro-woman movements to appear more legitimate, by publicly advocating for the rights of protecting women from oppression.

If the candidate's gender it is used as a "low-information shortcut" to estimate his/her policy positions, voters have an underlying gender preference, which is either male or female candidates. (Feldmen, 1988). Voters use gender as a cue to make inferences about candidates and their core preference is always present, rather than something that changes during a single electoral contest.

Gender stereotypes explain preference of male candidates over females. (Conroy et al. 2020). Such preference assumes on the perception of the best suited candidate for a position, and it is usually the same for both men and women. (Spierings–Zaslove 2015). The authoritarian perception of the state is fundamental for the populist politics. The almost personal, family like ties between political leaders and voters is influenced by community like engagement based on culture, religion etc. (Stathi–Guerra 2021). It is important to understand how populism's egotistical side effects the relationships it has with others. According to H. Pitkin (2017),

legislation establishes the framework for representative action and holds representatives accountable to constituents. In contrast, informal representation is not defined by laws, but rather by the way elected officials represent the diversity of society.

AUR, like Western European or Latin American parties, translates female representation into gender-conscious policies. Conservative female voters have played an important role in supporting populist leaders and their policies. They have been active in promoting the expansion of social services, which is a key issue for many populist leaders. This shows the emotional effect that populism can have in motivating the population to act, in democratic or aggressive way. The fact that women are playing an increasingly active role in the political movement as serving as activists, supporting the expansion of social services. (Crowder-Meyer et al. 2015).

If for instance in Latin America, Morales militates for the inclusion of women in the public sphere from a Marxist perspective (Lawless 2004), on contrast, in Europe, the populist parties tend to focus on gender issues in terms of familyist perspective, like family relations, immigration, and integration. (Stalsburg 2010) Women have been gaining ground in European politics over the past ten years (Huddy–Terkildsen 1993). After the 2019 elections, the European Parliament reached its highest percentage (40.2%) of female MEPs. As we know, the European Commission is composed by 11 women and 15 men. As McBrayer–Williams (2022) showed that the stereotype of politics as a male-dominated activity is weakening, as more women in the European Union are taking on positions of responsibility and proving their competence. (D'Agostino 2015)

Respondents from our interview sample emphasized certain qualities of female candidates, as being "more friendly and open-minded", "more compassionate and less aggressive", less likely to cause conflict, and less focused on power and winning elections. (O. S. f)

As there are two main types of woman representations, descriptive and substantive, descriptive has a greater impact on the political agenda and society.

"A gender quota, also known as a gender participation quota or women's participation quota, is a form of affirmative action with the objective of ensuring the effective inclusion of women in decision-making positions. in political parties and the State. It is a measure of a compulsory nature, which obliges the incorporation of women in lists of candidacies or lists of electoral results, and transitory, since it implies a validity subject to overcoming the obstacles that prevent an adequate representation of women in spaces of power and political representation."

(Line Barreiro–Clyde Soto, 2000: 1)

On female politicians, Thomas (2002) research founds out that 55% of female state legislators were childless, compared to just 3% of male state legislators. Also, female legislators tended to run for office when their children were older, while this factor was not as important to male legislators.

In case of AUR, the respondents of the interviews were less vocal to express their positions toward female candidates. Nevertheless, one of the most notorious female politicians in Romania, voted in 2020, remains Diana Șoșoacă, who initially run for AUR. She had been perceived as a masculinized figure, protector of national values, somehow outside of gender logic and roles a woman is meant to play in the society.

Main results

"Women are naturally less endowed for politics than men"

Several interviewees indicated in a spontaneous way that they believe there is a clear and "natural difference" in the social and political distribution of roles between men and women. As one of the most articulate respondents put it, "[…] there is a biological penchant of men for politics and of women for keeping the household" *(V.I., w.=woman).* This seems to be a widespread opinion among the AUR voters, being men or women. Among the male respondents, there is a strong opinion that "politics is masculine by its nature" (O.M., m.=man). One of the interviewees tried to defend his opinion in a more compassionate way:

"Sensitive as they are, how could women cope with the brutality of politics? They are simply not made for such a tough job!" (A.T., m.)

At least four out of the nine women respondents shared at their turn the conviction that politics is "not the realm of women". But one of them explained this "natural" lack of room in politics in more progressive though defeatist terms:

"Reasonably, there is no way women could or should advance so much in a political world made and dominated by men" (C.S., w.)

For some respondents, several voices within AUR who shared and asserted the "same incontestable truths" increased this party's support among the "reasonable Romanians" (M.D., w.). But for several interviewees, these "common knowledge about the men-women differences" with respect to their propensity to do politics were not necessarily essential in their decision to support the new far-right party:

"AUR says nothing spectacular in this respect – it simply reasserts what is true and this is not necessarily the first reason why I voted for this party" (V.I., w.).

Among the male AUR voters, there are nevertheless some more radical reasons for backing the party. The very conservative stance on this issue of Sorin Lavric, a reactionary intellectual and senatorial candidate of AUR who has repeatedly asserted his views about the inferiority of women,[1] "liberated the speech" about the man-woman inequality. Unlike the more general set of ideas attributed to AUR about the relation between gender and the propensity to become a politician, the more cleaving positions of Mr Lavric succeeded to reach only the male public: all the respondents who mentioned his discourses as a reason for voting AUR were men.

The most radical of them did not hesitate to depict those who do not admit the rightfulness of such assertions as being "liars":

"Come on, let's be honest and drop these lies. We all know women are not fit to lead, they are fit to obey and to please their men! And this was written even in the Bible since the beginning of times!" (D.Ș., m.).

Faithful Christian mothers

While according to most interviewees, women seem to be generally "unfit for politics" (D.P., m.), there are nevertheless "some exceptional women who deserve to be there" (T.R., w.). What is the typical portrait of such woman? While there are some relatively minor variations, about half of our respondents agreed upon a series of features that are indispensable for a woman to be a "worthy representative of the people" *(O.M., m.).*

Above all, a woman who wants to be a politician needs to be "not only married, but also to have children, at least two of them, if possible" *(I.A., w.)*. Being "married and faithful to your husband" is the "minimum guarantee" that once a politician you will "serve your country and you will be faithful to your people" (A.T., m.). Some respondents recognized in this line of argument the position of AUR, among whose founders we can count some of the leaders of the Coalition for the Family (CpF), the group of ultra-conservative NGOs who proposed the 2018 referendum for the traditional family aiming at amending the Constitution to restrict marriage to the heterosexual couples.[2] As one of the interviewees explained,

"AUR wishes to protect family from the fever of abortion, from homosexuality. Men are men, women are women. And women who are faithful and know their place can very well be politicians. Not president of the country, of course! But maybe… what do I know? Local councillor? Yes, I am willing to accept that, provided we talk about respectful, faithful wives and mothers." (T.P., m.).

Then, equally important, such women who deserve to be involved in politics need to be "true Christian believers" *(H.N., m.).* As the great majority of the AUR voters are rather tough Orthodox believers and the others are Neo-Protestant, their views upon the role of religious values in society are well established. With respect to their demands concerning the politicians' profiles, these values take the shape of two major claims. First, politicians, being men or women, need to be "morally clean, like our People, not like the other politicians" *(O.F., w.).* As they are "good Romanians, people who are modest and honnest" *(A.T., m.),* the candidates of AUR fulfil these standards. But on this first dimension of the Christian faith exigence, women have to be more convincing than men, as they are "weaker and so they are more subject to temptation. In the end, who did Satan attempt, Adam or Eve?" *(D.Ș., m.)*. In other words, to become politically acceptable, a woman needs to prove its "Christian faith and cleanness" much more than a man. This also an explanation of the smaller number of women in politics, as another respondent explained. *(A.K., w.)*

And secondly, faith is essential as it guarantees the connection between the people's representatives and their churches. Women "always need to be blessed by the priests" in order to perform those tasks that are "beyond what they can do according to their normal status" *(R.I., m.)*. The portrait of AUR's most visible woman candidate, Diana Șoșoacă, is highly compatible with this demand expressed by our interviewees. Always ready to show her faith, she was among the leaders of the anti-restrictionist street movement and served as the solicitor of several Orthodox hierarchs who organized religious services against the authorities' special interdictions during the state of pandemic alert. Her particularly close relations with some of the Orthodox Church's most radical figures made her a "model for many women who strongly believe in God, in our nation and in the need to defend our Orthodox faith and Church" *(I.N., w.)*.

Against the upside-down world

About two thirds of the interviewees stated that one of the main reasons for backing AUR is that the party defends "normalcy", understood as "straightness not pederasty" *(A.K., w.)*, with clear definition of manhood and womanhood, and with the restauration of national sovereignty and pride *(V.I., w.)*. Out of these components of "normalcy", the delineation between the two genders and the subsequent recognition of the different roles of the two seem to be a preoccupation for a majority of our respondents. As one of the most radical of them put it,

"[…] the world has been ravaged by pornography, homosexuality and other diseases, and we need to heal it from the toes to the head" (T.D., m.)

If this restauration obviously includes banning sexual minority rights, it also includes the interdiction of gender studies and the deterrence of the "feminist agitation" *(D.Ș., m.)*. A key-component of this attempt to "crush our traditional beliefs, us, as a people" *(O.S., w.)*, the feminist "propaganda" is, for some respondents, particularly dangerous as it promotes a "wrong idea about man and women being at war with each other" *(V.I., w.)*. For some the male respondents, "such ideas bring much more problems than they solve", as "they push women to change their natural roles" *(A.T., m.)*. These attempts seem unreasonable for they are meant to replace "what is natural to by what is not" *(R.M., w.)*. And because they deflect the public opinion from the "genuine problems we have – poverty, inequity, insecurity, unemployment" *(G.A., w.)*. An almost desperate claim came from of the less loquacious participants to the research:

"Instead of talking about how should women be leaders and replace men – which by the way is absurd - let's find solutions for women and men to live better, to enjoy their children, to be happier!" (O.S., w.).

For other respondents, topics such as women emancipation are "not at all Romanian, but coming from abroad" *(I.N., w.)*. One of them put it more bluntly:

"In our tradition, women and men do what they have to do, they know who they are, they never try to exaggerate, to turn the world upside down. This is how They terrorise our people, this is how They enslave us once again: by forcing us to put those who are meant to be down there – for instance, I have to say, women – up here, and vice versa" (F.S., m.).

The vast majority of our interviewees hope that the remedy against this "unnatural transformation" is to support the party who "has the guts to say things as they are and to restore our tradition, our order, our way of live" *(D.Ș., m.).*

Conclusions

The present study was focused on the role played by voters' representation on gender in the case of the populist politics of The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) party. Our main findings show that the AUR voters are, as expected, impregnated by a hegemonic patriarchal discourse according to which there is natural distribution of the gender roles, which makes that women should be assigned to their domestic and reproductive duties, while politics is a quasi-masculine business. Moreover, there a wide-spread conviction among the AUR voters that the traditional family is under siege, strongly threatened by the pro-European interest groups which promote sexual minority rights. The AUR female voters are more inclined to dramatize the magnitude of the alleged pressures of the progressivists for the legalization of same-sex marriage and therefore endow their option for AUR with a sacred aura: defending their families and their nations against the turpitude of the perverted Western world. Thus, the common element remains the promise of a homogeneous, heterosexual, and Orthodox word. This shows the emotional dimension that populism can have in motivating the population to take action.

The results of our analysis open for at least two future avenues of investigation. Some researchers could approach the relation between the consolidation of the far-right religious-conservative discourse and the setbacks in terms of the general population's perception about the status of women in the Romanian society. This could explain both why extremism prospers on the expense of the gender issue and how the extremist forces cultivate their reactionary ideas about the roles of women in society. And a second possible track would be a comparative regional analysis in Central and Eastern Europe, in order to weigh the scale and the intensity of sexism as a component of the new ascending and assertive far-right.

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Notes

[1] Diana Mereșan, Cine e Sorin Lavric, din conducerea AUR? Crede că femeia e „văduvită de simțul destinului" și îi numește pe romi „o plagă socială", *Libertatea,* 20. 12. 2020. https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/cine-e-sorin-lavric-din-conducerea-partidului-aur-3316088?utm_source=youtube&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=libertatea-page-post (seen: 5 July 2022) in Romania (38.787 are children) and 4327 applied for receiving asylum. See Guvernul României.
[2] Ov Cristian Norocel–Ionela Băluță (2021): "Retrogressive Mobilization in the 2018 "Referendum for Family" in Romania", *Problems of Post-Communism,* DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2021.1987270.

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Annex 1. Respondents' profiles

No.	Initials	Gender	Age	County	Profession
1	V.I.	Woman	35	B	journalist
2	C.S.	Woman	54	IS	technician
3	T.R.	Woman	41	SV	Salesperson
4	I.A.	Woman	48	CT	Unemployed
5	O.F.	Woman	56	AG	Farmer
6	A.K.	Woman	20	AR	Student
7	I.N.	Woman	65	MH	Retired
8	O.S.	Woman	27	AB	Nurse
9	G.A.	Woman	52	CJ	Businesswoman
10	O.M.	Man	44	CT	Fisherman
11	A.T.	Man	52	BV	Accountant
12	D.Ș.	Man	41	IF	Businessman
13	D.P.	Man	33	AR	Unemployed
14	O.M.	Man	51	IS	Policeman
15	A.T.	Man	67	AB	Traditional Singer
16	T.P.	Man	46	AG	Engineer
17	H.N.	Man	36	BH	Driver
18	R.I.	Man	29	CJ	IT Technician
19	T.D.	Man	50	SV	Physician, MD
20	P.U.	Man	46	DB	Priest
21	E.E.	Man	26	HG	Worker

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE USEFULNESS OF THE EU INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE III FOR FOSTERING CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean

Premises: the EU's experience with non-reimbursable funds in relation to East-Central Europe

The use of non-reimbursable funds within the pre-accession process has been a common practice of the European Union (EU), most notably since the applications of the East-Central European states were registered, after the mid-1990s. Such financial instruments are endowed with a transformative function which exceeds their intended purpose, i.e. of fostering socio-economic development, building infrastructure, enhancing administrative capacity or facilitating the adoption of the community acquis. In fact, they enable the changing economies of the countries to which they are addressed to become acquainted with a whole new toolset of project management that is intertwined with strategic planning, a better approach to regionalisation and, generally speaking, a previously unknown culture of programmes sponsored by non-reimbursable funds. The EU jargon that comes as a package deal with the use of funds from the European Commission is undoubtedly one more peculiarity of the vocabulary associated with post-communist transition, mingling with the likes of "functioning market economy" or "privatisation" (Papadimitriou and Phinnemore, 2008).

Such an experience was also quite new to the European Commission, as the principal decision-maker, or manager, of the EU's budget, since its previous experiences germane to such development means (Ireland, or the countries that joined the Community in the 1980s) paled in comparison when faced with the 13 new countries that conducted their accession negotiations mostly in the 2000s (Bailey–De Propis, 2002).

It is well-known that EU funds, whether in the form of structural and cohesion instruments, pre-accession financial assistance or humanitarian aid, are inherently tied to the normative power the EU exerts in its neighbourhood and, most notably, within the compounds of the Eastern Partnership (EaP). This stick-and-carrot approach, albeit not always effective or easy to gauge, is one of the most common soft power tools in the hands of the EU, which, in the light of the current budget shortages, can be put to better use, chiefly in the Western Balkans (WB). It is no wonder that the talks on the multiannual budgets of the EU are often marred by internal opposition to the extensive use of pre-accession funds, since they are no (longer a) guarantee that the recipient countries will eventually comply with the requirements of integration, as it has become apparent for quite some time now in the case of Türkiye. Moreover, sustainability remains of paramount importance in the long-term use of such instruments and the current major beneficiaries have little or no prior experience with the types of programmes on which the EU bases its strategic approach.

That said, in the absence of pre-accession assistance, the current candidate countries, many of which emerged from a complicated communist setting, including some that are part of the thorny Yugoslav file, would find it extremely difficult, or even impossible, to prepare their economies and administrations for eventual integration. The mechanisms of the Common Agricultural Policy or, even more crucially, the Regional Policy (which are two of the main incentives pursued by any aspiring EU member state) would prove overwhelming in the absence of prior experience with the management of minor EU policy tools. One major factor that ought to be borne in mind is that pre-accession funds are essential to the burdened budgets of, say, the Western Balkan countries, but represent merely about one tenth of the weight of structural and cohesion funds. Therein lies the sought-after prize of EU membership, along with, of course, the advantages of the single market, with the latter accounting for much more in terms of GDP growth than the former.

For an EU that has been in dire need of more popular support, pre-accession funds are the perfect opportunity to boost its image, but even here there are caveats. Some recipient countries have made a point of rendering the presence of the EU - due to such financial assistance - as visible as possible, chiefly where the civil society has pledged its support to the integration bid, such as Montenegro. Others, like neighbouring Serbia, where the EU is still sometimes portrayed as a scapegoat in relation to governmental failures, have opted for the opposite approach, making the EU's image close to invisible, despite the investments being implemented with non-reimbursable support from Brussels. Eurobarometers speak amply of the differences in support for EU integration across the Western Balkans, but this is most certainly not a criterion for the allocation of funds (European Western Balkans 2019).

There is also the matter of investing in countries that pose inherent risks stemming from ineffective or incomplete reforms of their judiciary, poor

administrative capacity, high doses of corruption, cronyism and remnants of ethnic conflicts, combined with the regular threats of economies undergoing transformation (Burcă-Voicu–Oprescu 2020). In the old days, when East-Central European countries were paving the way for their own EU membership, the context was even more hostile for the EU, since the lack of a European Prosecutor meant that cases involving the misuse of European funds had to be brought before national courts, thus increasing the financial risks for the donor entity. This has been somewhat overcome at present, given that the newly-created position of European Chief Prosecutor is already yielding tangible results. The choice of Laura Codruța Kövesi as the holder of this office, i.e. the former head of the Romanian Anti-Corruption Directorate, was far from random and still benefits from ample support on the part of the EU's civil society.

Several more aspects need to be delved into before one can take the analysis one step closer to the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and its focus on conflict resolution in the Western Balkans, including the ability of the four candidates (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and two potential candidates engulfed in festering conflicts (Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo) to cope with the technical requirements of EU funding. For instance, is there sufficient administrative vision and strength to properly assign resources based on genuine priorities, while taking into account the role of the civil society in the implementation of EU funds? Are the sources of co-funding properly and sustainably assured from budget planning strategies? Can the management of EU funds be run through high-performance digital tools, to foster communication between the sponsor and the beneficiaries, perhaps as part of an ampler e-governance endeavour? Is there a proper regional policy that lies at the basis of the use of such funds, given the WB's obsessive commitment to centralism?

East-Central EU member states can serve as positive and, sometimes, as negative examples of at least some of the aforementioned aspects, including the usefulness of configuring a ministry solely dedicated to European funds, the use of e-platforms for the complete management of programmes and their projects (such as Romania's MySMIS), or the wisdom behind the drawing of NUTS II regions based on historical ties and cultural propensities for collaboration. The contrast, for instance, between Poland's voivodships (Kubiczek–Bieleń, 2021), which are endowed with the weight of tradition and potential for solid community bonds, and Romania's shallow regional configuration, bypassing the richness of its historical units, should be indicative of the fact that decision-makers need to ponder the importance of a coherent regional policy (Bachtler–McMaster, 2008). Some of the WB countries are exempt from such dilemmas, since North Macedonia and Montenegro have each configured their territory in the guise of a single NUTS II region, but the example, or better yet, warning signal remains valid for the other, larger candidates (including Ukraine).

Few may doubt that the most spectacular EU enlargement endeavour so far has covered East-Central Europe, which doubled the number of member states

and required consistent transformations on the part of the EU, beginning with the Treaty of Nice. The protracted negotiations of those countries with the European Commission meant that the use of non-reimbursable pre-accession instruments was prolonged, sizeable and filled with obstacles (Albu Comănescu 2021). There were three major sources of funding in this regard: PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD, with interventions mostly tackling the base of the pyramid of needs. The latter two were not directly compatible with conflict resolution priorities, albeit arguably, connectivity as defined by the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA) did contribute to border communities experiencing faster communication and transportation routes. It was indeed PHARE (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies), originally intended for the two countries but later extended to the remaining candidates in the region, which comprised several tools for the improvement of community relations, and even cross-border initiatives meant to overcome past hurdles.

Indeed, conflict resolution within, and sometimes between or even among the ten East-Central EU states that later joined the EU, in or after 2004, had somewhat different terms of reference than the meanings typically associated with the concept in the WB. Nevertheless, while the intensity of such conflicts may have been lower than, say, in the Serbia-Kosovo file, the essence thereof is quite similar and stems from the heavy dossiers of the interwar period, furthered by a half a century of communism. Ethnic conflicts were a focal point of the EU in the management of negotiations with East-Central European candidates, not the least of which encompassed border disputes (e.g. Slovenia vs. Croatia), the rights of national minorities (concerning, for example, the Hungarian communities in Transylvania/Romania, as well as in Slovakia, or the Roma communities throughout the region) and rekindling cross-border cooperation (such as on the Romanian-Hungarian border). PHARE, although chiefly oriented towards compliance with the acquis, with public administration reform and cohesion as leitmotifs (Bache–Andreou–Atanasova–Tomsic 2010), did play a role in addressing such conflicts as the ones listed above. It provided the institutional setting and financial support for cross-border initiatives (including environmental projects), the conservation of shared and distinct cultural heritage, improving dialogue between ethnic groups and enhancing the standard of living of those communities that had been subjected to discrimination based on ethnicity. The financial allocations of PHARE were, however, quite modest, with Romania benefitting from 2.5 bn. euros and Poland from 1.9 bn. euros in the timeframe 1999–2006. Moreover, the first reports outlining the usefulness of the projects sponsored by PHARE in the area of administrative reform and, more generally, with regard to the compliance with the political Copenhagen criterion, were fairly critical towards the beneficiary countries (MWH Consortium Report 2007).

It is under such auspices that the EU implemented its pre-accession financial assistance in relation to the East-Central candidates, a situation which is indicative of a developing management culture on both sides of the barricade, engendering a

myriad of best practice examples and resulting in the achievement of the ultimate objective for the ten states involved. The following paragraphs will tackle the new non-reimbursable tools utilised by the European Commission and, most notably, DG NEAR, in the (pre-)negotiations with the WB, so as to emphasise the lessons that have been learnt, particularly in the targeting of conflict resolution priorities.

The IPA: a (technical) assessment of its breadth and conflict resolution potential in the Western Balkans

The first indication of how the not-so-impending European integration bids of the WB countries would be carried out stemmed from the manner in which the dismantlement of Yugoslavia occurred. This, among other transformative effects on the EU, stood as testimony to the lack of a genuine foreign policy shared by the member states with Brussels, thus prompting a clearer focus on this former pillar of the Treaty of Maastricht, as the landmark episodes of the war unfolded. With the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and the then-FYROM, followed by the bloodshed in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the break-up of Serbia and Montenegro, it became ever more apparent to the EU that the new countries, likely willing to pursue an integration course, required ample preparation and an equal amount of financial and administrative assistance. This proved to be key to the swift progress attained by countries like Slovenia (which held true to its commitment with respect to the Eurozone too) and the protracted, but fruitful negotiations with Croatia (a member state since 2013), whilst remaining under the auspices of a work-in-progress with the remaining ex-Yugoslav states, plus Albania.

The EU's conflict resolution potential did not fail to materialise during the border disputes between Slovenia and Croatia, with additional constructive involvement in the 2018 Prespa Agreement, bringing the Macedonian name dispute to an end. However, given the thorny history of the region, closure in this respect does not seem to be looming on the horizon, with Kosovo emerging as the single most complex file in terms of conflicts between aspiring member states, and the North Macedonia - Bulgaria spat marking perhaps the starkest dispute between a member state and a candidate from the WB. To this, one may add the internal conflicts that need to be approached with EU assistance, stemming, *inter alia*, from ethnic tensions (e.g. the Albanian population in North Macedonia), difficult justice reform (such as the persistence of customary justice in certain parts of Albania) or the precarious socio-economic stance of certain ethnic minorities (the Roma people all over the Balkans).

The IPA is not the first financial instrument used by the EU to support countries in the WB on their hypothetical way to membership (Mureșan–Grad-Rusu 2021). It was in fact preceded by the CARDS programme (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation), implemented between 2000 and 2006 and with a total value of 4.65 billion euros. Hence, the IPA, with its three

multiannual frameworks, is very much meant to be based on a set of lessons learnt by the European Commission in relation to the beneficiary countries, as it emerges from the obviously more coherent layout of the priorities proclaimed by the IPA III, for the period 2021–2027. There are five distinguishable axes, which attempt to strike a balance between the particularities of the WB, on the one hand, and the normative goals of the EU, on the other (Skolimowska 2015). Of these five so-called "windows", the first is tailored in keeping with the toughest chapters of the integration bids, namely 23 and 24, encompassing the rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy, albeit it is endowed with merely 15% of the total funds of the programme. The second priority is of more interest for the objectives of this study, since it includes good governance, adoption of the acquis, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication, however with no more than 16.5% of the budgetary allocations diverted to it. Glossing over the purely technical nature of windows 3 and 4, some interest also arises from the fifth priority line of the programme, which deals with territorial and cross-border cooperation, but it is also the "stingiest" of the five, with a budget of 3.5% of the total 14.1 billion euros allotted to the IPA III (European Commission, Overview – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2022).

This setting is indicative of the EU's awareness of the fact that the pace of integration in the WB is primarily slowed by the complexity of chapters 23 and 24, which are also red lines especially amid the current internal troubles caused by some of the member states in areas germane to the rule of law. The WB are indeed still underperformers in fight against corruption, fundamental rights and the protection of national minorities, which are not subjects the IPA III is shying away from. Then, one may wonder as to the apparently poor financial allocations to such priorities, with an essential contribution to the resolution of both internal conflicts and spats with neighbouring countries. In actuality, it is our view that the sums earmarked for such programmes are not necessarily insufficient, given that the major pecuniary investments evidently head towards costly infrastructure and environmental lines of funding, whilst training law experts, e-governance and the support for administrative capacity in the justice system, to take just three cases, are not tremendously costly by their very nature.

To elaborate on this, between 2014 and 2020, approximately 700 million euros in EU funds were channelled towards the WB on justice reform and related topics, as shaped by chapters 23 and 24 of the acquis, which is not, in itself, a significant amount. However, a recent report issued by the European Court of Auditors (2022) voiced stark criticism as to how sustainably this money was spent and how shallow the results of the justice system reform were throughout the WB.

Furthermore, a problem that is empirically noticeable lies in the size of the IPA meant to be used in the current seven-year plan, which one would have expected to exhibit considerable nominal growth, in the light of inflationary pressure and the need to push forward with the WB agenda. If the first IPA cycle (2007–2013) was endowed with 11.5 billion euros (with Croatia as one of the beneficiaries

at the time), the IPA II received a slightly more generous 12,8 billion euros and the current IPA III just 14.1 billion euros, clearly falling short of a real increase, considering macroeconomic indicators in the region (European Commission, Overview – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2022). Another setback we deem worthy of analysis is the temporal one, since the n+3 principle applies not only to structural funds in the East-Central part of the EU, but also to the candidate countries, extending the financial cycle of the IPA II until 2023. This makes the current absorption rate (as of December 2022) of some significance, given that the IPA II is on its last legs and the WB countries have merely attained a 58% usage rate of the funds (European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance – Performance 2022). This is in itself worrying and testifies to the dire need to improve the administrative capacity of the management bodies in the region. Nonetheless, when compared to several far more experienced states in East-Central Europe, similar results might emerge, albeit with respect to the absorption of structural and cohesion funds. For instance, Romania, in December 2022, registers 68.96% in this regard, despite its 15 years of experience as a member state, in what appears to be a regular delay marking the use of EU funds (Ministerul Investițiilor și Proiectelor Europene 2022).

In absolute terms, the countries in the WB receive overall small sums from the IPA II within the 2013–2020 framework, sometimes even ten times less than what a country with a similar population would obtain if it were a member of the EU. Romania, for instance, attained in July 2022 a much-expected threshold of +50 billion euros representing the difference between what it had contributed to the budget of the EU and the sums absorbed from it (Oncu 2022). As for Poland, often regarded as the champion of the use of EU non-reimbursable assistance, the new multiannual framework (2021–2027) has earmarked 110 billion euros for the country, NextGenEU included, which is a considerable sum, given its annual GDP (Oxford Economics 2022). Data from the beginning of the 2013–2020 cycle also shows that EU funds accounted for 4% of Poland's GDP, i.e. 3.7 times more than what the country made in payments to the EU that year (Matsuura, 2015). Bulgaria benefitted from EU funds worth six times the sum allotted to Serbia in the multiannual framework 2014–2020, despite the countries being comparable in size (European Issues 2022). In spite of such discrepancies, Serbia is expected to get 14 billion euros from the IPA II, Albania 0.75 billion, North Macedonia 0.63 billion and Montenegro 0.26 billion, with Türkiye remaining the primary beneficiary (with 3.19 billion), whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina is given 0.53 billion and Kosovo 0.57 billion (European Commission, Overview – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2022).

Having established that the amount of EU funding that is eligible for conflict resolution in the WB is *per se* modest, one has to place into the equation the fact that two more Eastern countries have just been granted the status of candidates to EU integration. Therefore, DG NEAR, the Commission's structure in charge of accession negotiations and the EU's neighbourhood, has suddenly much more on

its plate and the same budgetary limitations. Ukraine's current needs stemming from conflict management exceed any other financial allocation in the history of EU negotiations, which is likely to take its toll on the already strained budget provided to the WB. Until December 2022, Ukraine has already been granted 4.2 billion euros in EU funds for crisis resolution and emergency humanitarian assistance, to which one should add 3.1 billion euros in military equipment reimbursements for the member states that donated to the war effort. In addition to this, 18 billion euros are envisaged for 2023 mostly in the form of convenient loans to Ukraine, in keeping with the recovery mechanisms already in use following the side effects of the COVID–19 pandemic (European Commission, Press Release, 9 November 2022). The "RebuildUkraine" programme will certainly prove burdensome to the already limited enlargement budget, but is an unquestionable necessity for what is bound to be a cumbersome post-war transition (European External Action Service 2022).

The implementation of the IPA III will occur in an unprecedented context, with more and larger candidate countries than under its predecessor, and with the unique situation of a candidate country that is being attacked by a much stronger neighbour, the Russian Federation. It is, then, clear that the current size of the fund is unsustainable and that a major compromise needs to be reached first of all at the level of the Council in order to give more prominence to this tool that, albeit modest compared to the overall value of the EU's budget, is capable of engendering so much change. Clearly, most of it will still be directed towards the expensive priorities, including infrastructure, agriculture and socio-economic development, but the thorniest chapters of the acquis, like 23 and 24, have to remain in the limelight, while chapter 30, dealing with external relations, and chapter 35, where available, are also worth keeping a close eye on. If one considers that Serbia, a country with significant needs germane to conflict resolution, has the normalisation of relations with Kosovo inscribed in this final chapter, then it becomes apparent that special lines of funding ought to accompany the requests for progress in this respect, on the part of all sides sitting at the table.

The IPA remains the only viable non-reimbursable source of funding in the WB that can engender significant change in terms of community cohesion and conflict resolution. With NGOs in the region suffering from substantial underdevelopment and with their actions often hampered by domineering governments (like in the case of Serbia), the IPA can prove to be a unique opportunity to channel funds towards these key bearers of a democratic and often conciliatory agenda. It is the same non-governmental sector that is likely to foster social cohesion, including around matters that should be of interest to the EU, such as the support for the countries' integration. Following the same logical thread, the IPA could become a complement to the shallow financial allocations at national level in the WB for youth action, in addition to the already available, but scanty Erasmus grants. Since this age group, traditionally supportive of EU integration in East-Central Europe, does not appear to exhibit similar allegiances in parts of the WB (again, Serbia can be given as an example), such orientations could turn out to be paramount for the EU.

Success in conflict resolution, or quite to the contrary, maintaining and fomenting a conflictual situation, is often the doing of government, and the WB are no exception to that rule. Depending on the level of credibility the EU benefits from in a country, as opposed to national authorities, any change in a conflict dossier is bound to be tied to the actions (or alleged lack thereof) of Brussels, in the messages emitted by state institutions. Hence, any financial allocation to conflict management should make the EU aware of the need for more transparency and a better dissemination of results, to prevent distorting the facts in the eyes of the public. East-Central Europe once again yields contradictory case studies in this respect, with Romania and Hungary, for instance, often appearing on opposing ends. Similarly, in the WB, the prominently dissimilar levels of support the EU enjoys in Serbia and, say, Albania, may also lead to setbacks when it comes to the accuracy of the information the citizens of such countries are provided with, EU-wise.

The backing given to the development of a strong civil society is one of the clearly-stated objectives embraced by the new IPA. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have often been subjected to harassment or marginalisation in the WB, which makes the EU's involvement in this respect crucial in the light of the connection between the former and the democratic agenda promoted during the (pre-)negotiations. Within the IPA framework, a Civil Society Facility was created in 2008, accounting for no more than 3% of the overall funding, but which is meant to provide concrete support to organisations engaged in the fight for environmental causes, gender equality, youth empowerment and other prominent issues. In addition, CSOs may gain access to other funding programmes, such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. (Webalkans, 2022) In particularly sensitive areas, the EU organises special consultations under such projects as TACSO (Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye), so as to raise awareness among civil society actors as to the usefulness of the IPA III in areas germane to their fields of action (TACSO, 2022).

Indeed, the programming framework of the IPA III (2021) acknowledges that the fund will make use of the lessons learnt from the previous multiannual period, while focusing more on civil society in a region that has long been marred by conflict: "An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and prevents the polarisation of a society. It enhances political accountability and social cohesion, deepening understanding and inclusiveness of accession-related reforms, as well as supporting reconciliation in societies divided by conflict. In some cases, a more supportive and enabling environment needs to be developed that improves the conditions for policy dialogue and nonpartisan input to the decision making process." According to its third thematic priority, revolving around good neighbourly relations and reconciliation, the new IPA specifically addresses the "legacy of the conflicts of the past" as inputs to the measures it aims to support so as to foster social cohesion. Cross-border projects are also encouraged

in relation to overcoming past rivalry: "Cross-border cooperation between IPA III beneficiaries also constitutes an important part of the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans. Due to the wars stemming from the break-up of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the strengthening of good neighbourly relations in border areas was a prerequisite for growth and prosperity for the regions as well as for the beneficiaries involved. CBC programmes concentrate on overcoming the legacy of past conflicts and building reconciliation by creating direct contacts between entities and administrations at all levels on both sides of the border. Reconciliation can be fostered in particular through actions that promote cohesion between communities."

In lieu of a conclusion

The EU's Stabilisation and Association Process is recognised in the bibliography as an endeavour aimed at supporting peacebuilding through its conditionality mechanisms. According to Bojicic-Dzelilovic, Kostovicova and Randazzo (2016), however, "EU interventions in the Western Balkans have had an ambiguous effect in terms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding outcomes. Depending on the issue area, the interventions have either produced unintended consequences, had counter effects with respect to stated objectives, or proved a qualified success. Such outcomes can be traced to three main shortcomings in the existing approach to peacebuilding in the Western Balkans pursued by the EU: 1) state centric focus; 2) the fragmentation across policy domains; and 3) inconsistent conditionality." With all its potential shortcomings, this peacebuilding focus of the EU is in no way a one-off, as Brussels has taken credit numerous times for prior involvement in such objectives, for instance in the case of Northern Ireland (Hughes 2009).

As for the WB, the EU has progressively endowed itself with the right tools to intervene in the strengthening of a civil society and to provide support in the protracted process aimed at complying with the acquis, most notably in what is almost unanimously accepted as the greatest hurdles of all, namely the 23rd and 24th chapters of the negotiations. The breadth of the financial aid the Commission can manage is still undermined by the stinginess of several member states emerging ever more frequently in the debates on the DG NEAR budget, especially since the transformative effects thereof have been challenged even from within the EU's institutional setup. However, even with the decreased prominence of the IPA, one cannot help but pinpoint the manner in which its underlying philosophy has evolved and how effectively it attempts to make use of the little that it has in order to tackle head-on the complex issues stemming from the empowerment of civil society and the need to grease the wheels of conflict resolution.

The structure of the IPA III, which is, as shown above, not the only instrument the European Commission can resort to for the purpose of actively engaging in conflict resolution endeavours, is clearly tailored in such a way that it may

be accessed by relevant NGOs, cross-border applicants and public administration bodies which can play a role in this goal that is so much a part of the heritage of the WB. As administrative capacity and know-how are being built in the region, such beneficiaries of EU funds can become reliable partners in the implementation of the enlargement policy and need to be entrusted with ever more leverage on governments and institutional actors that have had a hard time adjusting to the new, anti-bureaucratic and bolder management style. CSOs are the backbone of a healthy, democratic society, most noticeably when the latter is engaged in a process of ample change, but they run the risk of remaining anonymous or lethargic in the absence of concrete financial support - therein lies the strength of EU funding, as it so clearly emerges from the East-Central experience with the likes of PHARE.

Unlike in the case of most East-Central European countries that successfully made their way into the EU in the 2000s, conflict management is part and parcel of the WB dossiers and, unless the EU is stocked with the right tools to foster progress in such areas as the Kosovo–Serbia dialogue and the constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the pace of negotiations will discourage all internal actors that are still hopeful for a future integration prospect.

If the situation was not difficult enough prior to February 2022, it most certainly needs to be re-assessed in the light of the unprovoked Russian war against Ukraine, from both the political and the pecuniary point of view. A reallocation of resources will inevitably take into account the undisputed pyramid of needs, where survival, then reconstruction take precedence over the more advanced topics to be tackled under the acquis. This will, of course put more strain on the WB and on the management authorities of the IPA, as conflict resolution has been given a completely new meaning among the current candidate countries, but it may well also turn out to be a trigger for a swifter integration of those countries that are already ahead on their accession track. Will the four WB candidates be treated as a package deal and fast-tracked in order to maintain the EU's upper hand in the region and as a counterweight to the threat coming from the East? This is a question with no clear answer in sight, for now. What is, nonetheless, desirable, is that a certain prospect should be looming on the horizon soon enough, lest another ill-timed Juncker-like approach put a damper on the little enthusiasm that still resides within the complicated, yet so rich WB region.

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DOES SOCIAL LEARNING LEAD TO RECONCILIATION IN SERBIAN–KOSOVAR RELATIONS? THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SERBIA

Laura-Maria Herța

Conceptual framework and methodology

The mail goal of this paper is to explore whether civil society organizations (SCOs) in Serbia act as agents of Europeanization, disseminating democratic values and European norms, and whether social learning and passive enforcement lead Serbia towards reconciling attitudes with regard to Kosovo. The methodological framework is built around social-constructivist assumptions related to the agency of SCOs, social learning, passive enforcement as tools embedded in the Europeanization process, and internalization of shared ideas and inter-subjective meanings (such as EU's norms). The qualitative research also rests on interviews taken with academics and decision-makers in Serbia in 2021.

This section will tackle key concepts employed in this paper, namely social learning, passive enforcement, and Europeanization as mean of transferring ideas, values, norms, and as framework for socializing domestic agents. Moreover, one objective is to verify whether there is a reception of norms (a reaction to EU conditionality), or, rather, a gradual incorporation of some norms and rules whose legitimacy and justness cannot be denied (indicative for social learning and passive enforcement). Finally, the paper will focus on the agent-structure relation, and on the effectiveness of all these processes of norm transference, norm internalization, norm appropriation which should, ideally, shape behaviours and push agents towards reconciliation and conflict resolution. The main research question is: what is role of civil society organizations in Serbia in this sense?

Social constructivists have built on previous strands of research regarding the nature and dynamic of the international system. The English School and the writings of Hedley Bull (1977) have shown the attributes of the international society (as opposed to a mere system characterized by cause-effect relations between states): values and norms which bring states together in a network of belief systems and shared aspirations. Additionally, the socializing effects of the international society have also been underlined. Given these ontological premises, Jeffrey T. Checkel developed the idea of institutions as "promoters of socialization in public arenas" (Checkel 2005). The socializing role of the European Union, as regional organizations, was theorized and empirically studied by several scholars. Checkel explored pathways and mechanisms through which "institutions in Europe socialize states and state agents, leading them to internalize new roles or group-community norms" (Checkel 2007). Zaki Laïdi argued that "Europe's capacity to establish and export norms should not be underestimated" (Laïdi 2008). Seeing the European Neighbourhood Policy as "a process of norms diffusion in the European 'near abroad'", Florent Parmentier argued that "the 'norms reception' process corresponds to the norm-takers' appropriation [...] of standards aimed at codifying their behaviour as actors on the premise of commonly accepted principles, norms and values determined at the EU level" (Parmentier 2008).

There are two levels of analysis in the constructivist scholarship regarding social learning and compliance. The first one is centred on a dynamic in which social learning entails a process of norm diffusion and norm internalization. In this sense, "compliance is not an issue of choice in any meaningful sense; agents comply out of habit, driven by certain logics of appropriateness" (Checkel 1999: 2). The second one sees social learning as a mechanism and is based "on notions of complex learning drawn from cognitive and social psychology, where individuals, when exposed to the prescriptions embodied in norms, adopt new interests" (Checkel 1999: 3). Here complex social learning is seen as process in which "agent interests and identities are shaped through and during interaction" (Checkel 2001: 561). According to Nathalie Tocci, social learning "occurs through a transformation of perceived interests (and possibly identities), as domestic actors voluntarily internalize the norms and logic underpinning the EU system" (Tocci 2007: 15). Complex learning refers to the process in which "agents, in the absence of obvious material incentives, acquire new values and interests; their behaviour in turn, comes to be governed by new logics of appropriateness" (Checkel 1999 ibid Tocci 2007: 15).

A third element which triggers or shapes compliance with EU normativity (apart from social learning, described above, and strategic calculation, which is not in extenso treated here because it is based on rational, realist assumptions) is passive enforcement. The concept is analysed as opposed to conditionality which shapes certain states' behaviours based on rewards or punishments. Instead, states perceive the rules as just and mandatory because of repeated exposure to the rule. Tocci has called it a "process of experiential learning" through which "the respect of the rule can also come to be viewed as a benefit" (2007: 17–18).

But how do states arrive at this stage of rule reception and norm internalization?

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink showed that the generally accepted definition of norms refers to the "standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity"; the two authors explain the norm "life cycle" as a three-stage process. The first one is "norm emergence", whose "main characteristic is [...] persuasion by norm entrepreneurs [who] attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace norms" (Finnemore–Sikkink 1998: 891, 895). The second stage was termed a "norm cascade" (Sunstein 1995) and implies the norm acceptance. Within this stage, norm entrepreneurs or norm leaders try to persuade other states/leaders to follow the norms; a process of socialization as well as a complex "dynamic of imitation" occur, wherein "the combination of pressure for conformity, desire to enhance international legitimation and the desire of state leaders to enhance their self-esteem facilitate norm cascades" (Finnemore–Sikkink 1998: 895). At this point, socialization plays a crucial role. Socialization is the mechanism through which, within the international society of states, the preferences for certain norms become obvious for all potential "norm imitators". Then, norm adherence is induced and behaviours are shaped. Socialization produces conformity which involves what Robert Axelrod has called the "social proof" which "applies to what people decide is correct behaviour"; according to Axelrod, "the actions of others provide information about what is proper for us", meaning that "by conforming to the actions of those around us, we fulfil a psychological need to be part of a group" (1986). Drawing on Axelrod's idea, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink argued that within the international structure "states comply with norms to demonstrate that they adapted to the social environment that they belong." Finally, the third stage implies the internalization of norms, meaning that "norms may become so widely accepted that they are internalized by actors and achieve a 'taken-for-granted' quality that makes conformance with the norms almost automatic" (Finnemore–Sikkink 1998: 895). Internalization represents a state's capacity to no longer question the validity or legitimacy of a norm, but to assume it as part of their identity, habitual behaviour, and interests, namely to incorporate it.

When tackling the constitutive effects of social norms and institutions, James March and Johan Olsen explored the "logic of appropriateness" and emphasized the differences between strategic interaction and the rule-guided behaviour (March–Olsen 2004). Building on March and Olsen, Thomas Risse pinpointed to two different logics: one is based on cost-benefit analysis, the EU constrains states' behaviour, and state actors try to pursue their interests through strategic behaviour. The second one stresses the fact that the EU is perceived as social institution, it is not seen as external to actors, and states "are deeply embedded in and affected by the social institutions in which they act" (2009: 147–148). The latter provides the ontological framework for our analysis. As underlined by Risse, social norms do not merely regulate behaviour, by enabling the actors to do something

or by punishing deviating behaviour, "they also constitute the identity of actors in the sense of defining who 'we' are as members of a social community". Moreover, "EU membership implies the voluntary acceptance of a particular political order as legitimate and entails the recognition of a set of rules and obligations as binding" (Risse 2009: 145–146).

Regarding the effects of institutions on state behaviour, the two approaches often discussed are: 1) a strategic adaptation to European conditionality, in which Europeanization occurs as a result of distribution of resources at domestic level, and 2) one in which "change agents" or "norm entrepreneurs" (Börzel–Risse 2003) are able to produce the redefinition of interests and identities, through a "logic of appropriateness" (March–Olsen 1998). According to Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse, both can (and usually do) occur at different stages or even simultaneously (2003: 59).

The third conceptual pillar of this paper is Europeanization. Social-constructivist scholars have focused on the ways in which the European Union acts, both regionally and globally, as a norm-setting organization that is able to transfer a body of normative load, which includes principles, values, rules and expected behaviours, to its neighbouring areas. At their turn, countries included in the EU neighbourhood or EU candidate countries are able to gradually internalize the normative framework and re-shape their behaviour according to the EU's norms and rules. Such reshaping would occur both exogenously and endogenously, since countries would pay attention to EU expectations and conditionality, but they would also genuinely and incrementally incorporate values, principles, norms, based on their adherence to and strong belief in the latter's validity and legitimacy (Herța–Corpădean 2021). Initial approaches to Europeanization referred to top-down processes and equated Europeanization to European integration. The majority of commentators concentrated on the implications of Europeanization on domestic politics. In this sense, Europeanization was viewed as a one-sided, limited process.

However, scholars have increasingly stressed the need of advocating "bottom-up" methods to analysing the consequences of Europeanization, on the assumption that "pre-existing domestic structures and internal developments are likely to have an important mediating effect on 'external' pressures" (Ladrech 1994; Bache 2002). Europeanization was tackled as a process which refers to adoption of values (Börzel 2002; Featherstone 2003; Ladrech 1994) or as "a process of change that transcends the conventional legal and political transformations that occur through the technical process of integration centred on the acquis communautaire" (Radaelli 2003; Economides–Ker-Lindsay 2015). Consequently, contrary to initial attempts to describe Europeanization (tackled as set of pressures from above, at political, administrative and legal levels), more recent approaches focus on the combination of attributes embedded in processes of Europeanization: the impact on domestic political, institutional and policy dynamics, but also greater emphasis on beliefs, values, ideas (Bache 2002), shared meanings, norms and perceptions. Olsen argued that "Europeanization as domestic impacts is not limited to

structural and policy changes […] European values and policy paradigms are also to some (varying) degree internalized at the domestic level, shaping discourses and identities" (Olsen 2002). Claudio Radaelli emphasized the role of shared belief, rules and norms: "Europeanization consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies" (2004: 5).

Europeanization, when viewed as an interactive, ongoing process, refers to an agent-structure (Giddens 1985) relation: the European Union as a structure influences the agents' national policies and transfers a framework of normative knowledge and expected behaviour; however, the agents also play a role in changing or revisiting, altering the structure's key attributes or in perpetuating them. According to Radaelli, "the question is not one of assessing whether a country has become Europeanised or not. […] Europeanization demands explanation of what goes on inside the process", since "the EU may provide the context, the cognitive and normative 'frame', the terms of reference, or the opportunities for socialisation of domestic actors who then produce 'exchanges' (of ideas, power, policies, and so on) between each other" (2004: 7). Therefore, contrary to initial conceptualisations of Europeanization which focused on top-down and unilateral effects on domestic politics, policies, and polities, other theorisations tackle the interactive, horizontal and vertical processes. Olsen underlined that "change is not unilateral. Global, European, national and sub-national processes interact in intricate ways. Typically, there is no single dominant and deterministic causal relation. Causal chains are often indirect, long and complex. Effects are difficult to identify and disentangle. Interactive processes of feedback, mutual influence and adaptation are producing interpenetration between levels of governance and institutions" (Olsen 2002: 942; Bulmer–Burch 2001).

In previous articles we touched upon the capacity of Europeanization to bring about frameworks for conflict resolution and discussed the EU's role in the Western Balkans, especially its mediating role in Serbian–Kosovar relations (Herța–Corpădean 2020). We showed that the essentials of the process of Europeanization rest upon the capacity of the European Union to reshape behaviours and change identities and interests because of strong adherence and real incorporation of core values, which could be considered as non-negotiable, and not because of rational calculation and convenient re-adaptation. One challenge encountered by processes of Europeanization in the Western Balkans revolves around the question of the EU's capacity to reorient the countries from the ex-Yugoslav space, to reshape behaviours of political elites, to help communities and societies at large overcome nationalism and ethnopolitics. Ideally, the European Union as normative power would impact, for instance, Serbian–Kosovar relations not only at rational, cost-benefit calculation level, given the corollary of EU conditionality, but mostly

at the level of socialization, norm diffusion and norm appropriation. The EU would act as norm-setter, transferring a body of knowledge and shared beliefs pertaining to core values (sustainable peace, human rights, good governance etc.), then political elites, in their capacity of "change agents", would incorporate such normativity and function as "norm entrepreneurs" (Börzel–Risse 2003; Tocci 2007), and, finally, societies, groups, communities, and individuals/citizens would play the role of norm-recipients, hence incorporating such norms and values. This top-down approach would of course run the risk of "Europeanizing" the elites and not so much societies at large. But, active engagement at society level (grassroots, NGOs constantly exposed to EU interactions and practices) would ensure the diffusion and appropriation of such normativity.

Therefore, successful Europeanization would entail the genuine incorporation and internalisation of rules, vales, norms by states within the Western Balkan region, and identity transformation. EU's rules and norms would gradually be accepted as most legitimate path, and not perceived as expected behaviour which triggers strategic thinking and calculated action (Herța–Pop-Flanja 2021). But, what role does civil society have in this sense, in the case of Serbia? Do decision makers act as norm entrepreneurs and do we observe the Europeanization of elites? Do civil society organisations play a major role in socializing and Europeanizing Serbian society? And do all these processes lean towards normalization of relations with Kosovo?

The European Union as peace promoter and its approach on Serbian–Kosovar relations

The Maastricht Treaty in 1991 specified the European Union's goals in foreign policy, by focusing on "conflict resolution, strengthening international security, promoting regional cooperation, combating international crime, and promoting democracy and the rule of law and human rights" (Treaty on European Union 1992; Tocci 2007: 7; Stivachtis–Price–Habegger 2013: 5). With respect to conflicts, the European Union and its member states are committed to the idea of "sustainable peace", meaning addressing both the structural causes of conflicts and their consequences and symptoms (Manners 2006). Moreover, the European Union's approach is centered on the "link drawn between values such as human rights, democracy and the rule or law on the one hand, and the prevention and resolution of conflicts and regional cooperation on the other hand" (Tocci 2007: 7).

The European Union's involvement in Serbia and Kosovo has been characterized by both temporary rapprochement and by strenuous relations and pitfalls over the last twenty years. The bulk of EU member states were supportive of the NATO-led intervention in 1999 against Serbia and the Union has been an active player in Kosovo, especially since the deployment of EULEX, the civilian mission acting under the EU's common foreign and security policy. After Slobodan Milošević was toppled,

EU-Serbia relations were vested with optimism for future EU integration, but after the assassination of Zoran Djindić, there was a major setback and Serbia's refusal to cooperate with the ICTY hampered rapprochement. However, a European Partnership was signed in 2004 (Economides–Ker-Lindsay 2015: 1034–1035).

In 2011, the EU brokered direct talks between Serbia and Kosovo. This EU-facilitated dialogue is chiefly focused on the normalization of relations between the two sides (Serbia-Kosovo Relations 2019; Emini–Stakic 2018). On a positive note, the dialogue was conducive to the first Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, also called the Brussels Agreement, in April 2013. The latter was initially acknowledged as a major breakthrough and it focused on "politically highly sensitive areas – such as security, the rule of law, the competences of local authorities in Serbian-inhabited areas in Kosovo, and the judiciary" (Emini–Stakic 2018: 1). The implementation of the Brussels Agreement, however, proved to be a difficult process on the ground (Emini–Stakic 2018: 1–3; Bátora–Osland–Peter 2017: 28–31). Since 2015, little progress has been observed and several incidents are indicative of renewed disputes in Serbian–Kosovar relations.

Positive aspects were initially visible in the agreements reached on technical issues, such as trade (with both Serbia and Kosovo showing commitment to duty-free bilateral trade), telecommunications, freedom of movement, and energy. However, in recent years progress has stalled in almost every sector. In 2018, economic and trade relations were marked by obstacles triggered by raised tariffs on imports; there is lack of consensus on border/boundary crossing issues (even with differing denominations and opposing narratives on meanings assigned to them); regional cooperation is hampered by the complicated recognition issue, with Serbia announcing its attempts to convince several countries to withdraw their recognition of Kosovo's independence (Emini–Stakic 2018; Serbia–Kosovo Relations 2019).

Major negative aspects have played a role in slowing progress in EU–Serbia–Kosovo dialogue. Parallel administrative and political structures in northern Kosovo have been supported by Belgrade for many years, while citizenship issues have been complicated by the Kosovar authorities' reluctance to accept documents in Serbian language (hence rendering some Serb citizens in northern Kosovo without Kosovar citizenship). Tensions escalated when Kosovar political leader Ramush Haradinaj was arrested in 2017 in France for alleged war crimes, as mentioned in the arrest warrant issued by Serbia (Emini–Stakic 2018: 2). A tragic event occurred in 2018, when moderate Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanović was assassinated. The incident with the train set on a route from Belgrade to northern Mitrovica "painted in the colours of the Serbian flag and bearing the words 'Kosovo is Serbia' in different languages" (Emini–Stakic 2018: 2) also triggered turmoil. In 2018, Serbian representative Marko Djurić was expelled from Kosovo, stirring outrage in Serbia. In December 2018, Kosovo decided to upgrade its security forces and turn them into a full-fledge army and Serbia threatened with a potential military response (Serbia–Kosovo Relations 2019: 2).

By 2020, Serbia and Kosovo were on the way of normalizing economic relations, after the deal brokered by the United States. The leaders of Kosovo and Serbia engaged in talks focusing on the establishment of air, rail and motorway links between Serbia's capital, Belgrade, and Kosovo's capital, Pristina (CNN 2020). However, in 2021 relations turned sour again. Meetings organized between President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić and Prime Minister of Kosovo Albin Kurti, held in June and July 2021, led to no notable progress. In 2022, the sensitive and complicated issue of freedom of movement displayed new tensions in Serbian–Kosovar relations. Things escalated in July and August 2022, when car license plates crossing the border triggered road blocks in North Kosovo, rising tensions and NATO-led K-FOR mission's response, stating that "it was ready to intervene if the stability was jeopardised" (European Western Balkans 2022).

Throughout this period, the EU has been engaged in Serbian–Kosovar dialogue, both by providing financial assistance and by insisting on the need for the two sides to reach a binding agreement conducive to a comprehensive normalization of relations. Both conditionality and social learning, as EU conflict resolution mechanisms, were set in motion. In 2013, Serbia was granted EU candidate status and accession negotiations began in January 2014. Kosovo is acknowledged as a potential candidate by the EU, after the Stabilization and Association Agreement became applicable in April 2016, promoting "peace, stability, freedom, security and justice, prosperity and quality of life […] stabilisation and the transition to a market economy, regional cooperation and preparation for EU accession" (An overview of relations between the EU and Kosovo 2016).

Civil society in Serbia: what role for the EU accession process and for conflict resolution?

Serbia received official candidate status on 1 March 2013 and got the green light from the European Council that very year to start accession negotiations. This was set against the background of the coming into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, on 1 September 2013.

According to the European Commission, the role of civil society in Serbia, in 2013, was notable insofar as promotion of democratic values is concerned and "civil society organisations continued to play an important role in social, economic and political life" (European Commission 2013). The same was underlined with respect to cultural activities. Since Serbia actively engaged in promoting Europe for Citizens programme through the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society However, regarding anti-corruption fight, civil society remained weak, playing at best a limited role (European Commission 2013). The most important step forward emphasized by the European Commission in 2014 was the establishment of a National Convention on the European Union which was meant to act as platform for cooperation with civil society in the accession negotiation process.

It included civil society organisations organized in various working groups, covering all negotiating chapters (European Commission 2014). Some drawbacks, however, were also noticed: civil society organisations and human rights defenders worked hard in trying to raise awareness about civil and political rights, but their efforts and campaigns were often stifled or discouraged, especially when they expressed critical views (European Commission 2014).

The report presented by the Commission in 2015 noted "some progress" regarding cooperation between the government and civil society organisations was mentioned, but more transparency was requested by the Commission. The positive aspect was that authorities included civil society organisations in the accession negotiations process, even though not to the latter's full potential, thus making CSOs' impact on policy making rather weak (European Commission 2015). Progress was also observed during 2016, as far as dialogue between civil society and government was concerned, but the Commission's report underlined that "civil society struggles to exert influence on policy-making and faces obstacles from parts of the public administration" (European Commission 2016). By 2019, the report issued by the European Commission highlighted lack of progress with respect to the authorities' decisions do enable the developments of an unhindered and strong civil society in Serbia. On an even more negative note, the report mentioned that CSOs have to work "in an environment [which] not open to criticism, with the authorities making negative statements, echoed by the media, on civil society […]. Harsh criticism against human rights defenders has continued in tabloid newspapers" (European Commission 2019).

The report released in 2020 showed that not enough effort was made for the strengthening of cooperation between the government and civil society and also reiterated that a strong and enabled civil society is needed for the promotion of democratic values. Moreover, the report criticises the fact that nothing has been endeavoured in order to create a positive environment for civil society, given the fact that there is no action plan or national strategy to this end (European Commission 2020). The 2021 report mentioned the continuation of verbal attacks against civil society organizations in Serbia. There is also criticism regarding setbacks in exercising freedom of expression. The Report also says that hate speech and smear campaigns against journalists and civil society representatives are worrying. The Government is criticised for not counteracting hate speech and for its lack of contribution "to a political dialogue on EU-related reforms in particular on the fundamentals of democracy and the rule of law" (European Commission 2021). The recurrent theme in this report is the fact that CSOs' actions are restricted while individuals who criticize the government are under pressure. In 2022, Serbia finally adopted the much requested strategy for creating a stimulating environment for the development of civil society for 2022–2030. Setting up a council for civil society cooperation was also discussed. Despite these, the report shows that smear campaigns, verbal attacks, pressure against CSOs still continue (European Commission 2022).

The European Commission's reports indicate the year 2013 as the most promising in what concerns EU's relations with both Serbia and Kosovo, as well as steps forward which illustrate the process of socialization and passive enforcement. Moreover, the year 2013 has also been termed as the "peak of Europeanization in Serbia" (Mikuš 2018: 6). However, polls conducted in Serbia display a downfall in this regard ever since then.

Public opinion polls conducted in 2012 in Serbia showed that half of the citizens were still in favour of EU membership, while the number of euro skeptics has increased by 10% compared to 2011. When asked to mention consequences of EU membership, most respondents said they would expect to increase Serbia's security (44%) or to contribute to combating corruption (44%) while 41% of respondents believed that joining the EU would lessen the possibility of Serbian citizens for deciding their own fate. What also resulted from such opinion polls is that citizens in Serbia feel more secured by Russia (18%) than by EU (16%) or NATO (4%) while the majority of respondents favour military neutrality (44%). (Citizens of Serbia between EU, NATO and Russia 2012). Regarding prospects of future EU integration, the surveys indicated so much optimism in Kosovo and pessimism in Serbia: 37% of people believed back then Kosovo will join the EU by 2020 and 25% by 2025 while only 6% said it would never join it. As opposed to this, in Serbia 9% expected the accession to EU to happen by 2020, 18% by 2025 and 38% expect this to never happen. (Balkan Barometer 2017: 54.) Serbia then registered the highest decline in positive perception on EU membership from 2010 to 2020 (BiEPAG 2021). A poll conducted in Serbia in 2022 shows that the number of Serbians who are against joining the European Union is now higher than those who are still interested in EU accession, namely as many as 44% of participants declared they are against membership while only 35% are in favour (Euronews 2022).

The political and social environment in which civil society organisations have been acting in Serbia changed and different periods displayed impeding or enabling effects on civil society agency. The effects of transnational norm entrepreneurs' activism or the social mobilisation of local CSOs in Serbia were shaped by both the exposure to European Union's norms and rules and to the political environment set in Belgrade. Europeanization and social learning were contingent upon these developments, exhibiting the structure-agency interplay.

Marek Mikuš (2018) analysed the development of civil society in Serbia and identified two narratives and two truths about Serbia's future prospects after conflict-ridden period associated with the break-up of Yugoslavia and then the fall of Milošević. The first one, leading to the previously mentioned "peak of Europeanization" was a Europeanization-cum-modernization discourse. This narrative was grounded in a framework of post-conflict, post-socialist, post-authoritarian transition and Europeanization was discursively presented as "movement towards the preconceived ('European') model of affluent, advanced and better-governed society". The underlying meanings and framing included "the Europeanness of Serbia" and made "Serbia's path to Europe" a daily subject. (Mikuš 2018: 79–85).

A second narrative was shaped as a response to this "Other, pro-European Serbia" and was built around the perceived superiority of developed Europe vis-à-vis the "Balkan" Serbia. This rhetoric was built on the "Serbian way of being" and "accused these 'Euro-Serbs' of an uncritical admiration and unbridled submissiveness in relation to the EU combined with a disdain for 'ordinary Serbs', whom they considered primitive and uncivilized" (Mikuš 2018: 86–87). More recently, another social and political environment took shape, visible after the Serbian Progressive Party became the ruling party. The features of this stage are: a strong-willed leadership, declaring itself as pro-European, but not undergoing any form of EU norm incorporation, a political discourse centred on verbal attacks against journalists, on marginalization of CSOs, and worrying steps back with respect to rule of law, democracy and promotion of free speech.

What is the impact of all this upon Serbian–Kosovar relations and what are the cumulative effects of Europeanization processes? Spyros Economides and James Lindsay-Ker analysed the Serbian–Kosovar normalization process and tackled the phrase "pre-accession Europeanization", based on the idea that the EU has shaped a model of relations in which candidate countries have to undergo Europeanization as a pre-condition for membership, and not as a result of integration. The scholars' argument is that "rather than undergoing a process of Europeanization, whereby a fundamental transformation in the underlying rationale and processes of decision-making occurred, as some have argued, the changes in Serbia's policy are in fact based on material concerns"; consequently, this is indicative of "a policy of rationally instrumental 'pre-Accession Europeanization' rather than as a process of adaptive normative Europeanization as more conventionally understood in the bibliography" (2015: 1). This entails a form of pragmatic adaptation to the model and the lack of genuine norm appropriation. It is the authors' contention that Serbia's relations with Kosovo are based on political opportunism, rather than "convergence or identity change" (Economides–Ker-Lindsay 2015).

According to some academics and policy makers, Europeanization is stalled in Serbia. They indicate "limited progress of the freedom of expression in Serbia" and criticize "hate speech against the journalists" (interview taken with member of former Serbian European Integration Office of the Government of Serbia, Belgrade 2021). As far as CSOs are concerned, the perception is that "there is no civil society as a clear entity, supportive of the EU; those who are critical against the Government are prosecuted" (interview taken with member of former Serbian European Integration Office of the Government of Serbia, Belgrade 2021). Other views stress the need for "internal Europeanization", but fear that there is a "coalition of unwillingness": the Serbian society is caught between enlargement fatigue and immaturity and intransigence of Serbian political leaders. All this generates a standstill: "nothing will happen in the next ten years" (interview taken with former member of the Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union). Regarding agency of CSOs, interviews taken in Serbia stress that civil society has been vibrant since the '90s, but is now very polarized: on the

one hand, there are those who vote for the ruling party and are against liberal democracy, and, on the other hand, there is a "disjointed opposition" (interview taken with former member of the Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union). Others stress the confusion of the young Serbian generation and the civil activism centred on environment protection in Serbia (interview taken with academic from the University of Belgrade). In what regards Serbian–Kosovar relations, interviews conducted in Serbia indicate an unresolved trauma, the equation of the "West" (and a pro-European path) with the recollection of NATO's actions against Belgrade in 1999; on the other hand, normalization of relations with Kosovo is seen as a must and the worst envisioned scenario is a frozen conflict (interviews taken with academics from the University of Belgrade).

The goal of this paper is to investigate to what extend social learning and passive enforcement, as instruments embedded in Europeanization processes, play a role in normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo. How are European norms and rules received, incorporated, diffused by "change agents" in Serbia and what role do civil society organizations have in this sense? As argued by Finnemore and Sikkink, "new norms never enter a normative vacuum but instead emerge in a highly contested normative space where they must compete with other norms […]" (1998: 897). EU rules and normative framework moved in this contending landscape. The EU remains a key actor in conflict transformation and conflict resolution, but throughout its engagement, assistance and peace-building efforts, the European Union also aims to socialize agents/actors, to model identities, and to lay the groundwork for passive enforcement of rules. In the case of Serbia, the "logic of appropriateness" has encountered the interplay of perceived enlargement fatigue coupled with intransigent attitudes of political actors and compacted, narrow space for CSOs' agency. According to Sunstein, "societies experience norm bandwagons and norm cascades. Norm bandwagons occur when the lowered cost of expressing new norms encourages an ever-increasing number of people to reject previously popular norms, to a 'tipping point' where it is adherence to the old norms that produces social disapproval. Norm cascades occur when societies are presented with rapid shifts toward new norms" (1995: 9–10). The Serbian society seems to be caught in an amalgam of perceptions regarding the legitimacy of norms: acceptance of EU rules, but also insistence on a traumatized self because of Western actions regarding Kosovo; the need to normalize relations with Kosovo and make use of EU's normative body in conflict resolution, which is contrasted by the disappointment over enlargement fatigue and over the fact that Serbia (together with other countries included in the Western Balkans) have to undergo pre-accession Europeanization, which other East European states did not, prior to their EU accession.

Civil society organizations in Serbia undertook two main tasks as agents embedded in the process of Europeanization: the first one centred on "monitoring the government's performance" and on conveying "critical assessments to EU actors"; the second one was to communicate "the contents and importance of the

accession process to Serbian citizens" (Wunsch 2018: 103). Some CSOs recognized the opportunity to use EU rules and norms as leverage for promoting internal changes regarding free speech and rule of law. According to the analysis of Natasha Wunsch, "CSOs emphasized their instrumental use of the 'Brussels route,' to which they explicitly resorted to secure additional leverage for their claims" and they saw the European Union as "a strong mechanism to improve human rights and other liberties" (2018: 103).

However, by 2021–2022, EU influence in Serbia seems to be diminishing and this is illustrated, inter alia, by the stalled Belgrade-Pristina talks on normalization.

Apart from these EU norm diffusers or EU rules "managers", there are also local, small scale, grass root activities meant to bring about reconciliation in Serbian–Kosovar relations. Recent field research indicates that there are strong and meaningful civil society activities of inter-community peace building. Several initiatives display youth involvement in Serbian–Kosovar rapprochement. Even though civil society sphere in Kosovo is small, it is also "forward-looking and re-worked through intra- and inter-community collaborations at the local level, regionally, and beyond"; similarly, "citizens of municipalities in South Serbia lack hope and motivation for activism, and CSOs recognize the lack of expertise, resources, and visions of the future"; and yet "a small number of emerging youth organizations, however, demonstrate solidarity, creativity, and care, giving hope that a revival of grassroots activism is possible" (Krasniqi–Lončar 2021: 21–23). Consequently, social learning has multiple facets; this type of cross-community initiatives indicates an agency focused on taking local ownership of reconciliation, normalization and the attempts to indigenize peace building.

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NORTH MACEDONIA'S INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL IDENTITY DISPUTES

ROLE AND IMPLICATION FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Mircea Brie–Islam Jusufi–Polgár István József

Introduction

North Macedonia, as a western Balkan country, with the turn of the century faced three rounds of internal and external disputes, and to overcome them, it signed three major agreements. The first agreement was the Ohrid Framework Agreement, signed in Skopje on 13 August 2001 by the parties to the 2001 ethnic conflict. The Ohrid Framework Agreement was the peace deal signed by the ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian representatives. The agreement ended the armed conflict between the National Liberation Army of Albanians and the Macedonian security forces that started in February 2001 and set the groundwork for improving the rights of ethnic Albanians and other minorities (Rusi 2004). It was the first major test or a variable measuring the capacity of the country's civil society to play a role in the resolution of the domestic dispute. The developments in North Macedonia, from February 2001 when sporadic inter-ethnic violence erupted in the country, to the negotiation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and its adoption in August 2001, to the Agreement's implementation, that lasted number of years and at least until 2010, offers opportunity for the evaluation of the impact of the civil society on it and how the civil society itself was shaped by the post-conflict state building processes as inspired by OFA.

The second agreement was the Prespa Agreement. After 27 years of negotiation, in 2018 Greece and Macedonia reached a historic agreement that aims to resolve the old dispute regarding the name of the former Yugoslav republic.

This agreement resolved very important issues which blocked the continuation of the integration process and also settled down new partnership positions and new cooperation guidelines between North Macedonia and its neighbors, especially with Greece (Chryssogelos–Stavreska 2019).

The Prespa Agreement represents a viable model through which disputes and conflicts can be resolved through a general approach and capitalizing on potential long-term benefits. The Prespa Agreement is more than a standard bilateral agreement, it is hardly a compromise. The analysis shows that the Agreement has gone beyond the usual legal standards, and its effects are visible in the civil and cultural sphere as well as in the domain of collective and individual human rights (Vankovska 2019).

One of the articles of the agreement stipulates that the intensification of bilateral cooperation between states and societies is necessary and represents a priority, especially in the field of social activities, technologies and culture.

In the case of identity and ethnic disputes, identification of real priorities of the society is essential. The Prespa Agreement is a practical example of this, a model of diplomatic creativity and political will in accordance with the expectations of the civil society (Brie–Jusufi–Polgár 2021).

The third dispute was the one with Bulgaria regarding identity issues, which Bulgaria had vehemently demanded in the context of discussions on the start of negotiations on the accession of Northern Macedonia to the European Union. Bulgaria used its veto to oppose the start of negotiations with the EU when its demands were not met. Bulgaria's three main demands are: the identity of the Macedonian language and the Bulgarian side's demand that their neighbours formally recognise that its language has Bulgarian roots, respectively the official formulation of a "common history", including identity; the recognition and inclusion of the Bulgarian minority in the Constitution of Northern Macedonia (this claim would mean that the remaining majority is not Bulgarian as the more extreme Bulgarian claims sound – which would put an end to a nationalist dream of the Bulgarian side); and, a much vaguer formulation, that Northern Macedonia to renounce to what is called a "hate speech" against Bulgaria. Bulgaria's veto was lifted after mediation by the French presidency of the Council of the EU posed a compromise solution accepted by the Macedonian side in a parliamentary vote on 16 July 2022 and after the agreement between the two sides was signed in Sofia a day later (G4Media.ro, 2022). The agreement enabled the formal opening of negotiations on the accession of Northern Macedonia to the EU, which were formally announced in a Council of the EU communique on 19 July 2022 (Council of the EU, 2022).

What has been the role of the civil society in reaching the afore-mentioned agreements? Did they support the efforts to overcome the disputes that the three agreements sought to resolve?

North Macedonia has been home to number of important disputes well known internationally and has signed agreements to resolve these conflicts; thus, it is important to obtain systematic knowledge about whether, and under what condi-

tions, the civil society can support or prevent the deterioration of the conflicts in a society.

While the general development, work and impact of civil society has been thoroughly studied (Hummel 2020), their role in conflict resolution has been somewhat looked at limited ways. This article addresses related research gaps. First, the civil society bibliography almost exclusively perceives the civil society as a constructive actor that engages in conflict resolution promotion efforts with positive effects. This 'deterministic approach' largely ignores the possibility that such engagements could generate unintended outcomes. Second, although case studies of individual conflicts provide useful insights for theory generation, there is little empirical evidence regarding the politics' potential to out pass the civil society's conflict resolution promotion efforts. The final research gap is a lack of systematic analysis of the civil society's role across different conflicts. Prior research suggests that civil society may have different effects considering the context (Kroupa–Štogr 2006) and the capacities of the civil society (Harris–Roffiaen–Moro 2006), yet these impacts have not been systematically compared in three different conflict cases. To address these research gaps, this article is the first to (a) study the role of the civil society in ending the domestic and external identity disputes and to (b) examine the effect these agreements in turn have had on the role and position of the civil society.

Western Balkan region, in general, and North Macedonia, specifically, is a good testing ground for analysing the impact of civil society on conflict resolution promotion efforts for various reasons. First, North Macedonia has been home for major disputes and efforts to overcome these disputes. Second, the civil society is much more attentive to the conflict situations. Therefore, if a role by civil society is expected in conflict resolution, this is likely to be detected in the western Balkan neighbourhood, where the societies themselves and international actors have actively sought resolution of conflictual disputes.

This study draws on analysis of evidence and data on the role of civil society in North Macedonia to investigate whether and to what extent the civil society can affect the subsequent conflict resolution efforts in the country, and the manner in which the civil society has in turn been affected by the dispute ending deals. It focuses on three major disputes that has concerned North Macedonia's polity – interethnic tensions domestically between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, dispute with Greece over the name „Macedonia" and dispute with Bulgaria over the origins of Macedonian language and interpretation of the common and joint history.

The study contributes to civil society literature in important ways. First, it demonstrates the role of civil society in conflict resolution efforts, which enriches the discussion of design of conflict resolution models. Second, the study tests existing theoretical arguments about the role of civil society in conflict resolution using the case study of North Macedonia and demonstrates that civil society plays limited role. Third, the article demonstrates the role that the civil society plays in competition with politics. Lastly, it assesses the way the civil society are impacted by the agreements ending the conflicts.

The article proceeds in following parts. The following section surveys civil society in North Macedonia. The third section introduces the study's theoretical foundations and hypotheses, followed up by a section on methodological approach and data collection methods. The fifth section discusses the findings with focus on the three specific disputes of North Macedonia. The sixth section discusses the results of the study. The final section briefly concludes the article.

Defining North Macedonia's civil society

The civil society in North Macedonia has been produced and re-produced. It has undergone series of transformations. New initiatives have been launched and some of the existing structures have been enhanced or transformed reflecting the changes in the socio-political context of the country. As the country moved to initial democratisation phase in early 1990s, the concept of the civil society was introduced to the country, a practice of which had limited prior experience in the country. In this phase the first civil society organisations emerged in the country. This first phase of emergence of civil society covered the period of 1991–2001 and corresponded to the period of the start of the interethnic disputes in the country that culminated with the armed conflict in 2001 and that ended with the signing of OFA in August 2001 (Trajkovski 1999; UNDP 1999).

North Macedonia following the conflict of 2001 and its aftermath that started with the signing and implementation of the OFA of August 2001, began the process of post-conflict state building, a state building process for the second time in the recent history of the country, after that of formation of state following the break-up of former Yugoslavia in 1991. What the country experienced during and after 2001 was process of post-conflict state building and moving in the direction that led North Macedonia into the track of post-conflict state building that aimed to overcome difficulties in interethnic relations in the country. As the country needed to deal with the legacy of the conflict and needed capacities to implement the provisions of OFA that required major changes in the country's governance, North Macedonia required new type of civil society from that of formative years of 1990s. The new civil society of the post-OFA period, which was the second phase of the development of the civil society in the country, was expected to establish safeguards for the protection of the inter-ethnic cohesion in the country in the spirit of OFA (Klekovski–Nuredinoska–Stojanova 2010; Gaber-Damjanovska 2007; Conces 2007; Grodeland 2006; MCIC 2006; Mungiu-Pippidi 2005).

The third phase of development of civil society of North Macedonia concerns the period of 2010s and covers the period until present times (2022). It is the phase when the civil society witnessed its opening to regional cooperation and intensive efforts to foster the regional cooperation, as part of the stipulation of the funding requirements of the major donors active in the region of the western Balkans. One important source of linkages established in the region is the funding

resources that required regional networking among civil society. For example, for applying to the donor programmes required that consortium is built at the regional level from different countries. The idea behind was reconciling countries through the engagement of civil societies in joint regional projects. Regional cooperation among civil society emerged as the important point as it can act as an important confidence building measure among the peoples. The benefits seen from the similar models in EU countries encouraged the civil society of the region of western Balkans to follow the suit and institute strong regional cooperation (Dimova 2012; Spaskovska 2012). This third and last phase corresponds to the time when the country overcome its external disputes with Greece and Bulgaria with the signing of the Prespa Agreement in 2018 and the protocol with Bulgaria in 2022.

While the role of the individuals with understanding of the role of civil society and its potential, it has been context that has been important as a source of the emergence and reform of the civil society through these three phases. In all these phases, there has been increase in the number of start-up civil society in North Macedonia. Earlier, while the civil society circle consisted of very few organizations, with the turn of century and with the change in the agenda of the reform processes in the country from transition to European integration, has led to triple the number of the civil society organisations in the country. The current stage of the civil society in the country can be labelled as the new civil society, as the circle has moved from generalist to specialized organizations and where the newly established organisations are led by the new generation of young leaders of the country. This growing interest was also replicated in different spheres of civil society work, including in think tanks, federations of the civil society organisations, etc. All of these circles form the pillars of the civil society community in North Macedonia. This growing civil society community provided an alternative source of information on issues for both policy makers and wider public and it also provided opportunity for popular debate, discussion and criticism of public issues.

Theory and hypotheses

Literature review of civil society development and conflict resolution in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe

After the fall of the Communist regimes at the beginning of the 90s, in the Central and Eastern European countries the the democratic transition process urgently required reforms and actions in order to reduce the distance between the citizens and the political power, both at national and local level. It was, in fact, about the introduction, or rather the reintroduction of the idea of democracy in societies deeply marked by the experience of the totalitarian systems (Bafoil 2006; Kutter–Trappmann 2010; Carmin–Vandeveer 2004; Ekiert 2003; Smolar 1996; Fotev 2006).

The new geopolitical realities, associated with a process of national-identity emancipation, have led to the redrawing of political maps in the Balkan space. Identity cleavages, which culminated in violent inter-ethnic conflicts, have profoundly marked Balkan societies. Competition and mutual distrust marked the first two decades after the fall of communism (Jakesevic 2018; Brie–Jusufi–Polgár 2022; Caplan 2010; Petričušić 2013).

The Western Balkan region plays a key role in the security equation of the whole Europe, the destabilizing potential, already demonstrated by the conflicts they have led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, explain the major interest of the EU (Dzelilovic–Lindsay–Randazzo 2016; Zupančić 2016; Sobotka 2013). The scenario of appearance of new armed conflicts has been permanently present in this space. Especially because many of the causes and consequences of the conflicts that determined the disintegration of Yugoslavia are, to a considerable extent, still existent (Kriesberg 2009; Kulkova 2019; Mureșan–Văduva 2007). Nowadays it is more and more obvious that the wars from the Western Balkan space led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia and to the creation of five independent states, without solving ethnic, economic, social, national and political problems (Bechev 2011; Ioannides 2007; Kulkova 2019).

Since the stake of this process was clearly perceived and understood by all the internal and external actors of the transition, its realization turned out to be much more complex and much more delicate than most of these actors imagined or realized (Bernhagen 2007; Federowicz 2005; Ackerman-Rose 2007).

In the Western Balkan societies, the post-communist transition took place in a specific societal context. Based on this we can admit, that the consequences created by this specific context will produce effects for a long time to come. The transition from communism to a new type of society determined decisive mutations in terms of the relations between the civil sector and politics (Bojicic-Dzelilovic–Ker-Lindsay–Kostovicova 2013; Wunsch 2018; Żornaczuk 2014).

Our point of view can seem severe, but is based on a series of observations of some structural phenomena. This finding is also supported by numerous specialized works which emphasize at a different extent, the obstacles that continue to oppose the efficiency of the democratization process and the strengthening of the civil society in many of the states from the region (Kacarska 2008; Hummel 2020).

If we would like to define briefly what is civil society in this specific social context created in the Western Balkans countries, we can say that civil society is most generally understood as an initial but well-ordered social arrangement. Current political philosophy explores civil society as a condition of society and seeks to identify the necessary societal infrastructure for a functioning participatory democracy (Buzhar 2004; Heidbreder 2012).

On the other hand, civil society can be defined as a result of a common legislative framework that enables the individual to associate and communicate in the public sphere (Börzel 2010; Cekik 2017).

Based on the history and the experiences of the past decades, we can affirm that the development of the legal framework for the civil society it is connected to the level of the democratisation process in post-communist states (Green 2002; Conces 2007).

Any assessment regarding the genesis and the evolution of the civil society in Central and South-Eastern Europe (especially the case, of the Western Balkans) it cannot skip the specific context and the different pace of development. (Kroupa–Štogr 2006; Mavrikos-Adamou 2010). The path was given by the existing diversity, starting from the collapse of the communist regimes (and the typology of the transition), to the apparition of the first entities belonging to the civil society (Chaney 2017; Christopoulou–Roumeliotou 2006; Dyrstad–Halvard–Kristen–Simkus–Listhaug 2011; Engstörm 2002a, Engström 2002b).

The collapse of the communist regimes from the region did not caused the overnight disappearance of the entire set of mindsets, values and perceptions deeply rooted in the society during the decades of the communist period (Meyer–Neumayr–Traxler–Vandor 2017).

If we would like to establish a chronological hierarchy with the main development phases of the civil society in the former communist countries, we will need to focus on three main stages.

The first stage in the development process of the civil society is represented by a rudimentary approach, characterized by the lack of resources, fragile democratic system, weak local involvement, legislative vacuum and a very small number of badly coordinated entities. This approach was valid in the first decade after the change of the totalitarian regimes (Bernhagen 2007; Federowicz 2005; Ackerman-Rose 2007).

A period of settlement followed, marked by the emergence of new actors and representatives of the civil society, using external expertise and resources (Péterfi 2009).

The last stage, is represented by a certain institutional expansion and consolidation of the civil society in South Eastern Europe. We can observe a network of entities built on a sustainable structure, covering more and more areas and fields of activity (Kákai 2009).

Still, the most critical aspect of the civil society in the former communist countries is represented by lack of power and impact over the politics and political leadership. In these terms the most important need in this case is the creation of a significantly larger group of organizations capable of forming the core of such a critical mass (Todorova 2018; Trajkovski 1999).

Beyond the deficiencies but also the successes and failures of the civil society throughout the three decades of democracy, it can be said that it has evolved meanderingly, following a similar trajectory to the South-East European society as a whole (Klekovski–Nuredinoska–Stojanova 2010; Kondonis 2002).

Theory and hypotheses of this study

As seen earlier, a large body of research focuses on civil society development in general, and specifically in Central and Eastern Europe. Besides, prior work has also dealt with the specific context of North Macedonia, and in this direction the existence of civil society (Trajkovski 1999; UNDP 1999; Conces 2007; Dimova 2012; Gaber-Damjanovska 2007; Grodeland 2006; Klekovski–Nuredinoska–Stojanova 2010; Spaskovska 2012; MCIC 2006; Mungiu-Pippidi 2005), the civil society development (Hummel 2020; Stefanovski 2016; Balkan Civil Society Development Network 2012; USAID 2010; Sotiropoulos 2005; Stefanovski 2016) and how the local civil society has interacted with international factors (Todorova 2018; Kondonis 2002; Christopoulou–Roumeliotou 2006; Grimm–Mathis 2015). The large body of research focuses also on civil society development in specific contexts such as post-communism or transition like that of North Macedonia (Harris–Roffiaen–Moro 2006; Green 2002).

In discussions of the potential effects of civil society's role, prior studies mostly employ the theses of democratisation in North Macedonia's or similar contexts (Börzel 2010; Cekik 2017; Hristova–Cekik 2015; Mavrikos–Adamou 2010). Building on democratisation thesis, the civil society can be expected to have a positive role in democratisation efforts (Draško–Fiket–Vasiljević 2020; Fotev 2006; Grodeland 2008; Pollozhani 2016) and in overcoming the disputes because it is expected that they help the society heal the wounds and clear paths for needed changes in the societies such as North Macedonia (Lyon 2015; Kroupa–Štogr 2006; Chaney 2017; Dyrstad–Buhaug–Ringdal–Simkus–Listhaug 2011; Koneska 2017).

The theoretical framework of this study builds on the assumption that the civil society exercises leverage over the societies by virtue of being parts and guides to the societies. For the civil society, overcoming disputes is a major priority. Since overcoming disputes strengthen civil society's role in the political reforms and changes, efforts to overcome disputes are expected to motivate the civil society support the proposed solutions. Thus, it is expected that: „Civil society having an important role in the societal change and aware of the need for dialogue, are likely to support and champion the reforms, changes and solutions and support the efforts to reach the conflict resolution agreements" (H1).

This role is expected due to the benefits that the civil society have seen in their work from the support of the international donors that have supported the attempts to end the disputes. Also, ending disputes opens the space for civil society engagement in various fields. Yet alternative domestic political actors may be prepared to compensate for the absence of the civil society's role. Past studies have demonstrated that often in North Macedonia the politics has been more progressive than civil society despite the expectations for the contrary (Willemsen 2006; USAID 2021; Risteska 2013; Reka 2011; Piacentini 2019). In North Macedonia, the politics is the main source of power and influence. While civil society is expected to leverage its influence, they can no longer be the only source of change.

Other actors such as politics may serve as alternative facilitator of the change and it can undermine the role and impact of the agreements on the civil society. The politics may therefore pose competition to the civil society by serving as an alternative for change and preventing the opportunity for agreements to positively impact on the work of the civil society. Therefore, it is expected that: „The more powerful politics is present in a society, the less positive effect of the conflict resolution agreements on the work of civil society" (H2).

H1 thus establishes the expectations for the role of the civil society in conflict resolution, while H2 evaluates how the civil society's role might change depending on the power of the politics.

Method and data

The data analysed in this paper consist of study of the role of the civil society of North Macedonia as regards the three specific cases of 2001 OFA, 2018 Prespa Agreement with Greece, and 2017 Agreement and 2022 Protocol with Bulgaria. The research covers mainly the period from 2001 to 2022, but also brief consideration is given to the legacy of 1990s.

The dependent variable is change in the role of civil society, which captures the change in North Macedonia's civil society community. This study captures the extent to which civil society respected the resolution of this disputes and whether it was in turn affected by the agreements overcoming the disputes in question.

We studied the data of developments and events as well as survey results that point to the civil society's role concerning the three agreements. These data, were complemented by discourse analysis by capturing relevant statements and press releases made by the civil society concerning the three agreements.

Findings

Ending domestic inter-ethnic dispute: 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA)

The means used and goals attained in North Macedonia, from February 2001 when sporadic inter-ethnic violence erupted in the country, to the negotiation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and its adoption in August 2001, to the Agreement's implementation, that has lasted number of years, offers opportunity for the evaluation of the role of the civil society and the impact that the Agreement has had on civil society in turn. The Agreement was agreed by the national political actors and broken with the mediation of the international special representatives of the EU and the USA (Chivvis 2008). While the civil society played a limited role in the discussions, it has had increased role in the implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes envisaged in the Agreement with the aim to

meet the grievances of the ethnic Albanian and other minority groups. Also, the impact of the Agreement itself on the civil society was extensive. The Agreement thus for the sake of this paper provides a framework against which the progress of the country's civil society development and situation can be measured.

The position of the ethnic Albanians and of other smaller ethnic communities in North Macedonia following its independence in 1991 was that as citizens of the country their rights should be on a level with the rights of the ethnic Macedonians, the majority ethnic group. The 1991 constitution guaranteed rights for minorities, but these came under the rights of the majority group (Koppa 2001). Thus, although the country became independent in 1991 without eruption of violence, the decade that followed featured continuous struggle by the political parties, but also by the civil society organisations, while limited in number but mainly led and composed by minority ethnic communities, for more rights. The role of foreign or international civil society organisations as well has been significant in this endeavour.

The peak of this struggle for more rights was the start of the ethnic conflict in February 2001 and that continued until August of the same year, the conflict that led to destruction of thousands of houses, death of hundreds of people, collapse of the functioning of the state institutions, and loss of rule of law in certain parts of the territory (USIP 2001; Rusi 2004; Perry 2001; Koktsidis 2014). With the start of the 2001 conflict, the civil society, both the ethnic and international, were then confronted with the need and challenge how to define the conflict, on the one hand, and how to push for the end of the conflict, on the other. Considering that the conflict was an 'ethnic' one, so was the civil society divided and the society as a whole polarised along the ethnic lines and there were dividing and conflicting perceptions and interpretation of the problem (Ringdal–Simkus–Listhaug 2007; Icevska–Ajdini 2004; Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2003, 2001; Vankovska 2006; Neofotistos 2004). Considering the national civil society organisations encompassing the whole public spectrum was limited in number or did not exist at all then in North Macedonia and that the overall number of civil society groups then was very limited in the country, the ethnic violence that occurred in 2001 further silenced the voice of the civil society. The civil society also had conflicting views on how to define the 2001 conflict and the state itself (USIP 2001; Icevska–Ajdini 2004; Ilievski–Taleski 2009; IWPR. 2001; Borden 2001). Nevertheless, there was a consensus among the existing civil society on the need to end the ethnic violence as soon as possible and to start the discussions on the reform necessities in North Macedonia's governance that would meet the needs of the minority ethnic communities (Milenkovska–Remenski 2016; Karajkov 2008; Engstörm, 2002a, 2002b).

To end the violence and find the resolution to the conflict, a series of talks started in July 2001 between ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian political parties, along with special representatives from the US and the EU. The negotiations started on 5 July 2001 in Ohrid, the south-west of the country, with the parties undertaking commitment for cease fire (Popetrevski–Latifi 2004). The civil society was not present in the Ohrid negotiations, but their expertise was sought during

the discussions. Experts from civil society were engaged by almost each side in the Ohrid talks for the individual needs of the parties to the negotiations (Laity 2007). They would offer the views how to set measures to be implemented in order to rectify those conditions that led to hostilities, fighting, and general unrest leading to paralysation of parts of the country throughout much of 2001. The negotiations ended with the writing of agreement in the form of a framework for constitutional changes and other conflict resolution measures. The agreement was labelled as the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) and was signed on 13 August 2001 in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia.

The OFA negotiations had number of important features for which the civil society propagated strongly during the Ohrid talks and discussions. Firstly, the peace agreement to be agreed should not lead to trusteeship or protectorate by the international community. The OFA ended the 2001 war, but unlike other peace agreements signed in the region of western Balkans following 1991 as in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo, did not lead the country into international protectorate. The changes and reforms envisaged by the OFA were to be implemented by the country's institutions. Secondly, the agreement to be signed, the civil society propagated that it should not be a separate legal document. As such, the OFA did not become a constitution of North Macedonia as it was the case of Dayton Accords for Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ober 2006). The OFA was a framework that would guide the work of country's institutions in providing necessary amendments to the constitution and to laws for enhancing the position of minorities. Thirdly, the civil society insisted that the solution to be sought should provide non-territorial solutions to ethnic problems of North Macedonia. With this, the OFA upheld the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the unitary character of the state. The civil society, both domestic and international, had a role to play in shaping the agreement along these lines (Koneska 2017; Karajkov 2008; USIP 2001).

The text of the OFA itself made an important commitment as regards the civil society of the country. It noted that "This Framework will promote the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society while respecting the ethnic identity and the interests of all Macedonian citizens" (Ohrid Framework Agreement, 2001: 1). Besides, aiming to resolve the conflict and to meet the grievances of Albanian community, mainly, the OFA included provisions that were to lead to important work by the civil society in the definition of the measures and the implementation of these measures (Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2003). The OFA provisions on devolving more powers to the local municipalities, more representation of minority representatives in the state administration, education, use of minority languages in the state institutions, police reform, protection of the minorities from being overruled by the majorities in the areas important for the minorities, educational rights, and other provisions for expressing the minority identity, established a basis and opened new spaces for the work of the civil society in the country. The OFA as a document that was later incorporated into the country's constitution and

laws, needed some serious work and commitment to become more than a mere promise. It was a challenge for the society to form a clear vision as to how domestic structures can deal with the demands of the OFA. With the OFA, framework was there, what it needed was ways for its practical realisation, a part which was taken care by the civil society (Lyon 2015). The OFA as a conflict resolution tool was a new business for the whole civil society in the country and it took part in supporting the implementation of the OFA.

Besides, ownership and its acceptance by the wider society through the work of the civil society was the key of this endeavour as the implementation of the OFA led to some genuine compromises in the Macedonian state and governance. Strengthened inter-ethnic relations has been an area among the challenges that the country has had to improve. North Macedonia is in fact a clear example where there is lack of common identity among its constituent ethnic and national groups (USIP 2001). Thus, the way ahead for the country has been building the civil society that is critical in circumstances like that where several nationalities have to coexist within one state framework (Spaskovska 2012). Civil society structures that transcend nations and overcome nationalism have been building block of this effort. In this context, civil society institutions, as a whole, could play a bridging function as they could facilitate the respect for differences on the ground. In this context, the civil society played a key role in building public support for meeting the demands of the minorities and providing sustainability of the undertaken changes, and in building confidence among the country's ethnic groups as the inter-ethnic trust was damaged with the hostilities of 2001 (USIP 2001). The civil society served as an overall driver of ethnic reconciliation and democratic consolidation. Giving confidence back to state institutions rather than to para-structures, triggered a process in facilitating the smooth political transition of the country from conflict-ridden weak state, to functioning democratic polity.

The OFA itself and start of its implementation became a critical juncture for further development and enhancement of the role of the civil society in the country. The civil society was needed for its support in the implementation of the OFA provisions and for this purpose, the international community allocated substantial funds for the civil society projects (Grimm–Mathis 2015). This led to the establishment of hundreds of new non-governmental organisations or NGOs, as the civil society are labelled and known in the country, their institutionalisation, internationalisation and consolidation (Nuredinoska–Evans 2010), although number of them could not survive the competition. The international financial support established incentives to civil society that put them become an important pillar in the policy making processes of North Macedonia (Risteska 2013). Ever closer contacts and the transnational networks established among the national and international civil society organisations provided an important channel for socialization of the civil society elite of North Macedonia. What the country experienced after 2001 was process of extensive civil society building on a scale unprecedented in the country's history and moving in the direction that led the country from non-existence

of civil society (Hislope 2003), to formative years of civil society development seen in late 1990s and early 2000s (Buzhar 2004; Kacarska 2008), into the track of contemporary modern society with presence of a significant voice of the civil society in policy making processes of the country (Stefanovski 2016; Balkan Civil Society Development Network 2012; USAID 2021; Government of North Macedonia 2021).

Means used with the negotiation of OFA and its implementation, which broadly speaking are a perspective and commitment for civil society building, international financial support programmes to the civil society, and opening the public space for a public role of the civil society were key benchmarks in the civil society's role in conflict resolution in North Macedonia. Thus, while the civil society's role in shaping the conflict resolution of North Macedonia was limited considering its then weakness, its role in the implementation of the conflict resolution provisions and measures of the OFA was significant and the OFA has had extensive impact on the development of North Macedonia's civil society. As such, the OFA remains an important framework upon which a success of North Macedonia's civil society in keeping the peace and promoting reconciliation in the country is measured. Thus, the case of OFA, suggests that while the role of civil society in negotiations of the conflict resolution agreement can be limited, it can play a significant role in the implementation of the conflict resolution accords and in helping the society accept the accord. In turn, the civil society itself becomes boosted and transformed with the conflict resolution accord.

Ending name dispute: 2018 Prespa agreement with Greece

The Prespa agreement has effectively ended the name dispute between Greece and North Macedonia. This issue has strained the bilateral relations between the two neighbors for decades. Also, blocked North Macedonia in its aspirations towards the European integration. Through this resolution new opportunities were settled down; new partnership positions and new cooperation guidelines were opened between North Macedonia and its neighbors.

Despite the fact that in certain fields and societal groups the agreement still represents a sensitive topic. Despite the fact that recent unfavorable outcomes effected the European integration process, Prespa agreement is still seen as a step forward of North Macedonia towards the EU.

Based on the achieved results we can consider the Prespa agreement as a real game-changer for the entire region which demonstrates the transforming force and modernizing dynamics of the enlargement policy, a process that contributes to the stability and prosperity of Europe and its neighborhood.

With four years after signing the agreement, we can consider it an important achievement, a success recorded by the Republic of North Macedonia in its European and Euro-Atlantic course. This success appears due to the perseverance and firm political will of the Macedonian political leadership, supported by the

civil society, which expressed a clear and firm choice in favor of the community of democratic values established in the EU and NATO.

These affirmations are supported also by the results and data obtained from the surveys conducted at the level of North Macedonian society.

Tabel 1. Perception of the importance of foreign relations in North Macedonia public opinion

Relations with…%	Not important at all + slightly important	quite important + slightly importantt
EU	20	80
Bulgaria	43	57
Greece	41	59

Source: Armakolas, Damjanovski, Siakas 2021:1–5.

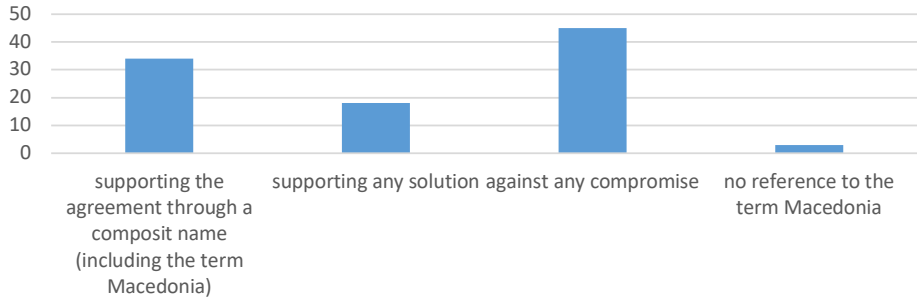
Civil society had a limited role in the negotiation process but it has had an increased role in the implementation of the constitutional and administrative changes envisaged in the agreement. The involvement of the civil society had the aim to solve certain dissatisfaction which appeared in the society. On the other hand, we can say that the impact of the agreement itself on the civil society was extensive.

The public opinion it was and it is still divided regarding the necessity, the impact and the long-term effects of the agreement. According to several surveys conducted at society level we can observe that there is a slim majority between the citizens in supporting the agreement, even though all groups are underlining and acknowledging the benefits of the resolution.

This slim majority is achieved through the percentage of those who supported the compromise without any criteria and those who accepted the compromise only if the name will contain the word Macedonia.

The source of these differences is more emphasized when the perception of the agreement is analyzed from the two main ethnic group point of view. While over half of the ethnic Macedonians are rejecting compromises, based on emotional and identarian implications over the name of the country, almost 80% of the ethnic Albanians would have favored a negotiated solution (Armakolas–Damjanovski–Siakas 2021).

Figure 1. Level of acceptance of the compromise made through the agreement



Source: Armakolas–Damjanovski–Siakas 2021: 9–14.

According to the data given by the surveys, the main benefits generated by the agreement are strengthening peace and stability in the region. The public opinion is generally supportive over this perception. However, more than a third of the population does not share the same sentiment, which underlines and indicates the lack of homogeneity in the society. Also, indicates that institutions from the civil society are still limited to solve certain dysfunctions and tensions (Armakolas–Damjanovski–Siakas 2021).

Tabel 2. The role of the Prespa agreement in strengthening peace and stability in the region

Strongly agree + Somewhat agree	**Neither agree, nor disagree**	**Strongly disagree + Somewhat disagree**
46%	17%	37%

Source: Armakolas–Damjanovski–Siakas 2021: 5–9.

North Macedonia's, relations with the EU continue to be extremely important, especially because the country's position in the regional and international environment is considered weak. This is proven by the fact that even after the latest deadlock in the EU accession negotiations pro-European attitude of the society did not decrease or cut back.

In conclusion we can say that the Prespa agreement places under positive auspices the European course of Republic of North Macedonia and emphasized that this historical and European example of reconciliation constitutes a success story, which represents an example in the region.

Ending language and history dispute: 2017 Good neighbourly agreement and 2022 Protocol with Bulgaria

Identity and cultural relations between Bulgarians and Macedonians are complex and deeply rooted in the specific historical heritage of the Balkan area. The Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom or Yugoslavia in the 20th century have complicated identity constructions in this region.

After the proclamation of independence, the Macedonians tried to reaffirm by all means their characteristic and specific identity elements. At the same time, in Bulgaria there were many supporters of a possible "reunification" of the Macedonian identity. Macedonians are seen as a "product of the political history of the late 19th century" (Sivignon 2099: 121). Moreover, the Serbian Macedonian identity (as distinct from Greek Macedonian and Bulgarian Macedonian) became even more pronounced during the Yugoslav period (Sivignon 2099: 122–123). The Macedonian Republic thus found its place in terms of identity and politics within the Yugoslav Federation. Identity issues are central to the dispute. Bulgaria refuses to recognize the existence of a separate ethnic Macedonian identity and a separate Macedonian language. It demands that the EU avoid using the term "Macedonian language", and instead use the term "Official language of Republic of North Macedonia" (Phillips 2022). It insists that the Macedonian language is a Bulgarian dialect and ethnic Macedonians are a subgroup of the Bulgarian nation (Phillips 2022).

Macedonia and Bulgaria share linguistic and cultural similarities but also hold differing views on their history and language, dating back to the 19th century, when Bulgarian nationalists claimed Ottoman-ruled Macedonia as part of Bulgarian territory (Marusic 2017).

Each country has in the past accused the other of not respecting the rights of its national minority living across the border.

In 2017 Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov signed Bulgarian-Macedonian *Treaty on friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation* in Skopje (European Western Balkans 2017). At the regional and European level, the bilateral treaty may have major implications for Sofia's attempt to join the EU's regional initiatives, which promise (also) economic opportunities, first of all through the Berlin-process (Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa 2017). Both countries will also now say they have no territorial claims against each other. Both countries also pledge to protect the rights of the other country's nationals living on their soil – not to interfere in the other's domestic affairs (Treaty 2017).

The 2017 Friendship Treaty between North Macedonia and Bulgaria called for the establishment of a joint commission on historical and educational issues. But implementation of the Friendship Treaty languished (Phillips 2022). In October 2019, Bulgaria warned that it would block North Macedonia's EU accession unless its "anti-Bulgarian ideology" was addressed. Bulgaria strongly objected to state-supported or tolerated hate speech and minority claims towards Bulgaria. North

Macedonia politicians across the political spectrum rejected the claim that Macedonians and Bulgarians were a single people, divided by Yugoslav policy during the 20th century (Phillips 2022).

Civil society in both countries, despite strong pro-European pressures, was marked by deep national feelings. Often its actions have been marked by identity and political factors that are most often intertwined in civil society in the two Balkan states.

Based on Northern Macedonia's desideratum to integrate into the European Union, civil society pressed for a compromise. At the same time, civil society has been politically used to generate public support for initiatives promoted by political parties.

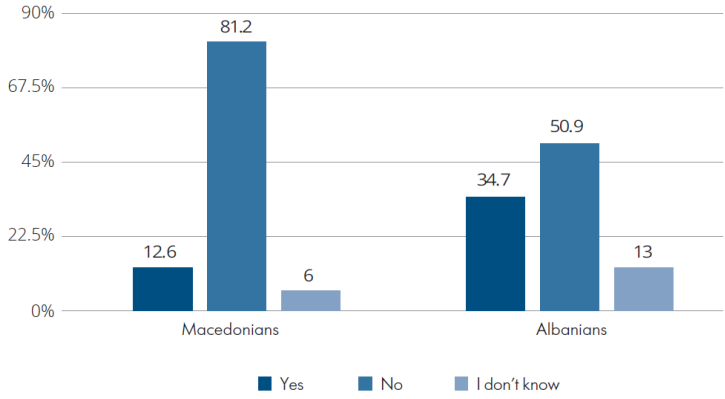
In March 2020, the Council of the EU decided to open the longawaited accession negotiations. And just as the first intergovernmental conference was about to take place, in November 2020, Bulgaria blocked the adoption of the negotiation framework over issues of identity and history. The year 2021 does not bring any progress in the negotiation process. Many of the dialogue initiatives have remained unsupported by civil society, or have been rejected by the authorities in response to proposals from civil society.

The Bulgarian veto was heralded by the lack of progress in bilateral talks. The positions of the authorities of the two countries were often determined by the tendencies expressed in public opinion and civil society in the two countries. The failure to form a stable government in Bulgaria naturally contributed to the continuation/solution of the Bulgarian–Macedonian crisis only partially.[1]

Bulgarian requests took into account:
– revision of the national historical narratives,
– language requirements
– the status of the Bulgarian minority in North Macedonia.

Despite a relative progress with the signing in 2017 of the *Treaty on friendship, good neighbourliness and cooperation* at civil society level, there has been no improvement in the perception of the required compromise in the relationship with Bulgaria. Moreover, on the basis of protracted disputes, public opinion has become less and less supportive of this compromise.

Figure 2. Do you think that North Macedonia should make concessions regarding the historical narrative in order to proceed with the EU integration? (%)

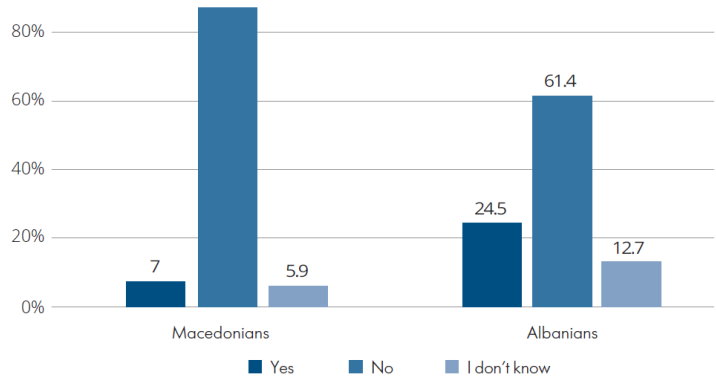


Sourse: Velinovska; Nikolovski–Kirchner 2022: 8

From the data provided by the above-mentioned barometer, it appears that even the Albanian minority does not support a compromise of the historical narrative just for the sake of a compromise towards European integration (34.7% of Albanians and only 12.6% of Macedonians were in favour of a compromise). This despite the fact that among the ethnic Macedonians, the European integration of the country is supported by 63% of the respondents, but a very high number of ethnic Albanians (82%) support North Macedonia's membership in the EU (Damjanovski 2022: 4).

Public opinion and civil society is even less open to compromise regarding the Macedonian language.

Figure 3. Do you think the the North Macedonia should make a concession regarding the language in order to proceed with the EU integration? (%)



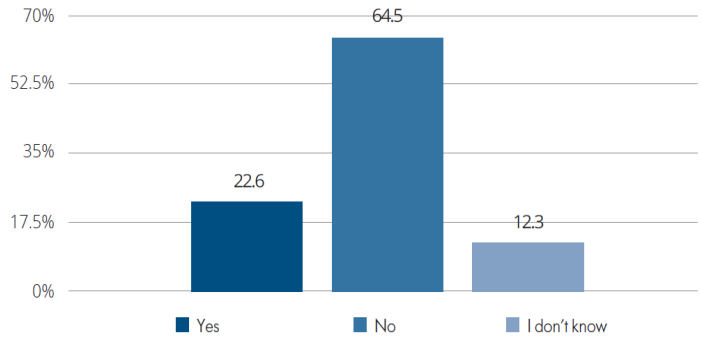
Sourse: Velinovska; Nikolovski–Kirchner 2022: 11

The results show a solid and almost undivided opinion among ethnic Macedonians who, by 86.8%, are not willing to make concessions on their language. A concession of this kind is equally unacceptable for a smaller majority of ethnic Albanians (61.4%) (Velinovska; Nikolovsk–Kirchner 2022: 11).

Another Bulgarian demand is concessions regarding the status of the Bulgarian minority in North Macedonia as a pathway towards lifting the veto.

The responses show that around 64.5% of the surveyed citizens would not agree on meeting this demand. 22.6% agree that this kind of negotiation can be accepted. Compared to the other two demands, historical revision (71%) and language (79%), the results for this question show a slightly lower percentage of 'no' responders (64.5%) (Velinovska; Nikolovski–Kirchner 2022: 13).

Figure 4. Do you think the the North Macedonia should make a concession regarding the status of the Bulgarian minority in North Macedonia in order to proceed with the EU integration? (%)



Sourse: Velinovska; Nikolovski–Kirchner 2022: 13

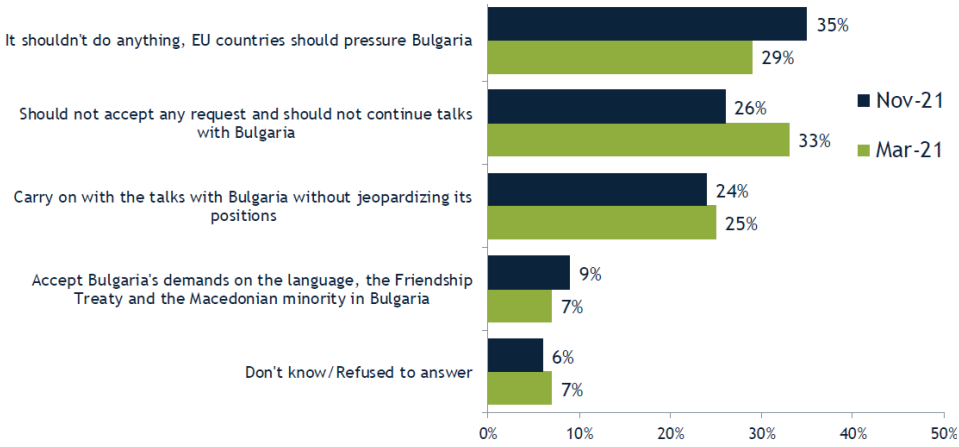
More than two third majority of ethnic Macedonians (73.2%) would not agree on conceding on this requirement, while 15.5% would accept if it benefits the EU accession process. Ethnic Albanians have divided opinions with a lead of those who would not agree on this issue (47.2%), compared to 38% who would agree that North Macedonia should respond positively to this demand (Velinovska–Nikolovski –Kirchner 2022: 14).

Negotiations delayed and the outcome led to a somewhat surprising decision for European public opinion, but also for civil society in North Macedonia: the Bulgarian veto until the settlement of the claims on the three tracks. Bulgaria was thus reconfirmed in the eyes of civil society, of Macedonian society in general, by its status as a state that poses a threat to North Macedonia, as identified by the Macedonian population. No less than 46% of Macedonian citizens who indicated a threat state for North Macedonia chose towards Bulgaria (Armakolas–Damjanovski –Siakas 2021: 4).

During 2021, public opinion and civil society in North Macedonia were questioned on several occasions about the direction the Macedonian state should take

in its relations with Bulgaria. We offer such a picture reflected in the analysis made by the Center for Insights in Survey Research.

Figure 5. Bulgaria recently vetoed the start of North Macedonia's negotiantions with the EU. In your opinion, what should North Macedonia do in its relations with Bulgaria in order to unblock the negociations?



Source: Center for Insights in Survey Research 2021: 60

In the end, after further rounds of negotiations and under the pressure of the EU, which wanted to give a clear signal of integration to the Western Balkans, Bulgaria's veto was lifted after mediation by the French presidency of the Council of the EU. The solution was a bitter compromise for North Macedonia, as the opinions expressed by civil society would show. The grievances were clear, but the compromise was necessary. Thus, with the vote of the parliament in Skopje on 16 July 2022 and the signing of the agreement between the two sides in Sofia a day later, the agreement enabled the formal opening of negotiations on the accession of Northern Macedonia to the EU, officially announced in a communiqué of the Council of the EU on 19 July 2022 (Council of the EU, 2022).

After long delays, accession negotiations were opened with an unpopular compromise that could escalate a political crisis in the small Balkan state. Violent protests against the French proposal continued in the first half of July 2022. Opposition parties used civil society platforms and used civil society to achieve their political goals. At the same time, the platforms of opposition political parties have been important vehicles for the weak civil society in North Macedonia. This new episode highlights once again the difficulties in the democratisation process of the Balkan states, the weak development and the interdependence of civil society and political actors.

Results and discussion

The case study of North Macedonia with particular consideration of the role of civil society in the three major disputes and the agreements ending these disputes, including OFA, Prespa and Bulgaria treaties, help us to test the first hypothesis. The results of this study only partially confirm H1, which assumes that disputes that inflict a society with political, economic and social difficulties have an effect in pushing the civil society to be engaged in ending the disputes. While the research results show that conflicts are positively associated with opening new horizons for work of civil society, contrary to H1, the civil society can be implicated in the debates that have divided and polarized the society in conflict. While the civil society can provide its inputs to the negotiations held in ending the conflicts, it is not a major party in the negotiation table. Nevertheless, the civil society becomes an important partner or party when it comes to the implementation of the agreements ending the conflicts. Their support and role become indispensable in realizing the provisions of the agreements in practice.

The second hypothesis that assumes the ability of the politics to undermine the role of the civil society is not confirmed. The civil society is likely to improve its role even when the politics as an alternative source of change is strong. Thus, the resolution of the disputes is likely to stimulate more civil society work and role. Despite the relative power of politics, the resolution of disputes can have unintended positive effect on the situation of civil society. The results presented in this study suggest that almost all the major dispute resolution agreements signed by the authorities of North Macedonia can give a role and can positively affect a country's civil society community.

In sum, this research shows that while the civil society can be unprepared in the beginning and in the duration of the dispute and while it can lag behind the relative power of politics, it can have a major role in implementing and in owning the agreements by the wider society and in becoming strengthened following the implementation of the agreements. The case of North Macedonia illustrates the positive unintended impact of conflict resolution agreements on the role of civil society in the presence of a relatively powerful actors of politics. The civil society is capable of promptly filling the vacuum established with the end of the conflicts and provide the wider public with a vision for a new era following the end of conflicts.

The evidence presented in this study is restricted to a single country, which limits the generalizability of the findings summarized above. But similar results may be found in contexts that come close to North Macedonia, in particular in places where the population is multi-ethnic and where the civil society is in strong competition with politics. Therefore, future research can attempt to test this study's arguments in other countries.

Conclusions

The fall of communism and the disintegration of Yugoslavia have amplified in a first stage the process of identity emancipation and the emergence of new cleavages in the Balkans. After the armed conflicts that followed the initial proclamation of independence in several of these countries, a period of consolidation came, along with European integration as well as cooperation and reconciliation efforts. Independence brought political freedom but at the same time increased economic insecurity as the state sector declined.

The gradual resolution of these conflicts has relieved the public sphere from excessive ethnic nationalistic discussions, which has been conducive to the emergence of civic identities and, with the further rapprochement to Europe, offering the prospect of European non-ethnic identities. Ethnicity remains important, but no longer holds monopoly in the definition of Western Balkan identities. Since the domestic and foreign policy context has changed, ethnicity is no longer the sole political identity dominating the Western Balkan societies, and especially not the North Macedonian.

Northern Macedonia has proven to be one of the examples of states that have more or less implemented a political system of consociationalism (McCrudden 2006). This process was supported and proven by facts. North Macedonia, faced three rounds of internal and external disputes, and in order to overcome these, it signed three major agreements (Brie–Jusufi–Polgár 2021).

Before the European integration process started for North Macedonia, the role and the participation of civil society has not been an area of interest for political decision-makers. This changed with a rising interest in the democratic credentials of the European Union.

North Macedonia, specifically, is a good testing ground for analysing the impact of civil society on conflict resolution promotion efforts for various reasons. First, North Macedonia has been home for major disputes and efforts to overcome these disputes. Second, the civil society is much more attentive to the conflict situations. Therefore, if a role by civil society is expected in conflict resolution, this is likely to be detected in the Western Balkan neighbourhood, where the societies themselves and international actors have actively sought resolution of conflictual disputes.

The current stage of the civil society in North Macedonia can be marked as the new civil society, as the circle has moved from generalist to specialized organizations and where the newly established organisations are led by the new generation of young leaders of the country. Nevertheless, the main problem of the civil society in North Macedonia remains the absence of the critical mass, needed to become a serious actor at either national or local level.

In order to reach this desirable we consider that it's a must to follow and use good practices from the European member states. One of the key steps are concerning the improvement of the relations between civil society and the media.

Another good way to speed up progress toward critical mass would be the establishment of a larger group of organisations, capable to exercise a higher impact on the socio-political environment.

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Note

[1] The fifth round of parliamentary elections in the last 18 months, held on 2 October 2022, again failed to produce a stable majority (Euronews 2022).

Fotó/István Péter Németh

PERCEPTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NAGORNO–KARABAKH CONFLICT

Mircea Brie–Ana Maria Costea–Laurențiu Petrila

Introduction and methodology

Armenia and Azerbaijan, two states with a different historical and cultural-identity heritage, have developed hostile neighborly relations. Geographically and geopolitically, Armenia and Azerbaijan are located in the South Caucasus region or the Transcaucasia region, as it is often called. Transcaucasia is a geopolitical region located on the border between Eastern Europe and Southwest Asia, (Mulvey, 2000) in the southern part of the Caucasus Mountains, stretching from the southern border of Russia to Türkiye, including the territories of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

This paper *aims* to be a contextual, conceptual and factual analysis of the complicated relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and what are the main perceptions of civil society in these countries in the context of the conflict in Nagorno–Karabakh.

One of our *research hypotheses* is represented by the fact that the civil society in both countries is not developed enough to have a decisive role in the context of the complicated conflict in Nagorno–Karabakh. A second hypothesis that we want to test starts from the idea that underdeveloped civil society is still closely linked to political actors and responds to political impulses.

The main *research questions* raised are: Q1. Is there a developed civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan to influence the conflict resolution? Q2. Is there a developed civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan to influence the geopolitical direc-

tions of these countries? Q3. What is the perceptions of civil society from Armenia and Azerbaijan?

The *levels of analysis* we propose from a methodological perspective include: a. the conceptualization of civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan; b. geopolitical contextualization; c. analysis of the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict and the complicated bilateral relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan; d. analysis of perceptions about civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan from the perspective of the EaP Index.

The importance of the paper resides in the fact that civil society is one of the most important indicators of a democratic society (Popescu et al. 2022). To go even further, we could say that without a civil society, we do not have a democracy (Popovenciuc 2022: 26). From this point of view, we will analyse the civil societies from Armenia and Azerbaijan for the period of 2011–2022 with a special emphasis on the year of 2020 when the Nagorno–Karabakh war erupted and the period of 2021–2022 in order to analyse how the civil society reacted to the events, which were the perceptions of the general public and how the CSOs got involved in the conflict resolution.

In order to make a comprehensive analysis we started from 2011 the first year when the European Commission released the European Integration Index for the Eastern Partnership states. We will pay a closer attention on the Management dimension, Participation of civil society category for each state having the purpose of developing a longitudinal analysis regarding the development and implication of the CSOs from each state. After 2015, when the Index was changed into the Eastern Partnership Index, the civil society became an inter-sectorial category. Hence we will analyse the periods of 2015–2016, 2017 and 2020–2021 by taking into consideration six sub-categories under the Approximation domain: Democratic rights and elections, State accountability, Independent media, Freedom of opinion and expression, Freedom of assembly and association, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination and Public administration. There was no available data for the 2018–2019 period of time, but, since the topic of the paper is concentrating on the September-November 2020 and afterwards, this limitation should not affect to a large extend our findings.

Beyond the EaP Index, we will analyse the Freedom House's Freedom of the World 2021 and 2022 Reports, the USAID 2020, 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Indexes and other qualitative researches in order to have a comprehensive view over the impact that the war had over the development of civil societies.

Conceptual analysis. Literature review

Definitions and concepts

When we talk about building a democratic society, we must call for the time that this civic building requires. We can even say that this is a continuous process of searching for social and civil balance between the interests of different actors in public life. But what is certain is that the first step in establishing a functioning democracy is strengthening democratic institutions and mechanisms. Perhaps the most important regulatory mechanism for democratic societies is represented by civil society (Zakota–Németh: 2022).

Civil society at large refers to all forms of social action undertaken by individuals or groups of individuals that are not connected to or managed by state authorities. A civil society organization is an organizational structure that has members that serve the general interest through a democratic process and that has a role as a mediator (sometimes as n amender of policies and or actions) between public authorities and citizens.

The fundamental documents of the European Union appeal to civil society in the articles of the Treaties: Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union recognizes the role of civil society in the good governance of the European Union (EU), and Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union emphasizes the need for the EU to maintain an open, transparent and constant dialogue with civil society organisations, for example when preparing proposals for EU legislation. Examples of such organizations include: social partners (trade unions and employers' groups); non-governmental organizations (e.g. for environmental and consumer protection); local organizations (e.g. youth and family groups). The European Economic and Social Committee represents workers' and employers' organizations at EU level and has a vital role in the EU's legislative process. The sectoral social dialogue committees are established to further involve the social partners in the decision-making process (EUR–Lex 2022).

Civil society institutions are needed not only in countries where democracy is being built, but also in those with a strong democratic tradition. These are necessary in the long term. Often, the interests of political and economic actors, such as party and business interests, intertwine and act against the public interest, so civil society remains important. In such situations, in order to correct the malfunctions, other institutions are needed, which are not part of the social-political subsystem, nor of the economic subsystem. Civil society's reactions to administrative, economic, social and other policies that contradict its interests are varied: demonstrations, press campaigns, protests, etc. Since such actions are difficult to organize and often have only a short-term impact, it is necessary to create some kind of structures parallel to those of the state. They must work with the structures involved in the management of society to find the right solutions and to continuously improve the quality of social life. Civil society must be involved in a

wide range of issues such as central and local governance, international relations, economic development, social and public health issues or environmental protection (Zakota–Németh: 2022) and why not as and in the present case in managing a conflict.

Because there has been a strong correlation between the origin of this conflict and the peace process, there is a concerted effort to increase conflict-sensitive research in the fields of sociology, anthropology, social psychology, political science, and history, as well as the applied fields of international development and journalism, can produce a breadth of knowledge and more experts that are able to contribute to the transformation.

Conflict is of many kinds, but beyond the great global military conflicts, history has shown us that after diplomatic conflicts or even next to them, there are ethnic conflicts. Ethnic conflicts are loaded with so much subjectivity that even neutral moderators cannot handle the situation very well. Ethnic conflict is a form of conflict in which the objectives of at least one party are defined in eminently ethnic terms. In this situation, the conflict and its antecedents and even possible solutions are perceived only in ethnic ways. Paradoxically, or perhaps not, ethnic conflict itself is usually not related to ethnic differences but to perceptions of ethnicity's perspective on political, economic, social, cultural and often territorial issues (Britanica).

Literature review

Perhaps we are talking about one of the most critical disputes in the long-standing post-Soviet space when we talk about the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. While this issue has long been seen as more of a territorial dispute – to a large extent, it can also be argued to be a conflict of ethnic identity. However, the negotiations carried out by the Minsk Group on the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, which were initiated within the OSCE, did not yield any results. In this context, the process of solving the problem through negotiations has failed. This opened the way for extraordinary measures to be taken to reach a solution. The final military confrontation experienced in 2020 was also specifically triggered by this approach (Kurt–Tüysüzoğlu: 2022).

The scientific literature on the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, has been written mostly in the last decades by scholars, journalists (https://romania.europalibera: 2020), and policymakers who are usually of Armenian or Azerbaijani origin. All the mainstream from Armenian and Azerbaijani media, both in the region and diaspora, also represent this trend. What unites this Bibliography is the fact that it focuses on legitimizing the position of one side and disregards even the most basic needs and interests of the other side.

Both Armenian and Azerbaijani authors have very similar approaches to the conflict: every positive feature is attributed to their side and every negative feature

to the other. The conflict is seen from an adversarial point of view. The Armenian side (Papazian, 2008) usually blames Azerbaijani and the Azerbaijani side (Shamkhal et al. 2016) blames Armenian for the failure of the peace process. They are united in their critique of the international community's inability to deliver a just solution, the Armenian version of which, obviously, is the opposite of the Azerbaijani one.

Another trend in the literature includes authors who tend to take a neutral or objective stance, and also look at the conflict from a zero-sum point of view (Chitadze, 2016; German, 2012; Gamaghelyan et al. 2021; Cheterian, 2018; Diyarbakirlioğlu, 2020). What unites these authors, however, and what differentiates them from others, is that they focus on the development of a long-term peace process that could transform the relations between the societies and make sustainable coexistence of Azerbaijanis and the Armenians possible. Many mention that accepting the other's grievances with as legitimate is an important first step in looking for a solution and that lasting peace requires reconciliation between the societies, not only among politicians and elites. Some emphasize the central role of identity in the perpetuation of the conflict. All of them stress the necessity of involving civil societies in the peace process (Kopecek et al. 2016; Caspersen, 2012).

In the happy event that Armenian and Azeri negotiators ever reach an agreement on the future status of Nagorno–Karabakh, it is worth noting that this would not necessarily resolve the conflict as any peace treaty would require the agreement of the Karabakh Armenians, whose political representatives are currently excluded from the peace negotiations. It is almost impossible to conceive of Karabakh Armenians agreeing to such a treaty without a change in their perception of Azeris. According to the theory of conflict transformation and subsequent peacebuilding, civil society in Nagorno–Karabakh should be an integral part of this change (Kopecek et al. 2016).

However, the discussion of identity, and identity-based conflict resolution, has been virtually nonexistent until recently.

It should be noted that the conflict remained latent for more than 20 years, and the political systems of the countries involved in the conflict have always adapted to the situation. Conflict is often used by political leaders to legitimize their power, consolidate their support, and marginalize their opponents and thus neutralize democratization pressures. Under these conditions, conflict transformation approaches are considered a necessary means to deal with conflict. Given that political elites have little motivation to implement such a transformation, civil society actors are increasingly coming to the fore. Thus, only through multiple initiatives supported by civil society actors, the practices of transforming conflicts towards peace can advance and, subsequently, bring good coexistence in the region (Ayunts et al. 2016).

It is no surprise, therefore, that identity matters as well as all other nonpolitical components of the conflict have not been addressed in the negotiations to date. Research on identity and its influence on the Armenian Azerbaijani conflict, the role of civil society, on collective memory and transmitted trauma and other

factors is growing – our study can be included in this category. Various experts increasingly approach the resolution of the conflict less as an outcome and more as a process. This process requires a long-term vision and commitment and a comprehensive understanding of all the underlying needs and factors, not only the political ones. It must involve continuous assessment and reassessment of the ever-changing context, political and economic factors and identity needs.

In all this context, the risk of escalation of the conflict remains an open one, and the need for external mediation remains a pressing need. Under these conditions, such a conflict would destabilize the South Caucasus region, affecting oil and gas exports from Azerbaijan – which produces approximately eight hundred thousand barrels of oil per day – to Central Asia and Europe. We note that Russia has pledged by treaty to defend Armenia in case of military escalation, but at the same time Türkiye has pledged to support Azerbaijan. So the vocal support of the United States for Armenia in recent years, along with Russia's current involvement in the war in Ukraine, could produce realistic premises for the resumption of the conflict and could further complicate efforts to ensure peace in the region. Given the reduced capacity of the United States and Russia to serve as honest brokers, the European Union, led by European Council President Charles Michel, assumed a more active mediation role in 2022 (Global Conflict Tracker).

The geopolitical context

The relationships in the Causational space were complicated throughout the 20th century. The Ottoman legacy highlighted the complex relationships between the peoples and religious communities of this region. The Soviet Union not only did not solve these but aggravated the mistrust between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the independence of these states led to even more violent conflicts in the Nagorno–Karabakh region, which proclaimed itself a republic on 28 December 1991.

Armenia's geographical position (hard border with Azerbaijan and Türkiye) has contributed to the fact that the country has a concept of complementarity in foreign policy. This concept is an attempt to balance specific interests, and on the other hand the lack of a concrete position in the direction of foreign policy. Armenia, with its interest and desire to cooperate with the EU in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), has also maintained its openness to Russia (Brie–Goreainov 2021: 249). When Armenia began negotiations on an Association Agreement with the EU in 2010–2012, Russia suddenly raised the price of Russian gas exports to Armenia and signed a contract with the Baku authorities for the supply of Russian weapons. Armenia was thus put under pressure to make another geopolitical option (Brie–Goreainov 2021: 249).

Armenia joined the Eurasian Customs Union, and later the Eurasian Union, but at the same time it showed interest in the PaE. In this way, Armenia used the con-

cept of diversification in the economic field and in foreign policy. Thus, due to its geographical position, Armenia is forced to have a policy based on the principle of complementarity and balance between Moscow's ambitions and EU interests.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan, having valuable oil resources, was more independent in managing its foreign policy. Majority Muslim, this country has developed special relations with the Islamic world. At the same time, he tried to break away from the model of Islamic states and to give the state a strong secular character under the influence of Western culture. *„Its position at the intersection of West and East has allowed Azerbaijan to develop a symbiosis of the values of both cultures"* (Gerasymchuk–Matiychyk–Nantoi–Platon 2013: 29).

The harsh geopolitical realities of the Caucasus, where Azerbaijan has strained relations with Armenia and cordial relations with Georgia, have led to a westward orientation of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has an interest in working with the EU within the EaP and in finding a way out of its problematic relationship with its neighbours. Its interest is therefore linked to cooperation with the EU, without any additional ambition of an integrative nature. This reality was increasingly understood over the period of 13 years of the EaP by the EU, which offered the possibility to deepen relations in the bilateral field depending on the specific level of ambition. The level of ambition in the EU relationship was even more complicated in the context of the Russian aggression in Ukraine after February 2022. As a result of the European sanctions imposed on Russian oil and the need to diversify gas sources, the EU has shown itself to be more and more friendly and open to collaborate economic and political with the state of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan took advantage by signing new energy export agreements on the European market.

Given the geographical position, the blockade and the policy of isolation from Türkiye and Azerbaijan, the development of relations with neighbours such as Georgia and Iran is of particular importance to Armenia. Economic cooperation between Georgia and Armenia largely includes the transit of goods from Russia to Armenia and vice versa, passing through the territory of Georgia. However, Georgia is not a strategic partner for Armenia. Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and a strategic partner of Russia, and Georgia in its turn aims to get closer to the EU, NATO and has a strategic partnership with Türkiye and Azerbaijan (CRS Report for Congress, 2010; Goreainov–Brie 2021: 233–234). In this sense, the political visions of these two countries are different.

Geopolitically, Azerbaijan has built a foreign policy based on the logic of a diplomatic oscillation between Russia and the EU, but also between Iran, the USA and Türkiye.

Azerbaijan pays special attention to bilateral relations with foreign states, including neighbouring states. In this sense, Azerbaijan's relations with Türkiye, which is also a strategic partner, are special and very important. Türkiye was the first country to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan and has so far provided support in various fields. It is very important for Azerbaijan that the

Turkish side has always supported its position in the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict. Between these two countries there are close relations of economic and energy cooperation (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 235).

Given the earlier conflict with Armenia over the Nagorno–Karabakh region, Azerbaijan was forced to move even closer to Türkiye, to which it felt close in terms of the mutual sympathies inherited from the common Islamic culture and religion. The two states signed the Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Mutual Support in 2010. Türkiye, by this treaty, undertakes to support the Azerbaijanis by any means, including the military (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 235).

The proximity to Türkiye also facilitated some openness to the United States. Russia's military cooperation and geopolitical common position with Iran have led Azerbaijan to further strengthen relations with Türkiye as a strategic ally (Gerasymchuk–Matiychyk–Nantoi–Platon 2013: 29; Goreainov–Brie 2021: 235).

Türkiye, together with Italy and the Russian Federation, are Azerbaijan's main trading partners (CRS Report for Congress, 2010). Important pipelines pass through the territory of Türkiye, through which Azerbaijan gas and oil are delivered to Europe. Cooperation with Türkiye is also very close in the military. To this end, Türkiye is providing financial assistance to Azerbaijan in the sphere of defence (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 235).

An important direction of Azerbaijan's foreign policy represents bilateral relations with Iran. Contemporary bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Iran are not simple, but they are developing quite intensively, even if there are several problems. It should be mentioned that in Iran there is the large Azerbaijani diaspora, about 16 million Azerbaijanis (Souleimanov–Kraus, 2017: 11). Thus, almost 16% of Iran's population constitutes of ethnic Azerbaijanis. Although Iran has close cooperation with Armenia, the country officially supports the Azerbaijani side in the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 235).

Nagorno–Karabakh conflict and Armenia's bilateral relations with Azerbaijan

Armenia and Azerbaijan do not have any kind of official diplomatic relations (Bilateral Relations). Armenian-Azerbaijani relations are the main problematic direction in the foreign policy of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Legally, diplomatic relations are missing, the two neighboring states are neither at peace nor at war, they have no commercial and economic relations.

The Nagorno–Karabakh region is an enclave within Azerbaijan. In 1989, the population of the region was about 189,000, of which 76.9% were Armenians and 21.5% Azerbaijanis, and the rest were Russians, Ukrainians and others (Băhnăreanu, 2016: 10). Armenia considers Nagorno–Karabakh to be a part of historical Armenia (Avakian, 2015: 8). In 1988, ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno–Karabakh demanded the transfer of what was then the Nagorno–Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) from Soviet Azerbaijan to Armenia (The Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, 2023).

On December 28, 1991, Nagorno–Karabakh proclaimed itself a republic, and in the subsequent period it fought for independence with the new state of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani side did not accept the declaration, unlike Armenia, and imposed direct presidential control over the enclave. As a result, heavy fighting broke out between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces. The conflict has allowed Karabakh-Armenian forces to regain control of Nagorno–Karabakh, leaving Azerbaijan with about 15% less territory (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 236). Thus, by Geographically and geopolitically, Armenia and Azerbaijan are located, according to some data, more than 30,000 people had been killed and more than one million displaced. In May 1994, Russia mediated the conflict and the two states agreed to sign an armistice accepted by the Nagorno–Karabakh army commander (the agreement was officially signed on July 27, 1994). (CRS Report for Congress, 2010).

The conflict between the two countries escalated in July 2020. Armenia and Azerbaijan have made mutual allegations of ceasefire violations. On September 27, 2020, military actions between the Armenian and Azerbaijani forces were resumed, which continued until November 10, 2020, and several thousand people were killed on both sides. Armenia was the first to declare a state of war, followed by Azerbaijan, but in the latter it was done so only in certain parts of the country. The two states blame each other for this serious deterioration of the situation (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 237)

The Nagorno–Karabakh conflict is of particular importance to the Russian Federation and Türkiye. Armenia's traditional ally in this conflict is Russia. Moscow and Yerevan are very close. Both peoples are closely connected, including through the Orthodox Christian faith. In fact, Armenia is one of the former Soviet republics that are loyal to Russia. Both are part of the Eurasian Economic Union. The two countries are also military partners. Russia has a base in Gyumri, Armenia, and Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a post-Soviet military alliance. However, in the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, Moscow does not position itself as an ally of Armenia, but as a mediator within the OSCE (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 236).

Azerbaijan and Armenia signed an agreement under Russian auspices to end hostilities in the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict, which marks Azerbaijan's military victories after six weeks of fighting. Following a 10 November 2020 tripartite agreement backed by Russia, Azerbaijan regained control over large parts of the self-proclaimed republic, successfully cutting its ties with Armenia. According to the terms of the ceasefire agreement, the so-called Lachin corridor remained the only road connecting Nagorno–Karabakh with Armenia, the security of which was to be provided by the Russian peacekeeping contingent (Amnesty International 2023).

Azerbaijan has also called on Armenian forces to hand over some areas it owns outside the Nagorno–Karabakh border, including the eastern district of Agdam and the western part of Kalbajar (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 237–238). Armenians will also lose the region of Lachin, where a crucial road connects Nagorno–Karabakh with Armenia, leaving more than 6,500 dead. The agreement stipulates that a 5-kilometer

-wide area in the so-called Lachin corridor will remain open and be protected by about 2,000 Russian peacekeepers (RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service 2022).

Azerbaijan's victory in the six-week war in Nagorno–Karabakh with Armenia, in which it enjoyed unconditional support from Türkiye, a faithful ally, further strengthened President Aliyev's position, despite the country's economic difficulties. Following the ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan regained control of districts adjacent to the Nagorno–Karabakh region that it had not controlled for more than 26 years, as well as part of Nagorno–Karabakh (Goreainov–Brie 2021: 238; Amnesty International 2023).

The situation became much more complicated after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since February 2022, Azerbaijan has initiated three major escalations in Nagorno–Karabakh and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border (Grigoryan 2023).

"The road, which connects Nagorno–Karabakh to Armenia, has been inaccessible to all civilian and commercial traffic since 12 December 2022 after being blockaded by dozens of Azerbaijani protesters, widely believed to be backed by the country's authorities. The situation has left some 120,000 ethnic Armenian residents in Nagorno–Karabakh without access to essential goods and services, including life-saving medication and health care" (Amnesty International 2023). Nagorno–Karabakh has been under a total blockade by Azerbaijan for a month.

Civil Society in Armenia and Azerbaijan: trends and the impact of war

In order to analyse which were the perceptions and the actions of the civil societies from Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the 2020 conflict resolution, firstly, we need to identify the status-quo regarding their development and involvement in the public affairs of the two states. For that, we used the relevant information from the Eastern Partnership Index (launched in 2011). After analysing the score that each state has recorded in various domains over the years, we used the data available from the Freedom House's Freedom of the World 2021 and 2022 Reports, the USAID 2020, 2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Indexes and other qualitative researches in order to have a comprehensive view over the impact that the war had over the development of civil societies. These reports are of high importance, since we cannot have a democracy without having a robust, resilient and efficient civil society (Popovenciuc 2022: 26). Thus, its development characterizes the entire political system. By making a longitudinal, comparative analysis, we could identify and analyse the main progress, but also the stagnation and even regression regarding the aforementioned topic. The analysis concentrated mostly on the years of 2020, 2021 for the purpose of seeing how each civil society was impacted by the war, how it reacted to it and which was its role regarding the conflict resolution that followed.

The EaP Index was launched two years after the launch of the EaP and includes aggregated statistical data on the level of integration of all six EaP member countries. It should be mentioned that from 2011 to 2014 the Index was officially called the European Integration Index for the Eastern Partnership states. The name was replaced in 2015 with the Eastern Partnership Index. The change was not accidental, given the meaning of integration and how it was perceived especially by Russia. Also, if in the case of the former, the emphasis was put on the integration process, thus starting from the premises that all six partner states wanted an in-depth relationship with the EU, if not even accession, in the case of the latter the tonality is more nuanced/adapted taking into account the different interests of the partner countries.

It should also be mentioned that in the period 2011–2014 the EaP Index had a special dedicated section for the category Participation of civil society within the Management dimension. Starting from 2015, this part was integrated as an intersectorial category, being included in all domains, especially in the Approximation one. Within it we have chosen to analyse the Democracy and good governance category, the following sub-categories: Democratic rights and elections, State accountability, Independent media, Freedom of opinion and expression, Freedom of assembly and association, Equal opportunities and non-discrimination and Public administration. Given the wartime situation, how the population reacted from both countries (mass protests in Armenia, anti-violence petitions in Azerbaijan and the governments' reactions; the humanitarian aid that was provided by the NGOs; the CSOs implication in the conflict resolution like the negotiation regarding the release of war prisoners) we consider the aforementioned sub-categories to be the most relevant. Unfortunately, regarding the EaP Index, there was no available data for the 2018–2019 period of time, but, since the topic of the paper is concentrating on the September–November 2020 when the war erupted and afterwards (period that was included in the Index), this limitation should not affect to a large extend our findings. Thus, in order to carry out a comprehensive comparative analysis, we have analysed the reports of the European Commission since 2011 until 2014 (Management domain, category Participation of civil society), and the ones from 2015 until 2021, all the aforementioned fields.

In terms of results, as it can be seen below, since the launch of the Index, clear differences in terms of national preferences emerged between the two states. Although it was not possible to talk about a desire regarding their possible integration into the EU, they had different reasons. Armenia perceived the program as an element of friction that could jeopardize their positive bilateral relationship with the Russian Federation, while Azerbaijan adopted a balancing strategy between the EU and Russia. Speaking concretely about the involvement of civil society, as can be seen below for the year of 2011, Azerbaijan recorded a score of 0, on a scale from 0 to 1, while Armenia, although less developed than the other 4 EaP remaining states, had a score of 0.5 highlighting a more developed and involved civil

society in the decision making process that Azerbaijan. Comparing longitudinally the 2011–2014 period of time, we can see the same difference, in the sense that the civil society from Armenia was more involved than the one from Azerbaijan. In terms of the front runners, for the period of 2011–2014 Georgia and Moldova scored the highest values. After being evaluated with the 0 score in 2011, Azerbaijan had a constant value 0.40–0.42, thus illustrating a state where the status-quo is maintained at a relatively low level of development. On the other hand, Armenia proved more active starting from a value of 0.40 and reaching 0.67, hence, not making revolutionary changes, but still being on a positive trend (https://eap-csf.eu/).

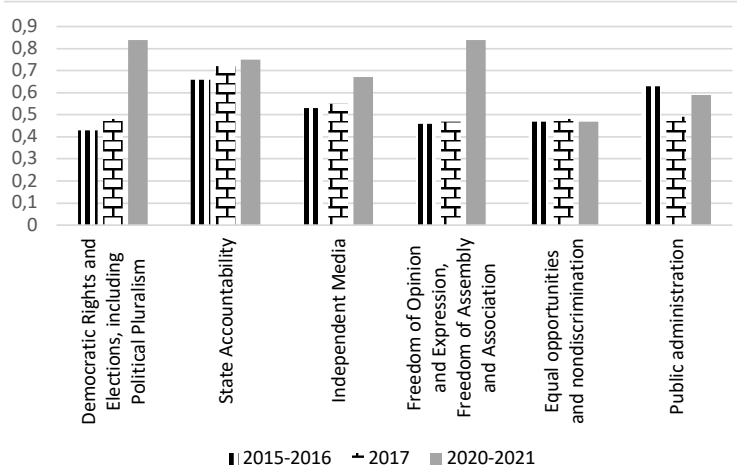
Figure 1: Participation of civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan- Management domain

Source: Analysis developed by the authors based on the data collected from Eastern Integration Indexes for Eastern Partnership countries conducted by Open Society and International Renaissance Foundations available online https://eap-csf.eu/, accessed 4 December 2019

As previously mentioned, starting from 2015, the civil society category was integrated as an inter-sectorial item, included in several domains among which we have chosen 6 categories within the Approximation domain. Analysing the 2015–2021 period of time, we can observe that the trend already identified from the previous period continues with Armenia as a front runner from the two.

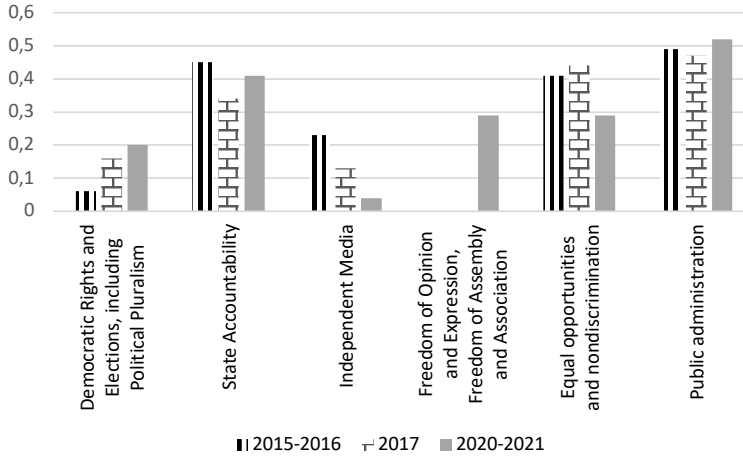
Given the topic of the paper, we will pay closer attention to the 2020–2021 period of time since the Nagorno Karabakh war took place in the autumn of 2020. Thus, looking at the values of 3 from the 6 categories that were analysed in 2020–2021, Armenia continued its progress, being the first among all six EaP countries, surpassing even the candidate countries Moldova and Ukraine regarding: Democratic rights and elections (reaching a score of 0.84), Independent Media (0.67) and Freedom of opinion, expression and freedom of assembly and association (0.84). On the other end of the scale, we can identify Azerbaijan which in the same period of 2020–2021 reached the lowest score from all six countries in two out of the six selected categories: State accountability (reaching a score of 0.41) and Independent Media having a score of 0.04, practically pinpointing towards the idea that there is almost no free media in this state. Regarding the category of Freedom of opinion, expression and freedom of assembly and association it registered a score of 0.29 occupying the fifth place being followed by Belarus. What is to be noted here is the fact that during 2015–2016 and 2017, Azerbaijan's score was zero, thus, although still low, the 0.29 score represents a positive trend (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum).

Figure 2: Armenia's civil society – Approximation domain



Source: Analysis developed by the authors based on the data collected from Eastern Partnership Indexes conducted by Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum available online https://eap-csf.eu/ , accessed 4 January 2023

Figure 3: Azerbaijan's civil society – Approximation domain



Source: Analysis developed by the authors based on the data collected from Eastern Partnership Indexes conducted by Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum available online https://eap-csf.eu/, accessed 4 January 2023

These dynamics are supported by other international statistical data. For example, in 2022 the Freedom House considers Armenia to be partly free, reaching a score of 55 out of 100 having a civil society that is considered strong. Comparing the rate with the one from 2021 (55/100 as well) Armenia proves among others also stability in its reforms and no significant impact of the war upon the reforms (Freedom House, 2022).

Regarding the effects of the Nagorno Karabakh war upon the Armenian society, given the loss of war, the decision makers had to face huge criticism coming from the population regarding the conflict resolution, events culminating with mass protests that ended in seizing the Parliament's chambers for a limited period of time. Although under pressure, the President Nikol Pashinyan remained in power, but what is important to mention is that, although there were some police interventions and temporary detention of some protesters during the 2020–2021 protests, they were free to exercise their right to protest and at the macro level there were no important legislative changes, that could have negatively affect the rights of the civil society (Freedom House 2021). At the same time, in terms of perceptions of the general population, according to the Settlement of the Karabakh Conflict: Results of the August k place in Survey that too March 2021, the Armenians considers that the settlement of the conflict depended firstly on the Armenian government (35%), the Russian Federation (33%) and the global superpowers (China, USA, Russia and the EU) (32%) (Civilnet, 2021). Hence, the perception regarding dependence on external forces, mostly Moscow was still visible even after the war, especially since the government faced huge criticism as it was revealed above.

On the other hand, Azerbaijan reached a score of 9 out of 100, being, thus, labelled as a non-free country. In comparison with 2021 when it reached 10 points, we could argue that the state faces a slow regress. Regarding the development of civil society, due to the legislative changes that were made in the recent years, its liberties have been crippled, having very limited rights in terms of activism and freedom of expression (Freedom House, 2022), as the EaP Indexes have already shown. Also, comparing with the rights of Armenian citizens to protest, in Azerbaijan the ruling party, Yeni (New) Azerbaijan Party (YAP), remained in power after the elections held on February while the *"authorities arrested opposition leaders along with activists planning to hold a protest over the elections' conduct later that month"* (Freedom House, 2021).

Regarding the freedom of media, in the case of Armenia, the media operates relatively freely and there are some small online media outlets that are independent. At the same time in the aftermath of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution that was highly criticized, in July 2021 the Parliament passed a law according to which is illegal to bring serious insults towards officials and public figures. This decision was met with an antagonistic behaviour by NGOs and journalists taking into consideration that the bill could bring harm to the freedom of expression rights (Freedom House, 2022). In comparison, in Azerbaijan, the social media users or the citizens that voiced against the Nagorno Karabakh war and praised for a peaceful resolution *"were harassed and threatened online, prompting at least one activist to remove their signature"*(Freedom House, 2022). For example Giyas Ibrahimov, an Azeri civil society activist, was briefly detained in September. *"In October, he was questioned by prosecutors for signing a petition calling for a peaceful resolution along with activist Narmin Shahmarzade"*(Freedom House, 2022).

Analysing other international Indexes that highlight the development and the role of civil society in both Armenia and Azerbaijan during and after the war, the trends are constant with the previous findings. For example USAID 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index, Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia highlights Armenia as reaching a 3.6 score, where 1 is the highest level of sustainability and 7 is the lowest, whereas in the case of Azerbaijan is 5.9 (USAID 2020). In 2021 the scores remained the same in the case of both countries (USAID 2021). As it can be seen below, the most concerning issue regarding Armenian civil society refers to the financial viability aspect, field where it scores the highest due to the dependency on foreign donors (USAID 2020) (Zamejc et al. 2021).

As the Index is mentioning, Armenia proves to have a relatively stable and strong civil society that played a key role during the war, as it proved to be adaptable during crisis and provide the Armenian society the necessary services. At the same time, it must be mentioned, that its advocacy power in relation with the government decreased due to the ceasing of the formal and non-formal channels of communication (USAID 2020). In absolute terms, *"according to statistics provided by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), 5,136 public organizations (compared to 4,794 in 2019) and 1,335 foundations (compared to 1,212 in 2019) were included in the state register as of the end of 2020"*(USAID 2020). Thus the number of CSOs increased, revealing a more active presence and involvement of the Armenian society.

Figure 4: Armenia's civil society sustainability

Source: USAID, 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index, Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, Armenia, 24th Edition, 2021, available at: https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2020-report.pdf accessed on 5 January 2023, p.20

Regarding Azerbaijan, the war did not change the civil society sustainability. As the Index is mentioning, one single positive aspect can be highlighted, namely the public image of the civil society organizations improved as part of their support for marginalized groups. At the same time, the access to foreign donors remain an issue. Among the government's actions against the freedom of speech and expression, the Index is emphasizing as the others above the internet restrictions against the ones that condemned the violence of what was called the Patriotic

War (USAID, 2020). In absolute terms *"according to official information, in 2020, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) registered 71 local CSOs (compared to 109 in 2019 and 169 in 2018), bringing the total number of registered non-commercial entities to more than 4,500. There are also dozens of unregistered groups in the country. During the year, three CSOs voluntarily dissolved their legal status"* (USAID, 2020). Thus, the war did have an important impact over the general trend of decreasing the number of CSOs.

Figure 5: Azerbaijan's civil society sustainability

Source: USAID, 2020 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index, Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, Armenia, 24th Edition, 2021, available at: https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2020-report.pdf accessed on 5 January 2023: 29.

Comparing the above quantitative data with the available qualitative researches, we can reiterate that the civil society in Armenia played an important role during and after the war. For example, the CSOs adapted to the situation on the ground and provided assistance and access to services for the displaced people, engaged in capacity building actions together with monitoring of rights for the ones that fled the war region. Others offered psycho-social support for the war veterans (Komm 2021: 13).

Another important element in what concerns the role of civil society in conflict resolution is represented by the fact that they can be a tangible solution when the diplomatic communication is under pressure. This was also the solution in the case of the Nagorno–Karabakh war, as the CSOs from both Armenia and Azerbaijan were communicating at the online level (since the people-to-people contact ceased to exist) in order to solve the issue of war prisoners as part of the peace-building process (Komm, 2021: 17).

In conclusion, the civil societies from both countries have been engaged in the conflict resolution after the Nagorno–Karabakh war erupted in 2020 in various degrees. The CSOs from Armenia seemed to be more efficient in adapting to the changing landscape due to a relative stable environment existent prior to the conflict emergence. Although there are some limitations, the rights to assemble

or the freedom of speech are generally ensured in Armenia. Also, another important aspect is represented by the access to foreign funding, opportunity that is also allowed in this country. On the opposite side, the CSOs from Azerbaijan had a marginal effect and tended to have their rights limited over time. They tend to face censorship and the right to free media is practically non-existent. Also, activists risk imprisonment over anti-government protests. Unfortunately, the wartime situations are prone to generate the emergence of non-democratic regimes or a legitimacy gaining for the non-democratic decisions (Borza 2022: 14). Armenia seems to be under this threat, but for the analysed period, it did not fall under this category. The same cannot be said about Azerbaijan.

Conclusions

Nagorno–Karabakh is a dispute over the province's status as a major source of tension between the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the leadership of the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno–Karabakh, in the mediation of which other international actors got involved, such as OSCE, the Minsk group consisting of France, the Russian Federation and the USA. In conclusion, it should be noted that the border of the Nagorno–Karabakh region, about 100 kilometers, is one of the most dangerous militarized areas in the neighborhood of Europe.

The Russian aggression in Ukraine moved the center of Russia's interest from the Caucasus. In this context, the Azerbaijani state was encouraged to exert new pressure and escalate the situation in Nagorno–Karabakh. This new reality on the ground has been facilitated by the Kremlin's decreasing capabilities and changing interests in the region. Russia's preoccupation with the war in Ukraine has significantly limited its capabilities in other key regions of the post-Soviet space. In the South Caucasus, Moscow has been doing its best not to get involved in a direct confrontation with Türkiye and Azerbaijan and wants to preserve its role as a neutral arbiter in the Armenian–Azerbaijani context. Azerbaijan in its turn has been periodically testing Russia's red lines, trying to change the status quo on the ground (Grigoryan, 2023).

Azerbaijan can afford a position of 'armed neutrality'. On the one hand, it is close to the EU and the US, providing its natural resources to the European market. On the other hand, it assesses quite realistically the impact of the Russian Federation on European policies and avoids any confrontation with Moscow, although it does not express any desire to develop relations as close as Armenia.

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Engaging with refugees in times of conflict and social acceleration: Romanian civil society and the war in Ukraine[1]

Ciprian Bogdan

Introduction

The war in Ukraine started in February 24. 2022 when Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade the country. Despite the Russian attempt to present it as „special military operation", the invasion has turned into in a classical conflict between two states mobilizing their economic and human resources to defeat the other side. With the war still raging on and producing significant human and economic losses on both sides, the Romanian society has been under the pressure to receive large number of Ukrainian refugees.[2] Though oftentimes chaotic (Paul et al. 2022: 12–13), the early mobilization at the level of civil society involving many volunteers from NGOs or other types of associations and Romanian authorities distributing resources to the border checkpoints with Ukraine and Republic of Moldova (Halmeu, Sighet, Siret, Rădăuți-Prut, Isaccea etc.) was quite impressive. As expected, this early intervention was also marked by the need to speed up social processes (registration, food, clothing, accommodation etc.) in order to deal with the large influx of people fleeing the war. Gradually, the number of refugees decreased allowing NGOs and authorities to slow down by focusing on other measures mostly related to the integration of those who decided to stay in Romania (such as access to healthcare, education, jobs). Although the context might change once again, the predominant approach at this point seems to concentrate on offering the basic conditions to allow Ukrainians to adapt to the local social environment (Paul et al. 2022: 22–23).

In this paper, we will analyze the way Romanian NGOs have dealt with this emergency by focusing on three levels of their engagement: their interaction with other NGOs, with the Romanian state and, last but not least, with the Ukrainian refugees. Although we believe that the concept of civil society remains a fuzzy one with no clear-cut boundaries (Laine 2014), our purpose is not to enter into a debate around it, but to analyze some specific problems emerging from the interaction between the levels mentioned above. In doing so, we will deliberately use the term NGO rather than Civil Society Organization (CSO), simply because it conveniently fits with our case study in which we concentrate exclusively on Romanian NGOs.

The existing bibliography on the topic is already a complex one, but there are several issues clearly standing out. One issue which has attracted a lot of attention has been the analysis of the underlying motivations of volunteers in helping refugees. Thus, in some of these studies motivations are addressed from a psychological perspective (Clary et al. 1998), while in others the main focus is on the political side whether by describing the policitization of emotions (Fassin 2012; Scheibelhofer 2019: 196; Karakayali 2019) or various forms of humanitarianism (Vandervoordt–Verschraegen: 2019; Turinsky–Nowicka 2019; Župarić-Iljić–Valenta 2019). A good deal of research has also concentrated on the intricate relationship between civil society and the state, the former often being understood as „filling the gap" between the needs of refugees and the capacities of the state to address them (Mayblin–James 2018; Pries 2019: 6; Witkovski et al. 2019: 28). Such a role is usually interpreted in the context of a neoliberal ideology which dramatically reduces the state's responsibility and ability to intervene in these contexts and, thus, needs to be compensated by the actions of volunteers and organizations coming from civil society (Ritchie 2018; Scheibelhofer 2019: 194–195). Some of these studies also describe the tensions and overlaps emerging from the interaction between civil society and state authorities (Pries 2019: 13–14; Schiff–Clavé-Mercier 2019; Fleischmann 2019; Parsanoglou 2020) or the effects of securitization at the state (Cantat 2016; Župarić-Iljić–Valenta 2019) and EU level (Guiraudon 2017; Crepaz 2020). Another set of studies is interested in the complex interaction between NGOs, international organizations, or other forms of volunteering by emphasizing the impact on the organizational level (Witkovski et al. 2019) or on their ability to compete for economic resources (Akșak–Dimitrova 2022).

The present paper looks at the interaction between NGOs, state authorities and refugees from a different angle by trying to assess the impact of *social acceleration* on this multilayered interaction. As such, we will rely on the theoretical background developed by the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa and assume that time has become a fundamental resource in the context of the accelerating tendency of the capitalist social world. This emphasis on mobility is not, of course, something entirely new in the field. Inspired by Deleuze's and Guattari's view on the relationship between "territorialization" and "deterritorialization", many studies associate the former with the state's tendency to control boundaries and

internal flows while the latter with the dynamism of refugees, displaced people or forced migrants (Ballinger 2012; Cantat 2016; Olivier-Mensah 2019). Nevertheless, our paper does not rely on this type of bibliography because of at least two reasons: instead of focusing on the relationship between temporality and "territory" (or boundaries), we are interested in the temporal dynamic and its variations (acceleration, deceleration); and instead of believing that mobility (or "deterritorialization") is an emancipatory force which is constantly frustrated by statal territorialization processes, we follow Hartmut Rosa for whom social acceleration has become a major source of complications and tensions in contemporary society.

The present paper will put to work Rosa's broad assumption by focusing on the way specific Romanian NGOs engaged with Ukrainian refugees since the start of the war with Russia. In doing so, we will try to answer two basic questions: how fast and efficient was the reaction of NGOs and state authorities to the crisis? And what was the level of synchronization of these NGOs with the actions of other NGOs, the Romanian authorities, and the Ukrainian refugees?

The qualitative method used in the case study is based on semi-structured interviews taken in August-September-October 2022. During this period, we interviewed (face-to-face and online) 12 representatives (seven females and five males) of Romanian NGOs from the main historical regions of the country: Transylvania (6 interviews from the city of Cluj–Napoca), Wallachia (3 interviews from Bucharest) and Moldavia (3 interviews from the city of Iași and the towns of Rădăuți and Siret). In the research, we have also incorporated discussions with two experts from Cluj–Napoca, Cosmina Paul and Oana Ivan, who have recently delivered two reports on the way civil society and Romanian authorities have addressed the needs of Ukrainians living in Romania. These reports have also been extremely useful in better clarifying both the larger dynamic of the way organizations and institutions have interacted with Ukrainians and the perspectives of particular social actors involved in the process (these reports contain interviews with local NGOs and Ukrainian refugees).

While the method used in this research has the clear advantage to get a glimpse of how the people involved in civil society interpret their actions and interactions, there are obvious limitations as well: firstly, these interpretations are by no means objective since they are partially shaped by class, ethnicity, ideological affiliations, or gender. Although we haven't focused explicitly on these factors, they clearly have a role in how the respondents tend to meaningfully integrate their (inter) actions into larger frameworks. Secondly, the interviews concentrate on Romanian NGOs and leave aside the narratives of people working in state institutions and Ukrainians refugees. A more comprehensive study should also include these voices.

Social acceleration

The relationship between modern (capitalist) society and speed has generated a growing academic literature in which social acceleration has been looked at through historical (Koselleck 2004), political (Scheuerman 2004), social (Noys 2014), cultural (Lübbe 2009) or technological (Virilio 1986) lenses. Undoubtedly, one of the most systematic and complex approaches on this topic belongs to Hartmut Rosa who thinks that in modernity acceleration is no longer a byproduct of specific events, but a central feature of society (Rosa 2009: 78–79). But he also claims that an analytical distinction needs to be drawn between "technological acceleration" (which covers technological innovations allowing much greater speed in communication, production or consumption), "acceleration of social change" (which refers to changes in patterns of social (inter)action, and orientation creating a gap between past experience and expectations about the future) and "acceleration of the pace of life" (which points to the "the speed and compression of actions and experiences in everyday life" often being translated into feelings of overload, fatigue etc.) (Rosa 2009: 85). As these dimensions remain intertwined, they generate a "closed, self-propelling process" with each form of acceleration reinforcing the others (Rosa 2009: 89). Behind this process, we can also identify three major "external motors": the "economic motor" (basically confirming Marx analysis of capitalism as a social system fueled by the imperative of constantly pushing towards more profit in a highly competitive environment), the "cultural motor" (expressing the shift towards the ideal of acquiring as many experiences as possible during our lifetime) and the "structural motor" (underlining the replacement of old social hierarchy with the functional differentiation between autonomous social systems) (Rosa 2009: 90–92).

According to Rosa, social acceleration is by no means homogenously distributed: while specific social areas can be more in tune with the overall tendency towards acceleration, others might *"decelerate"* or slow down. This turns out to be the source of a new type of social cleavage based on the *"desynchronization"* between people/groups who accelerate since they are better connected to existing social processes and those who decelerate (conservative groups, poor people living in ghettoes etc.). But contemporary (or postmodern) fragmentation and desynchronization is the result of earlier processes triggered by social entities like the *state*, *war*, and *public sphere*. From this perspective, the intersection between the modern national state and (European) wars constitutes an important source of acceleration paving the way for the modern world. Without entering Rosa's intricate analysis on the topic, suffice to say that the modern state focuses, on the one hand, on homogenizing its own territory (through laws, bureaucracy etc.) by creating a predictable space in which social actors can interact much faster than before, while, on the other, it engages in fierce competition with the rest of European states, thus, fueling processes like colonization. So, the state operates as an agent of acceleration both within its borders and beyond them.

But states also make wars. In modernity, the army becomes a core social institution in which individuals, for instance, are taught to strictly obey specific temporal sequences without which coordination between large masses of men would be impossible. The army also becomes the locus of technological innovations giving the state the possibility to develop more sophisticated weapons in the context of international competition. Last but not least, Rosa believes that the democratic *public sphere* is an early source of social acceleration as well because it allows political institutions "to react to emerging needs in the various spheres of society in a sensitive, fast, and flexible way" (Rosa 2013: 253). Unlike other political regimes, democratic institutions try to be sensitive towards deliberative processes within the public sphere, the locus in which various individual and collective interests can be freely expressed. This allows democratic politics to be better "synchronized with the path of societal development" (Rosa 2013: 252).

However, Rosa thinks that these early agents of acceleration – state, war, and public sphere – turn into agents of deceleration during the capitalist globalization from the last part of 20th century. When compared with the dynamism and flexibility of economic actors, the state is slow and cumbersome. From an instrument of simplification and acceleration, state bureaucracy becomes the very symbol of inertia and immobility. The same applies to classical armies and wars: because of the prospect of nuclear mutual annihilation developed during the Cold War, the new wars are no longer about large conflicts between states in which mobilization and speed is essential, but wars in which decelerating tactics are predominant (like guerilla wars). Finally, democratic public sphere is also affected by the growing desynchronization not only between (slower) political processes and (faster) economic and technological ones, but also between politics and sociocultural development (Rosa 2013: 259). In other words, "the genuinely political processes of interest articulation and aggregation and (democratic) deliberation, i.e., will formation and decision making, become ever more difficult and hence time consuming" (Rosa 2013: 265–266) since the sociocultural background itself becomes marked by fragmentation and desynchronization, thus, inhibiting the prospect of reaching political consensus (Rosa 2013: 265–266).

Drawing from this theoretical background, the rest of the paper will focus on two main problems related to our case study: first, it will analyze the way our respondents assessed the *fastness and efficiency* of the early response of NGOs and state institutions in addressing the needs of the refugees; second, it will describe the challenge posed to NGOs by the pressure to synchronize with other NGOs, state institutions and Ukrainian refugees. In line with Rosa's assumption about the risk of desynchronization in contemporary society, here we concentrate on the respondent's views regarding the coordination efforts between these social actors which, depending on the context, might imply acceleration, but also deceleration.

Civil society: "the response was total and overwhelming" and (oftentimes) chaotic

As in the case of the "refugee crisis"[4] from 2015 when many civil organizations and individuals mostly from Western countries felt great empathy towards Syrians escaping the civil war (Vandervoordt–Verschraegen 2019: 101–102), the wave of Ukrainian refugees also triggered a huge emotional reaction at the level of Romanian civil society and ordinary people. In this context, an important finding from our interviews was that many respondents emphasized the extremely fast reaction of their NGOs and civil society at large, while also hinting towards a smaller or larger degree of disconnect between the rapidity of this intervention and its efficiency. The reasons for such a (dis)connection are diverse. One of them was related to previous experience in dealing with similar situations, or lack thereof. As one respondent from Cluj–Napoca said, "my universe responded extremely well" to the emergency also due to the experience gained during the pandemic. In trying to help Pakistani refugee who were "nobody's" for one week, the NGO contacted other local organizations or authorities, thus, establishing a working relationship with them. This was further developed in the pandemic when an online platform was established by local NGOs and Prefect's Office. So, once the war broke out, this context allowed an extremely rapid and efficient reactivation of the platform and local connections. But according to her, this synergy was highly contextual because at the border the reaction seemed much more chaotic with many NGOs being "all over" the Ukrainians without a cool-headed assessment of their needs (L.C.). This account was partially confirmed by a respondent from Rădăuți town who was involved from early on in receiving Ukrainians at the border with Moldova. According to him, "the wave was large at the beginning with hundreds, maybe even thousands" of people entering Romania, while "the reaction was extremely rapid" with many local organizations rushing to help Ukrainians in the very first days of the emergency. However, because most organizations lacked experience in humanitarian intervention, their performance was quite confused and chaotic (R.U.).

Another factor was the emotional response of the Romanian society at large which created problems even for experienced NGOs. A respondent from Cluj–Napoca working at an international NGO with a long experience in humanitarian intervention said that he hadn't witness such a response during his whole career: the reaction of Romanian society being "total and overwhelming in the positive sense". Thus, "in the first weekend we had an endless stream of people coming by foot and by car with aid". His organization also immediately reacted to the crisis: "when the invasion took place, we had our emergency meetings two hours after the Russian forces first crossed into Ukraine". But this highly emotional reaction was also a source of chaos requiring a clear assessment of the needs of the refugees (M.S.).

The emergency was also seen as an opportunity by NGOs to become visible at the public level, thus securing possible funding for themselves. As one respondent put it, the "NGOs responded much faster" than state authorities reaching the border

in the first 16 hours after the invasion. However, their presence was marked by "total chaos", many NGOs being more interested by the media spotlight than addressing the needs of the Ukrainians refugees (V.I.).

As already mentioned, Hartmut Rosa believes that one of the pathologies of contemporary society lies in the desynchronization between people who are able to speed up and those who are not. From this perspective, the absence of coordination and clear division of labour between organizations with unneccessary overlaps and a lot of resources wasted can also be translated as a temporal disconnect between NGOs which accelerate and others which, on the contrary, decelerate. But here an important caveat must be added: as Rosa himself admits, acceleration is not always the most efficient way to deal with a problem, deceleration being sometimes more suited for addressing it. So, in spite of the overall social tendency towards speeding up, in some contexts the strategy that local actors prefer is that of slowing down.

When looking at our interviews, an important finding was that most respondents were aware of the importance of synchronization at the level of civil society. However, their accounts were also describing a constant back-and-forth between moments of synchronization and desynchronization. Of course, the reasons behind this oscillation are multiple. First of all, some pointed towards the (lack of) previous experience of an NGO. As one respondent remembered, because of the pandemic "the database was already there" making it much easier for local organizations to rapidly create a division of labor between them in which some would provide a daily meal, others would secure deposits for food, while others would cover accommodation etc. (L.C.). Moreover, the know-how brought by international organizations also improved the capacity for synchronization. For instance, one respondent from Bucharest working with two important international organizations operating in Romania said that there was a concerted effort between them, other international actors (like British Council) and local actors (NGOs, local authorities, universities, schools) addressing various issues from accommodation to psychological support or socializing activities for children (V.P.). A representative of a local organization from Rădăuți town remembered that international actors (like Good Neighbors International, or Norwegian Refugee Council) came a bit later to the border and started trainings (on psychological support, human trafficking, the protection of personal data etc.) with people from local NGOs who lacked expertise on humanitarian interventions. The same respondent also remembered that the lack of experience among local NGOs generated a desire to "expand their horizons" and learn how to work together. However, despite advocating for the need to "specialize" (with some NGOs focusing on psychological services, others on food supply etc.), he also admitted that this objective wasn't achieved (R.U.). Raising awareness on the need for synchronization was also a main problem for a respondent working at the border. As he recalled, "we wanted to mediate" between various organizations, "to direct somehow (along with the local authority) the activity of NGOs and make them understand that there is an enormous waste" of resources (V.I.).

Another issue emerging from interviews was the level of bureaucratization of an NGO. In one of these accounts, we were told that the process of synchronization among NGOs was low in comparison with that of individuals and informal groups which were not limited by bureaucratic procedures and, thus, much more motivated, and flexible in coordinating their efforts (G.N.). But in another interview, international organizations were viewed positively precisely because they brought expertise, organizational culture, and a procedural approach which improved the capacity to address the problems of people fleeing from the war (R.U.).

Last but not least, synchronization was also perceived as being dependent on the ability to access the necessary financial resources. So, during a discussion about the possibility of having a website in Cluj–Napoca that would concentrate all the necessary information to help Ukrainians from the city, a representative of a local NGO candidly admitted that "only a few of us have put our resources together", the main problem lying in the competition for limited governmental fundings. Local NGOs were not interested in coordinating their efforts simply because that would mean to recommend services provided by other NGOs they were in competition with (D.T.).[5] The presence of international organizations was also considered important because of the significant financial resources at their disposal (R.U.). While another respondent representing an international NGO with a long history of activities in Cluj–Napoca offered a much more critical assessment on the topic:

"A lot of international NGOs came in and said: 'We want to fund you!'. But they wouldn't say, 'This is the work we fund.' 'We don't tell you!' 'We want to listen to you!' And then you develop a proposal. 'Sorry, we won't cover that!' So, there was an incompetence in the international response which presented an additional burden on national NGOs who are going out trying to deliver this aid" (M.S.).[6]

State institutions "were never confronted with this kind of phenomenon before"

The state is often described as having a dubious reputation in the eyes of the social actors operating within civil society. To give one example, during the European refugee "crisis" from 2015, "most NGOs blame the state for the ill management" of the situation while trying to fill the gap created by its incompetence (Witkowski et al. 2019: 51). In sharp contrast, other accounts describe the state as the most active and efficient factor of "territorialization", or "deceleration and immobilization of migrant movements" which uses security measures both at the borders and within them to control human flows (Cantat 2016: 19). But state institutions can also intervene "to make volunteering with refugees governable" and silently exclude those non-state actors unwilling to accept the governmental approach to the way coordination efforts and "division of tasks" should be implemented (Fleischmann 2019: 65, 67).

When turning to our interviews, the findings are somewhere in between the positions mentioned above in the sense that the reaction of the state to the

emergency was viewed as being quite fast (considering the widespread expectation about Romanian institutions being slow) while not always very efficient, but still efficient enough (considering the usual social expectation about its lack of performance).

The level of (dis)connection between acceleration and efficiency was shaped once again by multiple factors. One of them was previous experience of institutions in dealing with similar emergencies or lack thereof. In this context, a respondent drew a clear distinction between local and national institutions: the authorities from her hometown Cluj–Napoca learned a lot from the pandemic explaining why the City Hall, the Prefecture and the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations reacted so well by providing, for instance, a space for a canteen which was fully equipped in less than three weeks allowing Ukrainians to have access to a free hot meal each day. In sharp contrast with this performance, national authorities "created disorder in order" with confusing regulations during their early interventions at the Romanian borders (L.C.). Other accounts placed more emphasis on the lack of experience of local or national authorities. According to a respondent from Cluj–Napoca, their reaction was quite fast which was proved by the fact that the City Hall had created in two or three days after the invasion an online platform to discuss with local organizations possible ways to help Ukrainians. But this fastness did not automatically translate into practical efficiency, a gap which was even larger at the national level since "the government could have stepped up more in delivery" (M.S.). A representative of a local NGO near the border said that national authorities reacted a bit slower and in a more confused way than civil society because "they were never confronted with this kind of phenomenon before". However, local authorities were quite supportive by promptly providing spaces to accommodate the refugees (R.U.).

Another explanation was the impact of civil society on state institutions. When comparing Cluj–Napoca authorities with other institutions whether local or national, the respondent believed that they fared much better than the latter mostly because of the city's "extremely reactive civil society". According to her, authorities tended to be much slower and efficient in addressing social problems in towns or cities with precarious or nonexistent civil society (L.C.).

The difference between the bureaucratization level of NGOs and state institutions also seemed to matter. Thus, NGOs would always be faster, more flexible because "we are not bound by legislation or bureaucracy", while the City Hall must follow clear and strict legal procedures which inevitably slows it down (L.C.). A representative of a local NGO near the border even offered a timeline of the early interventions of social actors: "NGOs reacted much faster than authorities even the local ones" being at the border in the first 16 hours of the crisis. Local authorities were present after 24–36 hours while national authorities came only three to five days after the beginning of the conflict. But in this case, there was a sharp difference between the rapidity of the reaction and its efficiency. While NGOs rushed to the border, their intervention was messy and chaotic.

Although a bit slower, the authorities were more methodical and organized because they had to follow strict procedures. As the respondent put it, "I think I would prefer a procedural reaction and a more delayed one than a more rapid and chaotic reaction" (V.I.).

The emergency has also raised another problem for the NGOs: how to coordinate or synchronize their actions with state institutions? When looking at the answers given by respondents, they seemed to navigate between two main expectations concerning the Romanian state: on the one hand, it was the more or less explicit distrust in its ability to organize in such a way as to efficiently address social problems. As one of the respondents said, a positive outcome of the crisis was the fact that it managed to suspend for a while the deep-seated tendency of ordinary people and civil society not to trust the state (V.P.). On the other hand, the same state was also expected to oversee the coordination between NGOs and institutions in dealing with pressing social issues because it was the only one having sufficient resources (financial, temporal etc.) to be able to engage in such an effort.[7]

Concerning the level of (de)synchronization, (the lack of) experience made once again a difference. Thus, the pandemic period was viewed as having different outcomes on the ability of the state to engage in coordination efforts with NGOs. In a more positive account, one respondent from Cluj–Napoca emphasized the online platform created by the Prefecture's Office during the pandemic which was successfully reactivated after the invasion of Ukraine (L.C.). Another one believed that there was a better reaction and coordination of local authorities from Cluj–Napoca after the invasion of Ukraine than previously. While during the pandemic the City Hall and Prefecture's Office created a platform which implicitly excluded many local organizations, the message being "if you are not here, you don't exist", during the Ukraine crisis the authorities were more open about including other NGOs on the "list" (O.B.). In another account, the City Hall from Cluj–Napoca quickly organized a WhatsApp group in which 31 organizations joined. On the first Monday after the invasion there were already 100 institutions and NGOs on the platform with seven working groups being created around specific tasks. On the more positive side, local authorities (mostly, Cluj–Napoca's City Hall) proved to be quite supportive "if you bring initiative". On the more negative one, the respondent mentioned an episode in which Prefecture's Office reactivated an online group from the pandemic which was a failure because it did not include other NGOs that had more experience in humanitarian interventions.

Concerning the national level, the respondent believed that Romanian authorities engaged in regular meetings with other NGOs on the crisis, but this was not "necessarily actual coordination" because they lacked the required experience (M.S.).[8]

Oftentimes, this lack of experience did not translate into a desire to engage in a learning process, but to adopt a patronizing attitude towards NGOs. In an interview offering insights into the early efforts of coordination between local NGOs and state authorities near the border, the respondent remembered that authorities

lacked procedures and expertise and, thus, had real problems in adjusting as fast and efficiently as the local NGOs to the flux of people coming into the country. "What bothered us the most was that even though they lacked expertise in certain areas, they did not admit that". Furthermore, experts from NGOs were often "treated with indifference" by state institutions. An additional problem was the fact that authorities (like the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, Police, Gendarmerie etc.) could not coordinate between themselves since there was no clear understanding of their legal competences. This was also mirrored by the overlapping between Prefecture's Office and the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations which created further confusion. However, things were gradually sorted out, authorities starting to better coordinate their actions with local organizations. There were cases in which someone working in a state institution at execution (not decision) level "who did a good job" was given support by NGOs. In some instances, local organizations would buy food and other necessary items that authorities would have acquired at a much slower pace because of their obligation to follow legal procedures (R.U.). In another interview, synchronization was considered one of the most important problems of the local community, authorities having the responsibility to lead the coordination efforts by giving up on their patronizing attitude and honestly learn how to improve things. As an example of their goodwill, they should start offering clear and transparent criteria that would allow organizations to join a local platform and they should also develop contingency plans for predictable future crises (O.B.).

In some cases, (de)synchronization was related to political or ideological motivations. Because the Ukraine crisis was not politically speaking as "catchy" as the pandemic, local authorities were more open towards including other NGOs on their official platform (O.B.), while another respondent believed that the state's tendency not to seriously engage in coordination efforts to address social problems stemmed from its "neoliberal" approach which tended to place the entire responsibility on individuals or non-state actors rather than institutions (M.S.).

Finally, the interviews also pointed out the role of money in synchronization efforts. One respondent hinted towards a discriminatory attitude in which certain NGOs were almost automatically funded by authorities while others were simply left out being forced to look for other sources (L.C.). Furthermore, local authorities did not provide a clear assessment of the concrete outcomes of their financing, thus allowing them to support hybrid associations which were neither strictly political nor regular NGOs. These associations were, in fact, designed "to implement the program" of local political actors (O.B.). According to another respondent, the same vagueness could be observed at the national level which lacks any "traceability of money" that would give the possibility to see how they were spent during this emergency and, thus, to make both authorities and NGOs much more responsible and transparent in their interactions (D.T.).

Refugees: looking for "the place where all problems are solved"

The reaction of the Romanian society to the war in Ukraine resembled that of Western countries to the wave of Syrian refugees from 2015 when "tons and tons of clothes were donated" to an association from Brussels alone, donations which "seemed to operate to an emotional rationale of instant gratification, rather than an accurate assessment of actual needs on the ground" (Vandervoordt – Verschraegen 2019: 111). But as one respondent noticed, the emotional reaction of Romanian society towards Ukrainian refugees was mostly triggered by the local „mythologies" with Russians often portrayed as being the villains. Otherwise it would be hard to explain the sharp difference between the unprecendented display of solidarity towards Ukraine and the extremely cold reaction towards Syrian refugees a few years earlier (M.S.).

As previously mentioned, most of the respondents tended to agree that the initial reaction of civil society was fast and oftentimes chaotic. However, this was also the result of a partial (mis)match between the expectations of local NGOs and those of the Ukrainian refugees. And again, an important factor was experience. Some NGOs had previous experience that allowed them to better adapt to the needs of the refugees, while others were out of touch despite being promptly involved in helping them. One respondent who had already dealt with refugees from Pakistan remembered that from the very first days of the crisis, her NGO together with a self-organized group of people (mostly students) from Republic Moldova and Ukraine, but also Transport Police were present at the Cluj–Napoca's central train station and provided meal, translation, or even yellow vests to Ukrainians to easily identify them (L.C.). As another respondent from the same NGO put it: the train station was "the place where all problems are solved" being a call-center, a place from where you could find accommodation or a canteen (E.R.). An international NGO operating in Bucharest with much more experience than local ones provided volunteers who would operate in train stations by giving food, clothing, or accommodation to the newcomers, while also contacting local social assistance to get in touch with them and identify their needs or helping women with medical or psychological support. The respondent also mentioned the main obstacles in this early intervention which stem from the lack of cultural experience of the Ukrainian refugees themselves: for example, the fact many were extremely suspicious and refused to be registered by authorities or that most of them could only speak in Ukrainian or Russian language (V.P.).[9] Apart from experience, another explanation emerging from the interviews was the possibility to access financial resources. For example, a respondent from Siret working at the border area told us that many NGOs had been engaged in self-promotion in the early days. Despite telling them, "Let's not suffocate them with unnecessary things!", "everyone wanted to offer food at the border, to have a picture with a sandwich in their hand only for the others to see them giving" (V.I.). An additional problem was the expectation that Ukrainians would fit the image of the poor and helpless refugees fleeing from the

ravages of war. And this was not always the case, at least in the early phase of the crisis. The Institute for Emergency Situations brought tents where Ukrainians could stay, but most of them looked for better locations that were provided by NGOs (for instance, culturally linked to Ukraine) or ordinary people. As the respondent said: "the intentions were good, but people from Ukraine felt that it was beneath them to stay in a transit center" since many Ukrainians from the first wave of arrivals had a rather good financial situation. Some of them did not even want the services provided by local NGOs. Eventually, local NGOs and authorities learned that the best way to help most of them was to secure their transit through Romania towards a (Western) destination as fast and smoothly as possible (V.I.).

In the early days of the war, there was a clear mobilization and acceleration at the level of civil society and authorities to register the large number of refugees, give them food, accommodation, medical or psychological support. Gradually, the influx decreased and new problems of synchronizing to the needs of Ukrainians have become pressing such as having access to a job, to education for children, or healthcare etc. (Ivan 2022). In this uneven process of synchronization, we could identify both moments of acceleration and deceleration with NGOs trying to speed up things (for instance, bureaucratic procedures) or slow them down (by providing predictable services, careful psychological assistance etc.).

From the interviews, we could identify several factors having an impact on synchronization efforts. One of them was the psychological state of Ukrainian refugees which often implied traumatic experiences and the need for NGOs to slow down their intervention in order to connect with people who had gone through such experiences. An interesting detail was given by a respondent from Cluj–Napoca. After recollecting the early moments of mobilization, she noticed that there was a shift in the attitude of Ukrainians coming to get a free daily meal at her NGO. While at first all Ukrainians came at 14 hours and left when finishing their meal, later, they started to arrive in three waves between 14–16 hours and began socializing after the meal. The respondent believed that this change was the result of building trust and predictability: in sharp contrast with the unpredictability of the war, Ukrainians started to feel more at ease by developing a comforting routine in their lives in Cluj (L.C.). Another respondent from the same NGO believed that the newcomers "love the city" and tried to adapt to its realities, but many were "in a state of shock" and still unable to really process the trauma and the gravity of their situation. Consequently, they were often afraid to make plans and tended to be "chaotic" by changing their opinions or concentrating on "living here and now" (E.R.). A respondent from Bucharest mentioned a project in which the main objective was to slowly and gently allow Ukrainian children to overcome their psychological distress by involving them in painting sessions, while artists and psychologists would talk to them about their drawings. According to her, it was "a crushing experience" with children often painting things associated with the trauma caused by the war such as a Ukrainian boy who drew the number 103 because, as he said, "I have become a room number". She also noticed that many

refugees who wanted to return to their homeland were afraid to do it and were usually psychologically suspended, unable to think about the future (V.P.). Another respondent from Bucharest said that her NGO focused on Ukrainian women simply because a woman would better understand the problems of another one and allow for "this transition to be easier". She organized a forum that would encourage these women to "forgive" and move beyond the idea of "a revenge against the Russian people". During this forum, they would meet with Romanian women and try to understand each other at cultural and spiritual level to overcome trauma and resentment. Although the meeting was overall successful, the respondent had several grievances, one of them being the fact that some Ukrainian women refused to accept the possibility of reconciliation (S.L.). A somewhat similar problem was noticed by another respondent who believed that Romanian civil society was engaged in a very consistent effort to help Ukrainians and now it would also be the time for them "to present themselves to the community". As she put it, "It is hard to apply political correctness to traumatized communities". Therefore, Ukrainians should learn how to overcome their trauma and start being part of the new local environment (I.H.).

Another problem was bureaucracy. In an interview, we were told that the Ukrainians who arrived in Cluj–Napoca had to go through an extremely slow registration level, the office being unable to process more than 10 people a day. To avoid losing time at the office, the local NGO gathered the documents of Ukrainians from Cluj–Napoca and sent them to the office to be processed (M.S.). Another respondent from Cluj–Napoca was even blunter: public administration was to blame for making people from NGOs "stay in meetings and do nothing" while there was not even a bureau where Ukrainians could have access to a proper translation concerning education or medical problems that might speed-up the process of addressing their needs (D.T.).

An additional factor emerging from interviews was the way cultural identity increased, or, on the contrary, decreased the frequency of social interactions. One of the problems facing Ukrainians from Cluj–Napoca was simply the fact that they were "dispersed" across the city without being able to communicate with each other and to attend events that might be of interest for them. So, hundreds of posters were distributed by the NGO in the city to allow them to have access to basic contact information. The main purpose of such actions was to give Ukrainians the possibility not only to reunite, but also to become aware of their "power" and "agency" which would make them interact more deeply with the local community (M.S.).[10] However, other respondents tended to emphasize the limitations induced by cultural differences. While a respondent believed, for instance, that many Ukrainians were "closed and secretive" (S.L.), another one bluntly confessed that although she was not a "nationalist", many Ukrainians behaved as if they were "entitled" to get help and assistance from Romanians. Even though they "are not Muslims" and "we are pretty much the same", they "do not make any kind of effort" "to learn Romanian or English" language (D.T.).

Many interviews also brought to the surface a more pragmatic side which was usually visible in the ability of Ukrainians to speed up in their interactions with the local environment, or in using Romania as a transit country to get to another destination. This acceleration also determined the level (de)synchronization between NGOs and refugees. One respondent identified a group Ukrainians who were interested in rapidly adapting to Romanian social conditions by trying to have a job and making sure that their children would learn Romanian. While others were concentrated on fleeing Romania to reach a Western country where they could start a new life (V.P.). Ukrainians were also viewed as being extremely pragmatic and even "wealthier than we thought", easily adapting to Romanian conditions while often taking advantage of the hospitality of the Romanian people or the benefits provided by state authorities (S.L.). Furthermore, someone else noticed that many Ukrainians were coming from a middle-class background and, thus, they were not really interested in integrating into Romanian society since they had the means to go back to Ukraine or a Western country (D.T.). In this latter case, the gap between local NGOs and the Ukrainians seemed almost unbridgeable.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have tried to indicate that the concepts of social acceleration, deceleration, synchronization, and desynchronization developed by Hartmut Rosa can shed a new light on the way civil society engages with refugees in the contemporary world. But these concepts also need to be properly contextualized. Going from our interviews, we have reached several conclusions.

First, contrary to Rosa's macro-analysis in which civil society and the state have turned into factors of deceleration, after the war in Ukraine broke Romanian civil society was able to accelerate to address the influx of people coming from the neighboring country. Although a bit slower than civil society, the Romanian state also proved much faster than expected in reacting to the emergency. A possible explanation for this divergence might be the fact that Rosa seems to downplay the role of more traditional crises (like inter-state wars) in accelerating things and emphasize instead the inherent "crisis of time" (Rosa 2013: 13) which mobilizes contemporary postmodern globalized world. The recent war in Ukraine indicates, however, that inter-state wars are back again and can also add fuel to the fire of global social acceleration by mobilizing large human or economic resources and by greatly increasing the number of refugees at the global level.

Second, the acceleration of civil society and the state mostly in the first phase of the emergency did not automatically translate into efficiency. Most of our respondents emphasized a smaller or larger gap between fastness and efficiency and tried to explain it by pointing to a multitude of factors. One of them was (the lack of) experience which allowed NGOs or state institutions to reduce the gap (pandemic prepared some of these actors for the emergency) or to deepen it.

The level of bureaucratization also shaped this tension: sometimes the low formality of local NGOs made them more rapid and efficient, in other situations this proved to be a problem, the procedural dimension of state institution or international organizations which made them a bit slower also turned to be better adapted to the needs and expectations of the refugees. Another explanation emerging from interviews was access to financial resources. For example, many local NGOs used this emergency to promote themselves for getting more fundings, sometimes greatly affecting their concrete performance in the early days. This was also a problem when expecting that all Ukrainians would fit the stereotype of poor refugees since many of them (mostly in the first phase of the war) had the necessary material resources and all they needed was to help them moving as fast as possible to reach their (Western) destination.

Third, in line with Rosa's idea that social acceleration produces fragmentation and the risk of desynchronization, our interviews also brought to the surface a genuine and widespread need for NGOs to synchronize with others, but also with state authorities and refugees in order to avoid waste, overlaps etc.

Fourth, Rosa believes that the state lags behind other social processes and loses its central role in coordinating social actors. However, our finding is more nuanced here: while many respondents thought that state institutions were indeed partially out of touch with social reality, they also believed that these institutions should have the leading role in the synchronization processes involving civil society and refugees. As a respondent put it, the main challenge was to overcome the predominant neoliberal approach in which the state was considered a simple bystander letting individuals or NGOs deal with social issues.

Fifth, the interviews have also revealed that the effort of synchronizing social actors would mean not only to accelerate in certain contexts (for example, NGOs which (mis)understood the need to couple with the expectation of many Ukrainians to leave Romania as fast as possible to reach their destination country), but also to decelerate in other situations (for instance, the attempt of many NGOs to help the refugees by engaging in the slow and delicate process of overcoming their psychological distress). Nevertheless, the capacity of NGOs to synchronize with state institutions and refugees was uneven and depended on several, sometimes highly contextual factors ranging from experience (the pandemic or the previous expertise in humanitarian interventions allowed some NGOs to be more prepared to synchronize with other social actors), the level of bureaucratization (in certain cases a more informal approach worked better, while in others, a more procedural one), psychological background (NGOs were more or less successful in adapting to the psychological distress of Ukrainian refugees often expressed in their inability to engage with the local community or develop future plans), or the access to financial resources (for instance, the competition for limited governmental resources was considered an inhibitory factor for better synchronization between NGOs, or the fact that affluent Ukrainian refugees were often uninterested in reaching towards NGOs).

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Notes

[1] I would like to thank Sorin Gog for his critical feedback which helped improving the earlier version of this paper.
[2] According to the Romanian government, 1.990.454 Ukrainians citizens (mostly women and children) entered Romanian territory since the start of war. Among them, 86.779 are currently living in Romania (38.787 are children) and 4327 applied for receiving asylum. See Guvernul României (2022): *Răspunsul României la criza umanitară a refugiaților, 19 august 2022.*
[3] Many have challenged the idea that Europe went through a refugee "crisis" in 2015. According to the former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, "this is not a crisis of numbers; it is a crisis of solidarity" (Pries 1: 2019).
[4] We already mentioned Rosa's example of contemporary guerrilla wars which are based on decelerating tactics, much better suited to their contexts than classical conflicts.
[5] A similar explanation can be found in a recent report which mentions the lack of coordination between associations in the context of an overall decrease in funding related to people coming from Ukraine (Ivan 2022).
[6] The same respondent said that another reason for desynchronization was the discrepancy between local NGOs struggling to provide decent wages for their collaborators and international organizations with access to "a huge pile of money" which they often used to provide much higher wages than their local counterparts (M.S.).
[7] One example of overseeing coordination given by a respondent was that "the state should do a sort of review by saying what are the legitimate sources from which you should inform yourself" when dealing with problems related to refugees (I.H.).
[8] According to the respondent, an example of the "absolute deficiency of the government" was the fact that there were only six locations where Ukrainians could register as refugees. So as a Ukrainian staying in Cluj–Napoca, you could only register in a place 120 km outside the city (M.S.).
[9] A respondent coming from an NGO with an extensive experience in humanitarian intervention said that they focused on an early analysis of needs including a contact team that would inform Ukrainians "who did not know how it would be like" in Romania and were afraid about the possibility of human trafficking (M.S.).
[10] According to the same respondent, instead of considering Ukrainians as "refugees" implicitly labeling them as people who needed to passively accept the rules of the host country, we should look at them as people who had "power" and "agency" and could "find pride in the midst of trauma" (M.S.).

Fotó/István Péter Németh

THE ROLE OF PROTESTS IN ROMANIA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

THE FORMATION OF A PARTICIPATIVE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND THE MAINTAINING OF AN IMPARTIAL JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Laurențiu Petrila–Felix-Angel Popescu

Introduction

Through the present analysis we propose to identify some of the aspects related to the construction of Romanian society after the Revolution and the events of December 1989. The end of 1989 and the beginning of the 1990s led to important changes in Europe starting with East Berlin and until the breakup of the Soviet Union.

For a society that was under communist rule for decades and managed to change a system of oppression to one of freedom and multiple economic opportunities, it is important to see how the spirit of protest has consolidated or not. Simply, but simplistically, when you see that you succeed with a certain method - you will most likely use the same method in other challenging situations. The Romanian transition faced a series of multiple challenges, and the reaction to these situations was a slow one in public perception but also when we look at certain socio-economic indicators (Zamfir 2016). Only since the end of 2019 and the beginning of the year 2020 is talking about a closed chapter of the first stage of the transition and the opening of another chapter: post transition according to the political scientist Marian Oancea (Oancea 2019).

Through our study we aim to see how much the voice of civil society mattered between the post-communist and post-transition periods. Anyone not familiar with civility or issues related to political society, whether Romanian or of another nationality, when he thinks of Romania, he thinks of resources, emigration and

corruption, or in this situation the Romanians have always communicated something. Romania is the only country in the world that during peacetime had the largest emigration in the world. We could say from a certain perspective that this phenomenon also represented a protest in itself, but we will deal with this possible approach in another research.

Research design, arguments, methodology

Besides a brief introduction and this methodological section, our study will comprise two major sections. In the first section, we will make a foray into the face of Romania after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989, and in the second major section, we will analyze the main protests that we consider relevant to the present topic – but we will also mention other protests that took place in this period of over thirty years. We selected only a few because we thought that their scale and the impact of these protests on the executives of that time gain greater relevance.

The current study will analyze through qualitative analysis methods and process tracking data the current state of democracy in Romania and the tools that the EU and civil society have at their disposal to promote and consolidate democracy in Romania. Of course, our approach will also include an important section that will be dedicated to the transition period, a period responsible for successful and unsuccessful reforms. The political scene during the transition period had an effervescent chromaticity that ultimately reflected the pulse of society and the crises it had to go through.

Romania after 1989: in transition, in corruption but also in the EU and NATO

The transition designates the process of moving from a socialist system of social organization to another capitalist-western type system, considering in particular two directions of change: the replacement of the totalitarian political system based on a single political party, with a democratic political system, multiparty type and the replacement of the state economy with a market economy (Vlăsceanu–Zamfir 1998: 638). Below, one of the most representative images that went around the world vis-à-vis the events in Romania in December 1989.

The situation of Romania and in general of the former communist countries are special cases of transition due to the fact that there is no concrete model to follow. Thus, the transition from the socialist organization model to the western one represents a completely new historical phenomenon, only at the beginning and about which there was not yet enough information nor political theories of social transition. What is obvious to everyone at the moment is that the transition process of the former socialist countries is and was much more complex than originally thought. This raised a lot of unknowns so that the transition period was and is much longer than anticipated in the optimistic scenarios of the early '90s (Vlăsceanu–Zamfir 1998: 638).

A former communist country, said Professor Vladimir Pasti – as is the case with Romania, has several standards to meet. First of all, in order to integrate into the economic, political and cultural reality of the Western system, it must urgently bring important changes to all its structures and institutions. Some of these changes, said the above-mentioned thinker, are changes related to detail. But, very important to remember: they all refer to the same thing – coherence with the characteristics of the Western international system (institutions). A connection to European institutional standards is needed. All the factors that somehow influence or affect this coherence will be modified so that, in the end, they become generators of this coherence. This change implies a whole revolution in perception, a change of paradigm, of mentality and ultimately a societal change (Pasti 1995: 14).

Changes also have their realities. For example, the entrepreneurial spirit and free movement in the face of opportunities do not always have a predictable finality, so resistance to change does nothing but mask the fear of taking risks. Considering these realities, we can say that the Romanian society was resistant to change or we can equally say that it did not have the necessary courage to take risks for the purpose of development. After decades of predictability and safety (as it were) the behavior of uncertainty or the hesitant and incoherent attitude that appeared in the vein of the Romanian spirit immediately became a natural thing (Boudon 1997: 383).

The Romanian society was crushed during this whole period, which seems to stubbornly go through many more disturbances, tensions, spasms and social riots.

The mines, the inter-ethnic conflict in Târgu Mureș, the many and ineffective outings in the streets, the general dissatisfaction, the fluctuation of voter turnout, the phenomenon of the University Square, the massive exodus of young people even after entering the European Union, the flight to redeem and elucidate our past, the procrastination of files of the Revolution, the increase in corruption, the 'Colectiv' case, the unnatural situation of August 10, 2018, the many crisis governments without a parliamentary majority are just some of the actions that actually express that Romanian citizens have fully demonstrated a strong resistance to change. A people against evil but circumventing it through its social behavior. However, we cannot help but notice the transformations that have been radical. It went from a communist society with a closed and centralized economy in all sectors, to an open, democratic society, and with a capitalism from which some enjoyed and others profited. Until a society stabilizes in democracy, it has to go a long and hard way. Sociologist Vladimir Pasti, in his work "Noul capitalism românesc" (English title: New Romanian capitalism), said that immediately after the change of regime, everyone agreed that a series of changes and transformations would follow at the level of society, but no one knew how this process would happen and what results it would bring – but all wanted long-dreamed-of results of Western life (Pasti 2006: 4).

The social actors were exposed in a short time to new situations that required skills and attitudes that they not only did not possess but were not warned or taught about. Roles and social statuses underwent transformations to which individuals had to integrate on the fly, without having a model of action. The change and reform plans were announced "from above" in a specialized language that was difficult for social actors to access. In the cited work, the approach to transition is exposed, revealing both the actions and attempts of politicians, on the one hand, and the social response, on the other. The interaction between the two segments and actions resulted more often in clashes and disapprovals than in continuity. This fact determined a sinusoidal and complicated course of the transition in Romania, a transition to which the term reform was also assigned along the way, as professor Pasti rightly pointed out, which implies that a series of concrete measures were indeed necessary for the transformation of society Romanian: namely, the abolition of some institutions and the transition to a new type of institutions through reforms of Western origin. This proved to be extremely difficult as the leaders were from the old party structures. The first 15 years after the revolution, the people voted according to promises, and then the population also rejected the governments that had to do restructuring and other types of reform. (Easter 2006: 4). What determined, however, the population to reject the various transformation programs, mentions Vladimir Pasti, was not the cultural, political or ideological disagreement, but the decrease in the quality of life felt as a result of these changes. In fact, only after entering NATO in March 2004 can we speak of an elective settlement based on an ideological tension.

The sociologist Dumitru Sandu, in the work "The social space of the transition", emphasized that the transition from the perspective of a reform as a social change project considering that the project is reducible to a series of public policies and projects regarding institutional change. (Sandu 1999: 16). So that in this whole process both factors and conditions of a social, structural, institutional, mentality and many others are involved, but in order to be able to follow these sequences of change, it is necessary to know the social aspects of the change through a report to a theoretical model of reform.

A comprehensive synthesis of the social, political and other transformations that Romania has gone through is made by Vladimir Pasti in the work Noul romanian capitalism. Here are presented the changes that all former communist societies should assume and implicitly Romania. There are therefore three major categories of changes/transformations: changes regarding the political regime, changes regarding the type of economy, i.e. market economy, and changes regarding the outlook of foreign policy. (Easter 2006: 10). This was the general framework, the matrix in which all former communist societies had to struggle to fit. Romania could not be an exception and, as such, took the necessary steps to achieve the specific objectives of a democratic, Western-type society. The author of the cited book concludes the Romanian transition process as follows: at the end of 2004, after 15 years of efforts, oscillations, steps forward and steps back, refusals and acceptances, the Romanian post-communist transition ends. Romania achieved all the objectives it had formulated in the period after the collapse of communism. It has a democratic political regime and a society in which democracy works. It has a market economy, meaning an economy based on private property and free markets. ..It is a component of the developed, democratic and Western world because it is part of both NATO and the European Union. The transition has ended! Romania's road from communism to the Western world has ended (Pasti 2006: 13).

As far as the cultural, political, structural and system affiliations are concerned, we can say that Romania has finished the transition road. But beyond these changes of national, regional and international status, the essence, detail and functionality aspects remain in every field of social, economic and political life. Perhaps in another expression we can say that the Romanian transition is just now starting, and the institutions that can be an ethical arbiter and social transformer will be able to take their role seriously. In this context, the question naturally arises: What's next? A possible answer would be to shift our attention to the fact that the reformation process is a process of transformation of society and ends up taking on different but essential dimensions in order to have a society in which the Romanian citizen to be satisfied with the quality of his life. Or for the citizen to finally be at the center of the system's activity and action.

Another important aspect is the fact that the major changes at the political and economic level were accompanied and supported by equally significant social changes, the Romanian analyst emphasizes. The current social structure is totally different from that of the communist period. Thus, if during the communist period

the social structure consisted of only three large social and occupational groups, this structure was radically transformed by the emergence of new social groups. In place of the industrial proletariat, the cooperative peasantry, and the middle class of administrative officials, state-employed intellectuals, and a thin layer of small entrepreneurs, there appeared from the 1990s onwards, "entrepreneurs" and capital owners, private management, the unemployed, peasant owners land, private sector employees and those employed in the service of individuals. Professor Pasti also talks about another category of people called "condottieri", who are most often registered either as "entrepreneurs", or as "self-employed", or as "managers" or "politicians".

It is important to understand that a democratic society is characterized not only by political pluralism and certain principles related to the market economy, but also by or especially by an active involvement of all social actors in the process of making and influencing decisions that they are in the interest of the community. In democratic societies, one can observe the active, constant presence of civil society with a well-defined role. Civil society groups and organizations are active in the social sphere and thus have a decisive role in generating change in this space. In Romania, as evidence of change, the development of civil society can be observed even if its presence is often felt timidly (Petrila 2020).

As a phase or stage conclusion regarding the picture of the transition in Romania, we can say that "all these changes together made Romania in the first half of the first decade of the 3rd millennium to be a clearly different society from the communist one that he left it in 1989. The differences are so great that, for a long time – and by many – Romania is no longer considered an adversary of the Western world, but on the contrary, a friend or even a member of it" (Pasti 1995: 14).

A great disappointment marked Romania in 2004 when it did not join the other countries in the biggest wave of EU expansion. It would have been a year of grace for the EU and NATO. Three years later we achieved the great desire of the transition: entering the European Union.

The status of a NATO and EU member state came with multiple privileges: from European funds, free movement to the honor of organizing the NATO summit in Bucharest, the EU summit in Sibiu and up to the rotating presidency of the EU.

Despite all its efforts, Romania was not without important civic events thus showing that the transition was somewhat synonymous with the discontent of the people.

It was only in 2022 that Romania managed to meet the criteria for the MCV to be withdrawn. The year 2022 was also the year of Schengen hope, but thanks to the Austrian veto, the entry into the Schengen area is slightly delayed.

Protests and their role in strengthening democracy/rule of law

We could say without making a mistake that the Romanian democracy was also a democracy of protests. After more than forty years of socialism and rule with an iron hand in a cold December the world shows solidarity with an apparently minor injustice. The paradox was given by the fact that a majority Orthodox city defends a minority Christian and ethnic Hungarian: the reformed pastor Laszlo Tokes (Europa Libera Romania 2021). Besides, the Revolution that started in Timișoara had assumed religious leaders – see the case of the Baptist pastor Petre Dugulescu who later became part of the Parliament (Dugulescu 2007). Much more recently, the connection between the church and the protests was made, see the Bodnariu case, which involved many resources, especially from the diaspora, and a lot of diplomatic support, in which case the churches united around the Pentecostals, thus achieving an ecumenism of opportunity for the reunification of a family (Petrila–Țepelea 2022) or the much more recent protest in Berlin where thousands of Romanians met to support the Furdui family (Adevărul 2022).

There are several studies that treat the phenomenon of protests in Romania from different angles. Probably the most recent text on this issue analyzes the interpretation given by the protagonists of these movements in an ideological context, through the lens of the intentional use of political mythologies and Manichean approaches, both of which serve the narratives used, in the sense of creating meaning and determining action, of course, taking into account the changes imposed by the dissatisfied street in Romania (Borza–Papp 2022).

Another extremely important element that deserves to be discussed is represented by the emergence of social networks and its ability to mobilize through it. In the work 'We don't leave until we leave!' A Case Study on the Rise of the Digital Civic Activism in Romania (2015–2018), the author focused her attention on the involvement of the oldest and most active online community, "Corruption Kills" and how this online organization got involved in organizing or rallying protests in 2015, 2017 and 2018. It can thus be seen the force of mobilization of the representatives of this community who managed to increase the number of fans (involved) who support the cause of the anti-corruption protests and how they used Facebook as an interactive tool for communicating with users in the case of the three analyzed protests. This online community managed to pave the way for the institutionalization of digital civic activism in Romania (Pătruț 2022).

But as we try to argue that somehow the protests always came as a support for legislation or a defense of the legislative framework, we must remember that the first serious protests that led to the fall of the government were also related to a law. It was about the health league from the Boc government (dw 2012).

Then followed the systematic protests of some organizations regarding the exploitation of gold in Roșia Montană (a case that remains unclear until today) and the protests in the village of Pungești where the Chevron company had to withdraw because the peasants opposed the shale gas.

Presidential election from 2014: A humiliated diaspora on the move

In 2014, during the presidential elections, an administrative error was created, intentionally or not. Tens of thousands of Romanians could not vote either in the first round or in the second round. After the first round of voting, Victor Ponta had the best chances, who was heavily accused of plagiarism (edupedu 2020). But for what happened in the first round, it seems that the population mobilized. If in the first round Ponta had an advance of over 10%, in the second round, his opponent Klau Iohannis managed to recover over 20% and overtake him. It was no longer a vote for Ponta or for Iohannis, but a vote against the government and the foreign minister who resigned between the two elections.

All the international press wrote about the humiliation of Romanians who, in addition to having to leave their country for a better life, now cannot vote and change the destiny of their country. But probably as the BBC journalists and others pointed out, if there was no disorganization in the diaspora we would not have been able to have the surprise, namely the victory of Iohannis (BBC 2014). If in the first round there were more than 160,000 Romanians who voted outside the borders, in the second round there were almost 400,000 (Free Europe 2014). Below is a picture from Paris during the polls.

The Colectiv tragedy

Many representatives of civil society say that the protests really started to have power after the tragedy in the Colectiv club. One evening in an unauthorized club with questionable approvals, a fire broke out that killed 64 people and opened a sad chapter in Romania's recent history. The news naturally broke towards night and the country was stunned. The hospitals were overrun and the then minister of health said that there was no need for external help, so whoever did not die of burns died of infection in Romanian hospitals. So seeing what was happening people

took to the streets, so the government resigned. It was the first serious victory of the street against the corrupt system. All public institutions followed in checking permits and regulation (Digi 24) Out of the desire to be more Catholic than the pope, these checks were exaggerated and many premises were closed. Long trials and convictions followed, as well as drama and even an Oscar-nominated film. An unprecedented protest was carried out by representatives of the victims who protested on the steps of the Court of Appeal in Bucharest covered with white sheets as a sign of protest against the fact that the process is taking so long.

The biggest protests of 2017 and the fight for legal control

At the beginning of 2017, there were significant protests on the streets of the largest cities in Romania. Protests of this magnitude are unprecedented in the country's post-communist history. The cause of these protests was the much-discussed Ordinance 13. A decree passed by the government that had just won the election by a landslide following mass absenteeism (Popescu et al. 2022). The decree was intended to decriminalize certain crimes, including the abuse of office by politicians - a situation in which the leader of power found himself. The political situation at that time and the protests came to the attention of the international media very quickly. Society began to divide.

Only one national television supported power and misinformation while the others tried to be objective. The use of news frames varied significantly depending on the type of channel (Antena 3 was the Government's mouthpiece), the can-can tabloid newspapers focused more on human interest frames, while attribution of responsibility and conflict frames and authentic issues were more present in quality newspapers (Mucundorfeanu 2021).

In the work Construction of cultural and collective identity in protest communication; case study: the protests of February 2017" starts from the assumption that the verbal message is an important component of protest movements.

The mentioned study is based on the claim that collective identity should be seen as a binder within a protest movement. They also highlighted new elements regarding the protests in Romania, namely the way in which it is constructed with the help of language and certain contents (Campian 2019). The Facebook slogans and hashtags of the February 2017 protests were otherwise considered the most beautiful, inventive of all the protests and seemed to create a constructive competition in the protest collage.

Diaspora rally: August 10, 2018: Diaspora humiliated also at home

Humiliated repeatedly and without many opportunities for repatriation, the international community of the Romanian diaspora organized a rally in the middle of summer in Bucharest. It is important to state that this rally came somewhat in support of the biggest protests of 2017.

Over 100,000 people were in Piața Victoriei in Bucharest but also in other cities in the country. The rally resulted in unprecedented violent attacks (dw 2018). The Gendarmerie repressed the peaceful demonstration of our fellow citizens outside the borders. Things got so out of control that hundreds of people needed medical attention as a result of the beatings.

If the other protests were defending a law or the idea of the rule of law, here it was something else. The diaspora wanted to be heard, but because its vote was always against the PSD, tyranny was unleashed. Many years of trials and no one guilty (Hotnews 2021). All the protests were basically aimed at a legal regulation or a defense of an existing law. But the Diaspora's protest was already a matter of fine civility, of recognition of a huge community that builds the country, and the government's reaction led to the great changes that followed. The party that did these things has lost every election since then.

Conclusions

Considering the challenges of the transition and the many socioeconomic difficulties of the last thirty years, we can say in conjunction with the sum of the mentioned protests, several conclusions can be drawn. First of all, we can affirm without hesitation the fact that in certain moments of recent democracy, the phenomenon of protests played the role of guardian of democracy in its entirety.

On the other hand, another role of the protests was that of the guarantor of some rights and goods won (SMURD – in the case of the Health Law) or of preserving the integrity of the criminal code.

Perhaps the most important role played by the protest phenomenon was actually represented by Romania's firm option in recent years to go with the Euro-Atlantic world. The slogan We want a country like out (Gubernat–Rammelt 2020) became used in all the protests and even a well-known band composed a song with this chorus that became a hit.

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Russia–Ukraine War: Celebrities' Involvement in Conflict Resolution

Paula Mureșan

Introduction

Incorporated by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics after the Second World War, a semi-presidential republic which gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Katchanovski–Kohut–Nebesio–Yurkevich 2013), Ukraine is a state that has always been confronted with dilemmas of national interest, in terms of foreign policy, oscillating between two diametrically opposed geopolitical directions that dominate the stage of international relations: one pro-Russia and the other pro-European Union (Veira–Ramos–Liubyva–Golovakha 2019). Such dilemmas have also been reflected in the election of its presidents. From its independence to the present, Ukraine has had six elected presidents who embraced either a Russian or a European route (Semenov 2021; Kuzio 2005): Leonid Kravciuk (1991–1994), Leonid Kuchma (1994–1999, 1999–2005) Viktor Iușcenko (2005–2010), Viktor Ianukovici (2010–2014), Petro Poroșenko (2014–2019) and Volodimir Zelensky (2019–present).

Politically troubled, like other countries emerging from communism, the history of Ukraine after 1991 has had quite a few points that have become milestones to undertaking a European path.

In 2009, Ukraine, together with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova signed the Eastern Partnership,[1] a prevailing public and political priority within the pro-European route. In 2014, due to the illegal annexation of Crimea, the European Union imposed a number of sanction packages on Russia

(individual and economic sanctions, restrictions on media, diplomatic measures).[2] Furthermore, the Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), was signed with Ukraine and entered into force in 2017. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area is an integral part of the Agreement, offering new economic opportunities to both sides, in terms of trade.[3] That same year, the Council adopted a regulation on visa liberalization for Ukrainian citizens travelling to the EU for a period of stay of 90 days in any 180-day period.[4] Since 2015, more than 11,500 Ukrainian students have participated in the EU's widely appreciated Erasmus+ programme.[5] Moreover, macro-financial support was offered by the European Union. Thus, between 2014 and 2021, the EU endorsed Ukraine through five consecutive macro-financial assistance (MFA) operations that amounted to € 5 billion in loans.[6]

Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights are at the basis of the functioning of the European Union. Known as its values, they need to be assumed by the member states.

Protecting citizens and freedoms, developing a strong and vibrant economic basis, building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe and promoting European interests and values on the global stage are the priorities assumed in order to guarantee freedom, security and fair justice, but also a competitive, balanced and stable socio-economic environment, which allows for sustainable development, encouraging technological and scientific progress. Fostering peace and the well-being of its citizens, fighting against social exclusion and discrimination, valuing cultural and linguistic diversity, protecting and improving the quality of the environment and creating an economic and monetary union are also goals assumed by the European Union.[7] It is in this spirit that Ukraine was supposed to reform itself. A stronger economy, society, governance and connectivity were to be the mainstays, but because on 24 February 2022, Russia threw a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the reconfiguration of the agenda quickly turned into a necessity. Consequently, the European Union has taken a series of measures in support of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and in reply to this senseless and baseless military aggression. Ever since, the EU has increased its sanctions on Russia and offered to Ukraine the status of EU candidate country (on 28 February 2022, Ukraine had applied for EU membership and on 17 June 2022, the European Commission issued its opinion on the application).[8]

The Russian attacks horrified a significant portion of the world, which reacted immediately. From politicians to ordinary people, from academic and cultural personalities to sportsmen and actors, many showed compassion for the Ukrainian people, strongly condemning the Russian military aggression (Biden and von der Leyen).[9] A category that attracts the attention of the public is that of celebrities, regardless of the field in which they act. Thus, due to their notoriety, celebrities play an important role in the awareness and concern of the public opinion regarding a conflict resolution process, especially in the digitalized world. Nowadays, they dominate social media due to the impressive number of followers (Erickson 2022),

thus becoming an influential social group that can play an active role in crisis management.

This research is based on three complementary parts, with the following research design: introduction (context, historiography and methodology), means of involvement of celebrities in conflict resolution, findings and conclusions.

The following hypothesis was formulated: celebrities with or without Ukrainian roots have manifested a positive engagement in conflict resolution.

Due to the deepening of various theoretical concepts, works and research items that deal with this topic, the present research will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Does the national origin/ background – the Ukrainian one, in this case – of a celebrity matter in their involvement in conflict resolution?
2. What are celebrities' means of involvement in conflict resolution?
3. Does the media inform about the engagement of celebrities in conflict resolution?

In the light of these questions, the objectives of this article include:

– To acquire new theoretical and practical knowledge on the impact of celebrities' engagement in conflict resolution processes, leading to new reflections meant to enrich the Bibliography.
– To discuss and evaluate the role of celebrities in conflict resolution processes, with a focus on Angelina Jolie and Mila Kunis' engagement in the Russia-Ukraine war.
– To present the media coverage of the involvement of the two actresses.

With regard to the methodology, the research focuses on both qualitative and quantitative methodology, with two case studies on Angelina Jolie and Mila Kunis, two notable celebrities – Hollywood actresses –, the latter with Ukrainian roots.

The sources of information include dedicated books, articles, press releases, posts on social networks, official websites of European institutions and bodies, videos etc.

Historiography

The topic *Russia-Ukraine War: Celebrities' Involvement in Conflict Resolution* proves its major importance and actuality in the Romanian and international historiographical research due to the interest shown by both specialists and the public in this matter. Indeed, it is important to evaluate the involvement of celebrities in the conflict resolution process, while attempting to identify the means of their involvement and the significance that the media assigns to their engagement.

Examining the bliography regarding the involvement of celebrities in different fields of activity is a necessary stage for a better understanding of their role in conflict resolution.

Celebrities have drawn the public's attention to disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, famine and wars, either as individuals or as UN ambassadors/members of NGOs. Some fight against the violation of human rights, sexual harassment and discrimination (based on sexual orientation or religious beliefs) and, consequently, their involvement in terms of humanitarianism has been approached, discussed, and analysed worldwide. The views of specialists on these issues help us to better understand a phenomenon that is gaining more and more attention from the wider public.

The article entitled "Celebrities' role in the Conflict Resolution Processes: George Clooney in South Sudan,"(Rudincova 2020) besides the actual engagement of George Clooney in the process, sheds light on an extremely serious domestic problem in Sudanese society – the corruption of politicians – while revealing the fight of the actor against the violation of human rights in the country.

Directed towards a much more theoretical component, Mark Wheeler 's article "Celebrity diplomacy: United Nations' Goodwill Ambassadors and Messengers of Peace" (2011) examines the meaning of celebrity diplomacy. It chiefly refers to two aspects: Andrew F. Cooper's concept of "celebrity diplomacy" as an alternative form of agency, and another used by John Street, i.e. a framework of "celebrity performance." The topic revolves around the UN and how it manages to involve celebrities in promoting its programmes and agendas.

Brad Pitt's activism is approached and discussed in the suggestively titled paper "Brand Pitt: celebrity activism and the Make It Right Foundation in post-Katrina New Orleans" (Fugua 2011). The author highlights the involvement of Hollywood actor Brad Pitt in the reconstruction of New Orleans after the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, while evoking Lauren Berlant's concept of national sentimentality, with the aim of demonstrating that the civic involvement of the actor was not merely a mechanical one.

The adhesion of a celebrity to a social media community motivates, inspires, and determines participation and individual involvement in causes that until then were totally unknown or seemed to be remote. Thus, the celebrity becomes a model of best practice, turning into an extremely important vector of opinion. The powerful social media interconnectivity between a celebrity and their fans was the topic explored by the article "If we stick together we can do anything: Lady Gaga fandom, philanthropy and activism through social media" (Bennett 2014).

The research titled "Social media's commodified, transgender ambassador: Caitlyn Jenner, celebrity activism, and social media" (Williams 2020) is structured on the same note, that of social media interconnectivity between a celebrity and their fans. Unlike the case of Lady Gaga, although Caitlyn Jenner used social media (e.g. Twitter) to inform, discuss and advocate for the transgender community, she did not succeed in speeding up any collective social movement actions.

Although the celebrities had been involved in the United Nations' agendas and programmes, it was in 2018 when NATO engaged with a worldwide celebrity for the first time. Angelina Jolie's engagement with NATO's conflict-related sexual-

and gender-based violence agenda is in connection with her persistent dedication to the fight against this issue and her attempt to purge CRSGBV globally. The article "NATO's strategic narratives: Angelina Jolie and the alliance's celebrity and visual turn" (Wright–Bergman Rosamond 2021) reveals the image-based partnership between NATO and Jolie that the former proposed so as to create a new planned label by appealing to celebrities' stories and engagement, with the aim of reaching popular culture to a greater extent.

The role in reconciliation that elite runners took up in the run-for-peace events after the violent elections in Kenya in 2008 is the subject of the paper "When celebrity athletes are 'social movement entrepreneurs': A study of the role of elite runners in run-for-peace events in post-conflict Kenya in 2008" (Wilson–Van Luijk–Boit 2015). The authors state that within this category of athletes, there is a distinction between those who get involved in the events and those who are simply present at the events. Nevertheless, they all impacted the public opinion in a positive manner.

At a time when the environment is perceived as a global issue, the involvement of celebrities in this approach is a prerequisite. The article "How Celebrities' Green Messages on Twitter Influence Public Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions to Mitigate Climate Change" (Park 2020) explores the impact of celebrities' messages related to this topic on people's attitudes, underlining that it is the appeal to fear that prompts action rather than the appeal to hope.

The research paper "Networked volunteering during the 2013 Sardinian floods" (Parisi 2020) refers to a disaster that took place in Italy, in 2013. The study emphasizes the engagement of celebrities during the Sardinian floods using a social media instrument – Twitter – so as to motivate ordinary people to take action. Moreover, the study intended to explain how bottom-up disaster-relief-oriented communication was put into practice and turned into a success.

Means of involvement

Angelina Jolie – A short Bio

Born in the United States in 1975, Angelina Jolie is an iconic personality in Hollywood's entertainment milieus and worldwide. As an American actress, filmmaker and later Special Envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), she started her humanitarian commitments in 2001 when she was appointed as UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador (UNHCR 2009). Ever since, her energy, devotion, empathy, and work have been focused on those in need, by both helping and advocating for them. Such activities and engagements are highlighted individually on her website (Jolie 2022), with thirty-three initiatives developed and presented.

Mila Kunis – A short Bio

Born in Ukraine in 1983, Mila Kunis moved along with her family to the United States in 1991. She is part of a generation of Hollywood actresses who have asserted themselves internationally even though their origins are not American.[10] The information on her humanitarian work only refers to the aid provided to Ukraine as a result of the Russian invasion in February 2022. Mila Kunis does not have an official social network account. The posts she made to help the Ukrainians appeared on the Instagram page of her husband, actor Ashton Kutcher. At present, he has 4.9 million followers (Kutcher 2022).

Statements

Celebrity gives rise to controversies, emotions, followers and detractors. Regardless of the support or indifference it causes, its message is often heard, its information is disseminated. Therefore, when a celebrity speaks, their voice is endowed with some degree of persuasion. The social network that we have used for analysing the statements of Angelina Jolie is her official Instagram account. At present, she has 13 million followers (Jolie 2022) and she reached the one million milestone in the shortest time ever recorded (Lavin 2021), on 20 August 2021, when the page was created.

The first statement she made with reference to the Russian invasion was on 24 February, the very day of the initial Russian attacks, using a black background and white writing for the purpose of conveying emotion. The post is very concise, structured on four components: empathy for the Ukrainians, urge to take action for helping them, reality of the Russian attacks and public awareness of the gravity of the situation. More than 600.000 people appreciated that post.

The hashtags used were *#ukraine, # russia.*

Like many of you, I'm praying for the people in Ukraine. My focus along with my @refugees colleagues is that everything possible is done to ensure the protection and basic human rights of those displaced, and refugees in the region. We have already seen reports of casualties and people starting to flee their homes to seek safety. It is too soon to know what will happen, but the significance of this moment – for the people of Ukraine, and for the international rule of law — cannot be overstated.

Five days later, on 1 March, Jolie posted another brief message. To draw attention on the extent of the situation, she included some statistics from the very beginning of the message. A credible organisation was brought into discussion, i.e. the United Nations, along with more statistics related to the refugees. An emotional appeal for compassion and kindness to the receiving countries ended the post. More people reacted to the post (800.000) than before.

The hashtags used were *@refugees #ukraine #refugees #displacement.*

More than half a million people have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries in the past several days. UNHCR estimates it may be up to 4 million if the situation escalates further. It is critical that receiving countries continue to welcome all those fleeing conflict and insecurity.

In her next post, on 3 March, Jolie linked the Ukrainian refugees' situation to that of displaced people from Syria, Myanmar, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and Ethiopia. The aim of this comparison was to raise people's awareness and highlight the gravity of the matter, by stressing its worldwide occurrence. The truthfulness of the information she provided was supported by statistics for each country, in relation to the case of refugees and of all those who had to leave their homes. More than 800.000 individuals appreciated the post.

The hashtags used were *@refugees # RefugeesWelcome # Ukraine # Syria # Venezuela # Afghanistan # SouthSudan # Rohingya # UNHCR.*

1 million refugees have now fled Ukraine.

Before a single Ukrainian refugee crossed the border, there were already more than 82 million people forced from their homes globally – the highest number on record.

They include over 6 million Syrians – the world's largest population of refugees – who've been displaced for over a decade already.

And over 1 million Rohingyas from Myanmar – who as well as being forcibly displaced, are also stateless.

And nearly 48 million people who have been forced from their homes by conflict and violence, who are living internally displaced within their own countries – in Yemen, in Somalia, in Afghanistan, in Ethiopia, and in so many other places.

All refugees and displaced people deserve equal treatment and rights.

The more the situation in Ukraine became critical, the more engagement was needed. The attacks of Russian troops were a reality that needed to be felt, so a video of a Ukrainian woman who fought for her children was shown. Jolie emphasised the fact that refugees from Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, India and African nations that were in Ukraine were suffering for a second time. UNICEF and UNHCR are the institutions that are entrusted with assisting those in need. The structure of the post relies on emotion, but also figures and solutions. The post gathered more than 4.800.000 views.

The hashtag used was *#ukraine.*

If you can, please take a minute to watch this video, shared with me by @unicef, of a Ukrainian mother Maryna struggling to keep her children safe, amid fear of shelling and attack.

This is the reality of life for civilians trapped and displaced by conflict – including an estimated 7.5 million Ukrainian children, their parents and families, and refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria who'd fled to Ukraine and now face being uprooted again, as well as students from India and African nations.

Ensuring that aid and supplies can reach trapped civilians is urgent for all people in Ukraine. UNICEF and UNHCR @refugees and partners including brave local

organizations, are working hard to reach those in need and deliver aid relief wherever possible.

On that same day, 6 May, Jolie posted another message with regard to her visit to Yemen. She once again connected the situation of the refugees from Ukraine and from Yemen, emphasizing the fact that in Yemen the situation of the citizens was terrifying and unimaginable. Again, statistics were offered to testify to the accuracy of the information and the breadth of the damage. More than 580.000 people reacted positively to the post.

The hashtags used were *#Yemen #UNHCR #refugees.*

I've landed in Aden, to meet displaced families and refugees for UNHCR @ refugees and show my support for the people of Yemen. I will do my best to communicate from the ground as the days unfold.

As we continue to watch the horrors unfolding in Ukraine, and call for an immediate end to the conflict and humanitarian access, I'm here in Yemen to support people who also desperately need peace.

The situation here is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with one civilian killed or injured every hour in 2022. An economy devastated by war, and over 20 million Yeminis depending on humanitarian assistance to survive.

The emotions of the followers and of the public in general are skilfully stirred in the following brief post, where Jolie once again brought statistics into discussion when she referred to the situation of refugees and of those who had to leave their homes because of the war. The consequences of this war would clearly have an impact on children, with all the implications that come from experiencing it. She claimed that the war was absurd. More than 430000 viewers responded positively to the post.

The hashtag used was *UNHCR ©refugees #ukraine.*

As well as the millions who've fled over Ukraine's borders, nearly 2 million people are displaced inside their country, many trapped by fighting, denied access to aid, and in direct physical danger. Without an end to the war children will pay the highest price - in trauma, lost childhoods and shattered lives.

Jolie paid a visit to Lviv where she met children that had been injured in the war. She described in detail the consequences that pieces of shrapnel from bombs had had on the lives of citizens in Lviv, and especially on children. Their removal from their bodies was a tough and painful process. In their innocence, the children were playing with such stones, not knowing what they actually were. She argued that the war was senseless and had to come to an end. More than 720.000 people answered positively to the post.

The hashtags used were *#ukraine #childreninconflict.*

While I was in Lviv a few days ago, I was shown a „special stone" found by a little girl. The little girl who found it didn't realize the stone she was playing with was in fact a piece of shrapnel from a bomb. Sitting in the palm of your hand, it's jagged and heavier than you would expect. Its shine and unusual nature must have caught the child's eye.

When a bomb or shell explodes, sharp fragments of heavy metal tear into the bodies of those near the point of impact. Many of the children I met from the Kramatorsk train station bombing had pieces of shrapnel recently removed - a difficult and painful process. Fragments close to vital organs were too dangerous to remove, and remained inside some of the children's bodies.

There is no sense to be made from such harm to children, that goes beyond physical injury to the emotional and mental manifestations of trauma.

The fight to end a war, like the one being suffered in Ukraine, is a race to limit the number of casualties killed, injured, displaced and traumatized every day.

In another post, Jolie exhibited more data on the war concerning the number of children that were displaced, killed, and injured. She offered information about the support and help that the children in Ukraine had received from international humanitarian organizations. She reiterated the idea according to which the children were the direct victims of wars all over the world. The care and assistance of organizations are in the service of children and often prove to be essential for their future. More than 290.000 replied positively to this message.

The hashtags used were #ForcedToFlee #ChildrensRights *#LaStradaInternational @savethechildren @UNICEF @dzherelo.centre @refugees.*

Children are displaced. Nearly 2/3 of Ukraine's children are displaced. Since February 2 at least 277 children have been killed and 456 injured. At least 256 attacks on healthcare facilities and more than 1800 schools have been damaged and destroyed. This war is a child right's crisis.

Visit the link in my bio to learn about work being done on the ground to support children in conflict.

Children bear the greatest consequences from war. Globally, children account for 30% of the population but represent 41% of all forcibly displaced people. A collective effort to address the physical and emotional manifestations from trauma must meet not only the needs of children in Ukraine but also Afghanistan, Yemen and so many other often forgotten conflicts that are funded far below levels adequate to meet children's needs. Local and community-led organizations are innovating new ways to connect children with tools to learn, and nutrition to grow, to help protect them from the worst outcomes of this war, but the global humanitarian response can and must be stronger to ensure this generation of kids have the resources they need to begin healing.

Her last post was dedicated to the World Refugee Day, which she spent in the company of refugees from different continents, a day to remember and advocate for the refugees.

The hashtags used were @refugees @savethechildrenitalia @joel_nafuma_refugee_center *#worldrefugeeday #withrefugees #respectrefugees. The post was appreciated by 818.660 people.*

On this year's World Refugee Day I celebrated dinner with new friends from Ukraine, Afghanistan, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Egypt, Kurdistan, Nigeria, and Gambia. I'm grateful that among so much heaviness in the world, these brave people

shared their time and stories with me. Family, friends, and food bring people together and I was honored to be joined by new friends to eat, share, and learn.

Visit

Another type of involvement in helping and raising awareness of the dire situation of the children in Ukraine was Jolie's visit to Lviv, on 30 April, in her position as special UNHCR envoy. The event was broadcast all over the world, with reports, images and videos being released. The media coverage[11] was significant and the titles were related to her role within the UNHCR or as a *common* person or as the Hollywood actress. The visit was perceived by the media as a surprise, due to the fact that the bombs from the Russian offensive were an ongoing reality in the region. The aim of her visit was to meet children, visit them in hospitals, discuss with international humanitarian organizations on the ground and raise the alarm about the situation.

Fundraising campaign

Mila Kunis' involvement was different from that of Jolie's. At the beginning of March, she focused her energy and work on gathering money from organizations and ordinary people to help Ukraine, her native country. Conducted together with her husband, she named the campaign *Stand with Ukraine*, with the purpose of raising 30 million dollars in humanitarian aid. They made a personal donation of 3 million dollars, to set an example. Those funds have already been donated to two organizations supporting Ukrainian refugees. The video was seen by almost 6 million individuals and was posted on Ashton Kutcher Instagram.

While we are witnessing the bravery of Ukrainians, we are also bearing witness to the unimaginable burden of those who have chosen safety. Through GoFundMe, this fundraiser will provide an immediate impact on refugee and humanitarian aid efforts. The fund will benefit Flexport.org and Airbnb.org, two organizations who are actively on the ground providing immediate help to those who need it most. Flexport.org is organizing shipments of relief supplies to refugee sites in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Moldova. Airbnb.org is providing free, short-term housing to refugees fleeing Ukraine. Standing with Ukraine means supporting Ukrainians.

The couple also informed the public when they had succeeded in raising the money, with more than 65.000 people participating in the campaign. They expressed their thankfulness to those who had made donations, guaranteeing that every contribution was treasured in the light of three values: respect, love and benefits. They argued that even though the money had been raised, the goal of helping those in need was an ongoing necessity.

We are overwhelmed with gratitude for your support. 2 weeks ago, we asked you to join us and more than 65,000 of you stepped up and donated what you could.

Now, with your help we have reached our $30 million goal. While this is far from a solution for the problem, our collective effort will provide a softer landing for so many people as they forge ahead into their future of uncertainty. Our work is not done. We will do everything we can to ensure that the outpouring of love that came as a part of this campaign finds maximum impact with those in need. Funds have already and will continue to be delivered to Flexport.org and Airbnb.org so they can act now. As funding continues to come in we will treat every dollar as if it were being donated from our pocket, with respect and honor for the work that went into earning it, the intent of love through which it was given, and the desire for it so be maximized for positive outcomes for others.

As a direct consequence of the above-mentioned involvement, President Volodymir Zelensky showed his gratitude to Mila Kunis and Aston Kutcher for their engagement in helping Ukraine, through a video call, and posted on his official Twitter page an image from the meeting and a message of thankfulness, stating that the couple was an inspiration to the world. The message (Zelensky 2022) became viral and was picked up by numerous TV chains, newspapers and press agencies.[12]

@aplusk–Mila Kunis were among the first to respond to our grief. They have already raised $35 million–are sending it to @flexport& @Airbnb to help refugees. Grateful for their support. Impressed by their determination. They inspire the world. #StandWithUkraine.

Findings

The study presents new data on the involvement of celebrities in conflict resolution endeavours, showing that one's roots are not the only determinant factor that prompts action. One's belonging to an international organization (eg. UNHCR) is another feature that can trigger a similar effect.

The reaction of the two actresses analysed was extremely prompt in helping Ukraine (Jolie took a stand on the day of the Russian attacks, with Kunis becoming involved shortly after). The means of action identified in the case studies refer to messages posted on official networks, visits to the territory and fundraising operations. The topics that were covered include: the call for humanitarian aid, the need to stop the war, the serious negative consequences of the war on children and the global phenomenon of refugees. The appeal to emotion, the presentation of statistical data regarding the number of refugees / of those that were killed / of those who had been forced to leave their homes, the presentation of solutions / the involvement of international humanitarian organizations are the predominant components in the vast majority of the posts. The messages written by Angelina Jolie were largely appreciated, with an average number of over 500,000 people/ post. A video message describing the situation of a Ukrainian mother trying to protect her children garnered around 5 million views.

UNICEF and UNHCR are the organizations most commonly mentioned in the posts, to which one may add others such as *Save the children or dzerelo.centre @ refugees.*

Jolie's visit to Ukraine was widely publicized by the international press due to the actress's popularity. In her function as special Envoy to the UNHCR since 2011, she has made frequent visits to conflict zones around the world to help refugees and raise public awareness. Her visit also had the purpose of testifying that the Russian attacks and invasion were a reality, especially since the Russian propaganda machine had vehemently denied this information. Jolie's official page contains information about the projects she supports together with other international bodies. Fundraising campaigns to help Ukraine can also be found on such pages as Save the Children-Ukraine or UNICEF-Ukraine Crisis.

Mila Kunis approached her involvement in conflict resolution in a different manner. Together with her husband, they made and posted a video in which they announced their intention to raise 30 million dollars. The main ideas of the posts were about helping the refugees and gathering humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian population with the help of two companies present on location. The population reacted positively (65,000 donors) and the desired amount of money was collected in two weeks, which shows the confidence levels Kunis enjoys and the fact that she is an image vector and booster for humanitarian causes.

Not surprisingly, President Zelenski reacted to Kunis' fundraising campaign through a video call and a post on his official Twitter account, amid President Biden's official visit to Europe. Mila Kunis' Ukrainian origins are likely to have contributed to the positive reactions. The information was widely revealed by the international media, which constituted another image setback for Russia, with the American people sympathizing even more with Ukraine.

From both case studies, it becomes apparent that Russia's invasion in Ukraine prompted reactions condemning this aggression and, at the same time, determined the mobilization of celebrities who came to Ukraine's help.

Conclusions

The war started by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was condemned by democratic political regimes, as it was considered a turning point in international relations. Therefore, drastic measures were taken against Russia, with the European Union and the USA being the first to put these measures into practice.

The pro-EU path of Ukraine, a member of the Eastern Partnership, was technically frozen because of the war, although four months after the Russian attack, in June, the European Commission did issue its positive opinion on the country's application for EU membership.

The study reveals the fight of Angelina Jolie and Mila Kunis against the injustice of war and their putting pressure on international policymakers and national

leaders to stop the invasion. This has turned them into vectors of opinion on the stage of international relations, with their influence far exceeding the borders of the country in which they carry out their activity.

Celebrity diplomacy, the concept to which Andrew F. Cooper also referred, is perfectly moulded onto the two case studies. The positive involvement thereof in the Russian-Ukrainian war, which is currently the most frequently cited news, does nothing but confirm the awareness of the role that the two actresses have in society, while Jolie's affiliation with international peacekeeping and humanitarian aid organizations reinforces her global position. Their messages/ declarations/posts/TV appearances, visits, meetings, fundraising campaigns are followed by positive reactions on the part of fans/the public, including in the form of financial assistance. The media coverage of the involvement of the two actresses was broad, thus exhibiting a win-win situation.

We advocate that in the particular contexts we studied, the two actresses played an important role in conflict resolution processes and that their involvement had a positive impact directly on the Ukrainian people.

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Fotó/István Péter Németh

Helping those in need: Civil mobilization in Romania in the context of the war in Ukraine

Elena Grad-Rusu–Marius Grad

Introduction

The European security environment was completely reshaped after the Russia's extensive military attack on Ukraine in 2022. The longest period of relative peace experienced by European countries after the World War II, known as *Pax Europaea*, ended. The full-scale invasion represented an unwelcomed return of armed conflict within the continent and an unprecedented humanitarian situation. Immediately after 24th of February more than 7.4 million refugees crossed borders into neighbouring countries[1] (UN 2022), seeking safety, assistance and protection.

In this context, the receiving countries mobilized human and material resources in order to provide the needed help. Yet, in some cases, the institutions were slow or inefficient and civil society became the main provider of humanitarian aid, overcoming the shortages and blockages generated by bureaucracy or lack of resources. Moreover, the governmental logistic capacity was exceeded by the large number of individuals, even in those countries that previously had to tackle with migration waves from Middle East or Africa. Theoretically, it was an *ad hoc* civil mobilization initiative that managed to cover the needs of the refugees in a very short time. Besides basic goods, other services were provided: linguistic assistance, short-term accommodation, travel support (using public or private vehicles) or medical services. So, the logistics behind, the motivation and coordination were significant, considering the lack of previous planning and existence of formally built networks.

Moreover, from a theoretical perspective, in the last decades, the existing bibliography extensively examined matters such as humanitarian aid, social movements or resources mobilization in various environments. Most of the observed cases are related to on-going conflict or post-conflict states or to already economically or politically challenged area (Development Initiatives 2021; Otegui and Yoder-Bontrager 2021). As such, little attention is paid to how contemporary social movements work and what are the main mechanisms behind resources mobilization. Overall, there is a gap in the bibliography related to the main drivers of the current social initiatives, although there are some relevant works on citizen aid and grassroots humanitarianism (Fechter–Schwittay 2019).

This article aims to fill that gap and seeks to explain the main drivers of Romanian citizens' mobilization (both on-line and in the field) immediately after the war outbreak. It argues and tests the explanatory power of five potential determinants: economic self-interest, deontological motivations, psychological dispositions and cultural/religious context. Complementary, we take into consideration the social and cultural environment as a general factor that can shape the willingness to voluntarily participate in such actions. The analysis uses individual-level data from a survey conducted in 2022 on a sample of 117 Romanians directly involved in humanitarian work with Ukrainian refugees.

The following section reviews the bibliography on humanitarian aid, resource mobilization, citizen aid and social movements and formulates several arguments according to which there are some fundamental drivers of citizen mobilization and involvement in ad hoc initiatives. The third section presents the research design and provides details about the case selection. Next, the results of the quantitative analysis will be presented and interpreted. The conclusion discusses the main findings and present directions for further research.

Theoretical framework

The central goal of this research is to understand the motivations of Romanian volunteers who assisted refugees in the context of the war in Ukraine. To develop this analysis, we draw on studies about humanitarianism, which we define as people's efforts to help others in hostile climates. An extend part of the bibliography has focused on formal humanitarianism, which represents organized efforts financed and developed by large, nation or international NGOs. Humanitarian movements represent the positive characteristics of humanity, people doing this reduce their well-being to assist less-able others. The humanitarian work exponentially increased after the World War II when civil organisations became more visible and tented to see themselves outside of politics, as people who will do everything to save those in need (Barnett 2005). In the last 30 years, the humanitarianism became more professionalised and was institutionalized (Suski 2012) by co-working with authorities and the governments around the world (Barnett 2005).[2]

Such volunteer efforts come in different shapes and structures, from those very well designed and massively sponsored at a national or international level to those provided by simple civilians who direct small, spontaneous, but important actions in a significant moment (Yarris–Millan–Schmidt–Murillo 2020). The last type of humanitarian aid appears mostly in crises moments and is mostly characterized by interpersonal relationships and affective sentiments (Shinozaki 2015). Most of the time, volunteers offering aid in crisis situation do not wait for the authorities to get involved, they are using the local advantages and their own efforts to instantiate a counter-hegemonic vision of inclusion for refugees (Humphris 2019). Consequently, volunteer efforts towards refugee resettlement thus constitute a huge argument for civil mobilization and opening spaces of welcome based on affective ties of solidarity (Yarris–Millan–Schmidt–Murillo 2020).

Theories of civil mobilizations can help us to better understand which are the main drivers of peoples' actions to conduct these social phenomena. Previous studies found the answer in psychology, sociology (Suski 2012), economy, culture, political science (Donini 2010) or philosophy (Orgad–Seu 2014). Most of the work developed in this field mainly focused on the causes and mobilization strategies (Tertytchnaya–Vries 2018) and less on peoples' reasons to participate in these events (Segers 2019). Conversely, we would like to pique scientific interest in crafting the main drivers of citizens' mobilization, especially in the context of a conflict nearby. And we are especially referring to those people who are not remunerated for their work and on whose support most of the refugees put their trust. This support is mostly seen in the form of donations or personal assistance, actions to define an altruistic behaviour, because the goal is to improve the welfare of the recipient even though it is costly for the performer in terms of resources, time and energy (Fehr–Schmidt 1999).

Then comes the big question about what drives someone to engage in humanitarian activities. Previous researchers found out that personal motivation (T. Miller et al. 2012), compassion (Shepherd–Williams 2014) and empathy (Bacq–Alt 2018) toward those in need are the main drivers of citizens' mobilization. Regarding the last one, people are often impressed by the possibility that someday might have to face same similar challenges. A huge civil mobilization is mostly driven by shared feelings that knit people from diverse categories to come together in the pursuit of one collective goal (Tilly 2002). It is about the people's ability to identify themselves with the framework of a story in which they might be someday and so, they get involved to reduce the feelings of threat, mercy and to increase the feelings of having control. And by this, we can define civil mobilization as the process by which a group goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life (Tilly 1978).

In these contexts, a significant number of new civil initiatives were developed to reduce the suffering of those affected by different crises. People involved in offering humanitarian aid transform themselves in individuals who use non-routine resources and activities to apply to non-routine domains and tasks, using non-rou-

tine organizational arrangements (Majchrzak–Jarvenpaa–Hollingshead 2007). This makes the humanitarian movements to implement professional codes of conduct for intervention and have a better prepared staff. But still, in a crisis context, it is all about improvising, taking initiative, sacrificing own resources to help others (Balliet–Parks–Joireman 2009), proposing new alternatives in order to fulfil rapidly those in need (E. and A. 2002). Mostly, in critical times, humanitarian aid comes also from civil society, from people not daily involved in this kind of work, not even as registered volunteers.

Larissa MacFarquhar examined in one of hers books the concept of human altruism and explained it as a number of civils' actions who are oriented towards helping others as volunteers (MacFarquhar 2015). Her work was inspired by religious arguments regarding the "good" part in any individual. She defines the humanitarians as people who prefer social equity, pacifism and to help the others, even if their powers and actions are limited. In the same way, is functioning the civil mobilization in a hostile climate.

Other researchers based their work on explaining the concept of refugee aid using the concept of "vernacular humanitarianism" (Čarna Brković 2017) meaning local assistance very well organized in different networks from informal solidarity groups (Rozakou 2017b), controlled through social media, to large associations which embarrassed a common purpose, outside of formal humanitarian organizations or state authorities.

Another term used to define the humanitarian work developed by civilians without a formal framework is "informal humanitarianism" (O'Hagan 2013), by which we understand that volunteers are developing their efforts outside the scope of formal humanitarian organizations though grassroots movements and based on their own initiatives.

In a study regarding the volunteers involved in refugee resettlement in Oregon, the authors explain the peoples' attitude as actions of social belonging in local communities through connecting emotional ties and empathy (Yarris–Millan–Schmidt-Murillo 2020). This approach is based on volunteers' past experiences as children or grandchildren of migrants and refugees, making easier for them to identify with similar stories, trying somehow to transpose themselves in that moment and feeling that they are helping by being involved this time. Relatedly, increased perception of a shared identity (Hellmann–Fiedler–Glöckner 2021) (a common goal, enemy or stage of economic development) determines a higher degree to get involved from the civilians.

In this paper, we are analysing the civil mobilization in the context of an armed conflict nearby the border. In this regard, humanitarian aid offered in or near by conflict zones, exposes people to dramatic and unpleasant conditions and intensifies their emotional resources and psychological dispositions making their work more intensive (Tassell–Flett 2011). In this case, why people continue to be involved in these types of mobilizations? Willing to help in the context of a war nearby your region can be seen as an expression of empathy-induced altruistic

motivation(Daniel–David–Eric 2015), as an effort taken not in self-interest, in the first phase, but still an action to protect yourself on a long term vision. In this regard, harmful outcomes which are experienced on psychological, physical, legal and economical levels by the affected people (Koelsch 2017) are also drivers of civil mobilization for people nearby who put themselves in a similar scenery.

In the recent years, the increased use of the Internet and social media has spread also to the civil society and enabled their huge mobilization in critical times by providing the necessary tools for coordination and communication of large masses of people in large geographical and informational landscapes in very limited time (Diani 2000) (Reda–Sinanoglu–Abdalla 2021). Civil mobilization was driven multiple times by events such as natural disasters (Okolloh 2009), political rallies (Jungherr 2015), desires to protect the trust in different belief (Larson et al. 2019) or to offer humanitarian aid for conflict refugees as is the case of our study. The effect of mobilizing people on social media in the context of a conflict was very well observed during the Arab Spring when a plethora of actions were directed online (Wolfsfeld–Segev–Sheafer 2013) (Eltantawy–Wiest 2011). Since then, social media become a key feature of many social movements, especially those organized in order to offer humanitarian aid (Kidd–McIntosh 2016). Since the online accounts are used by more than half the world population for everyday interactions, they become a useful tool for any kind of mobilization (Shafiq 2018); this can be simplified as a simple idea a movement that does not make it into the media is non-existent (Rucht 2004).

It is also the case of our research, not only the fact that we conducted online surveys in order to find the main drivers for the civil mobility around Romanian people, but also the think that the mobilization in this context started and was conducted almost by using social media. In this case, we can remind support groups for donations, platforms used for schedules to participate in offering help at the border or simple online website with information regarding the mobilization.

Moreover, all the above-mentioned concepts can be practically found in social movements, generated by various triggers in different contexts. In the existing bibliography, four different perspectives on how these collective actions work can be identified. First, there is the theory of resource mobilization that argues on citizens rationality, which makes the individuals to mobilize and take action (Marshall 1950; McAdam–Tarrow–Tilly 2001; McCarthy–Zald 1977). Secondly, framing theories show how mobilizations seek to establish and promote specific meanings as being legitimate (Benford–Snow 2000).

Another approach is related to movement identity and in this case the scholars discuss about the interaction processes of identification that can be found at different levels and are facilitated by immediate contexts of shared experience (Castells 2004; Drury–Reicher 2005; Ward 2016). The fourth one is related to explaining social movements by theories of space, place and network (Edelman 2001; B. A. Miller 2000). In this case, the communitarian perspective on citizenship – which

argues on the citizen role as a member of a socially and spatially embedded community (Sandel 1998) – is used to explain how such initiatives are formed.

Regarding citizen aid practices, the theoretical framework available is poor. Although the concept refers to initiatives started by individuals who are privately funded and aim to support others in need (Fechter–Schwittay 2019), there is no solid conceptualization. Moreover, it consists in an unstable category that can include a set of practices that are dynamic and often temporally limited (Fechter–Schwittay 2019). The most relevant practical context is considered the migration crisis from 2015, a relatively similar situation with the humanitarian crisis generated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Thus, if associated with "grassroot humanitarianism" (Sandri 2018; Schulpen–Huyse 2017) it is worth considering the following features of citizen aid practices: are characterized by spontaneity (Fechter–Schwittay 2019), mostly implies unexperienced humanitarian workers (Sandri 2018), represent a form of "solidarity" (Rozakou 2016, 2017a) and are strongly determined by geographical proximity (Fechter–Schwittay 2019). In addition, the practitioners base their activity on their own funds, as well as on those belonging to their social networks (Fechter 2019) and, initially, look for a short term involvement (Fechter–Schwittay 2019).

In addition, although there is a significant conceptual overlap between the aforementioned notions and vernacular humanitarianism, we can conclude that, in most cases, all these practices are ad-hoc, non-professional and non-bureaucratized forms of helping (Brković 2016).

Following these arguments, we hypothesize the following:

H1: Economic self-interest will motivate citizens to involve in helping the refugees.

H2: Stronger deontological values will determine a higher level of involvement in refugees' assistance.

H3: The stronger the psychological impact was the more motivated to help the citizens were.

H4: Citizens closer to borders are likely to participate at humanitarian actions.

The previous hypotheses were designed to be answered without strong data processing, given that further use of other data collection methods is intended in order to increase the validity of the analysis.

Research design and case selection

To test these hypotheses, we use original data from a survey conducted between July and August in 2022 on a sample of 117 Romanians directly involved in humanitarian work with Ukrainian refugees. The respondents were selected based on a maximum variation sampling, since there is no official statistics about the number of those involved in helping the refugees and their profile. As such, a probability representative sample cannot be drawn. Non-probability sampling is often used to study populations where formal access to complete lists of mem-

bers is not possible (Vehovar–Toepoel–Steinmetz 2016). The group of the citizens that support the displaced population fit in this category, because there were no restrictions or limitations. Moreover, we considered all the potential forms of engagement – direct or indirect/on-line or on-site, and we did not demand a minimal time frame. Thus, we also took into account the irregular volunteers or workers.

The maximum variation sampling used for this survey aimed to increase the variation in terms of experience with refuges or humanitarian work, age, education, gender or income. Some of these variables are included in the current analysis and can be found in the following sections. Since the sample is not representative, the variation of the variables is relevant for our analysis. To provide an illustration of this variation, the age of respondents is distributed as follows: 18–30 years (29%), 31–40 years (38%), 41–50 years (21%) and over 50 years (12%). This age distribution matches partially the samples used in other researches focused on volunteering – e.g. (Meijeren–Lubbers–Scheepers 2022). This sampling approach confines the findings presented in this article to our respondents. However, due to the different profile of the volunteers included in the analysis and because the survey was conducted on-line, we should consider a slight influence of the internet usage in Romania based on age (Statista 2022). The answers were collected after the survey was distributed through messages on Facebook Groups (created for helping those in need), so the main disadvantage can be the bias towards those who have Internet access. Moreover, for this analysis we took into consideration only the total number of complete answers received to the questionnaire.

The Romanian citizens involved in helping the Ukrainian refugees were selected as subject of this study due to two reasons. First, Romania was second only to Poland in what concerns the number of Ukrainian citizens who have cross its border. As of July 2022 over 1.94 million entered our country – seeking long term assistance or for transit (UNHCR 2022). In these conditions the impact was significant and there were no previous preparatory measures. Secondly, the Romanian civil society has a short experience with civil mobilization (Abăseacă–Pleyers 2019), there are no formal networks that can facilitate a fast coordination between individuals and groups in such cases and no similar triggers were recorded before. Moreover, social cohesion is known to be a factor contributing to civil mobilization and in Romania it recorder low levels in the past (Commission 2017), although the COVID–19 pandemic had positive effects in the sense of mobilizing latent but extensive energies at the local level (Saghin–Lupchian–Lucheș 2022).

How Romanian people effectively mobilize to help Ukrainian refugees?

Since the first day, Romanian citizens mobilized to help Ukrainian citizens to be well welcomed after passing the border. Multiple news was related to the effective actions undertaken by the civil society. Headlines as "Romanians are mobilizing to help refugees from Ukraine" (Lungu 2022), "Unprecedented mobilization of

Romanians to help refugees from Ukraine. Dozens of hotels, restaurants, doctors, students and universities offer their services for free" (Vlaicu 2022), "Romanians mobilize to help refugees from Ukraine: „We cannot remain indifferent"" (Matei 2022), "How Romanians mobilized to help Ukrainian refugees: They offer accommodation and free transport or jobs for those fleeing from the Russians" (Spotmedia 2022), "Mobilization on Facebook |The Romanians offer their houses to host the Ukrainians, the authorities are waiting" (Ofițeru 2022) are just a few of the first information released regarding civil society implications.

These headlines explain in concrete words how exactly Romanian people get involved. Basically, from being present with food and clothes at the border, they offered to accommodate long-term refugees or to employ some of them. Also, social media was used to create pages or action groups for the same cause. For example, "United for Ukraine" is a Facebook group which was created in the first day of the movement. As is written in its description, "the group is intended for volunteers, donors, everyone who wants to get involved in helping our neighbours in Ukraine affected by the Russian invasion" (Facebook 2022) and is still functioning nowadays (September 2022). In order to see the degree of involvement, over 38,000 people signed up in less than 24 hours on this Facebook group, thousands of them volunteering their help (Spotmedia 2022). This is just an example, but multiple other initiatives were developed online. Another very active social media initiative in this context was "Volunteers in Europe" (Facebook2 2022) which is a group for Romanian people, but which get involved in this crisis. One remarkable initiative directed by this platform is an interactive map with available accommodation places for refugees – "RoOmenia" (GoogleMaps 2022).

Also, the mass media was a good binder in connecting those in need with the civil society wanting to get involved – numerous of announcements about where, when and how the help could be used were relieved through media channels – press, television, radio or online news.

Regarding the kind of help offered, this was not only expressed as an emergency in terms of food and accommodation, we also remarked initiatives to insure transport from border (to other border for those in transit), food delivery, language teaching assistance or medical assistance (for people and also for their pets). Using their own facilities, cars, goods or houses, numerous volunteers get involved in helping Ukrainian refugees. There were also moments when the number of those wanting to be involved was bigger than those in need. Since the involvement was so intense in the first days, the volunteers started to think how to transform this spontaneous effort into a sustained one. Border associations, as well as local and border authorities, have started communicating with volunteers to prevent overcrowding and waste of time or resources (Șancu 2022).

The involved increased daily in the first weeks of the invasions and was diminished when the number of people needing help was reduced. This is very well to be observed in the reduction of refugees passing the border. Still, nowadays, on the social media groups mentioned above, and others also, can be identified

multiple helping initiatives – people providing accommodation, job offers, medical assistance, help in school integration or language assistance. The impact of the refugees' crisis is still important in the eyes of Romanian civil society and continues to grab the attention to those willing to offer humanitarian aid and assistance.

Drivers of citizens support and involvement

This section aims to understand the main drivers of citizens support and involvement in the humanitarian crisis generated by the invasion of Ukraine. As we previously mentioned, the mobilization was significant and unprecedented. Although, in the last decade, at national level, we had several moments when civil society managed to actively express a strong position towards political topics (Abăseacă–Pleyers 2019), there was no previous experience in mobilizing large material and human resources. Besides this, the profile of those involved in such initiatives was similar (e.g. protests against corruption), while in this case there were no identifiable similarities. Moreover, in the past, the general positioning towards refugees was characterized by reluctance and some sort of discrimination (Coșciug et al. 2019). Hence, the cultural and political background was not facilitating nor predicting any of the capabilities that were expressed in a very short time after the outbreak of war.

Similarly, the tremendous capacity to coordinate and organize within Romania's societal structures was not backed up by the existence of formally developed networks of collective action. Thus, is worth questioning the main drivers of citizens support and involvement that was recorded immediately after 24th of February. Additionally, the motivation in helping and providing assistance could not be supported by a strong relationship between Romania and Ukraine since, in the last decade there were divergencies that deepened the gap. Overall, the major topics of debate were: a large Romanian minority in Ukraine is discriminated (the Romanians ethnics are not schooled in their native language), the dispute over the ecological damage from Ukraine's Bystroye Canal and the territorial limits of the contested Snake Island. But this subjects that generated dissension in the past were set aside after the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 (Daborowski–Iwanski 2016). So, we cannot discuss about strong ties between the two communities in the past and the cultural and social differences are not overcome only by religious similarities.

However, the Romanians managed to organize informal networks that gathered hundreds of volunteers and humanitarian workers. These networks emerged out of nothing, but with the help of social media, small initiatives transformed into significant civil mobilization operations. In the remainder of this analysis, we will discuss about the main drivers in accordance with the research hypotheses.

After observing the on-line activity (especially the FB groups used for mobilization and coordination) we found that, in some cases, citizens offered their help in order to obtain some benefits. For example, some of those providing transportation with their own private vehicles used to ask for money. Some others, offering accommodation were charging the refugees, either from the beginning of their stay or after a predetermined period. As such, in our survey we used three questions to assess if economic self-interest was one of the drivers.

The results show that only a small number (3%) of those involved in providing transportation or accommodation ask for payment. In all the cases, they were low-income citizens that wanted to help so, we assume that, they needed to cover the basic expenses. Moreover, those providing accommodation asked the refugees to partially cover the administrative costs – especially during the first month of their stay.

Besides, on the social groups, the refugees were asking for support and, in all the cases, either if the request was made by themselves or by other volunteers (because of the language barrier) it was mentioned if they could cover the costs or they needed the service for free. Later, the Romanian government fully covered the transportation costs (by public means), so the ones using private cars were willing to pay for the service, or they were in a difficult situation – in all the cases, sooner or later the assistance was provided.

Regarding accommodation, in March 2022 a long-term housing program was launched and the owners could ask for financial aid – 50 RON/day (10E) for accommodation and 20 RON/day (4E) for meals.[3] Since then, citizens economically motivated offered their premises for the refugees, in some cases, homes that, on the market, would be rented for a lower price. So, either in the first days, the economic self-interest was not a significant driver for those providing help – especially at the border – later, it could be one of the main factors.

Although the current situation is different, we can assume that immediately after the outbreak of war, economic self-interest was not one of the main drivers behind the humanitarian support provided by Romanians, thus, the fist hypotheses is not confirmed.

Deontological values often play an important role in individuals' decisions. In humanitarian actions, people respond to crisis and disaster situations in which victims are unable to recover on their own and in which their vulnerability puts them at further risk. Individuals involved in humanitarian work are driven by strong motivation which source can be identified using an ethics-based approach. Moral motivation is the basis for the commitment to the moral course of the human agent's action (Komenská 2017).

The Romanian society is in a developmental phase, characterized by a rejection of the individualistic, modern values and the respect for social, communitary and family values, of (post)traditional lineage. The impact of the religious factor on public morality is significant, as the Romanian society is in a post-secular stage of development. However, religious values are transmitted indirectly, through education

received within the family (Sandu–Huidu–Frunză 2020). However, it shares the similar moral and social values with other European states, although the existing cleavages are hard to overcome (Mureșan 2017). Even if, the work of civil society is considered to be limited by low trust capital, citizens' focus on individual needs and social alienation (leading to passivity and a lack of mobilisation) according to a report published by Multimedia Foundation in 2013, the moral values embedded within each citizen represented a fundamental factor for cohesion and teamwork.

The results of our survey show that most of the volunteers were driven in their actions by strong moral motivations. 78% of the respondents argued that the main reason behind their help was "to do good", while 87% supported the fact that "I felt the need to involve myself – I couldn't stay impassive". Besides this, 60% of the subjects consider themselves "active citizen", while only 45% support the idea that they are religious persons. Moreover, 64% claim that someone else from their family or close friends' group was involved in providing humanitarian assistance.

As such, according to the data collected, we can affirm that values as empathy, justice, responsibility were some of the main drivers that lead to strong and fast mobilization, cooperation and involvement of the Romanian citizens, thus the second hypothesis is confirmed.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine represented an unforeseen event for Romanians, although warnings were sent by media and national authorities. In a study conducted in 2022, researchers show that: "Regarding the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, 95.4% of respondents are aware of it. […] Fear of a possible war caused by the invasion of the Russian Federation in Romania is present in 47.1% of respondents, while 38.1% of them believe that Romania or another NATO member state will be invaded by the Russian Federation […]"(Mărcău et al. 2022). Moreover, previous analysis place Russia as an external threat to Romania's national security in public perception (Sarcinschi 2021).

Moreover, humanitarian aid offered in or near by conflict zones, exposes people to dramatic and unpleasant conditions and intensifies their emotional resources and psychological dispositions making their work more intensive (Tassell–Flett 2011). Thus, the immediate vicinity of the Romania-Ukraine border became the closest area to the on-going battles, and the central point in refugees' assistance.

According to answers collected, 85% of the volunteers perceived a certain level of anxiety, while 69% of respondents consider that "Russia is a direct threat to Romania and European Union". Moreover, the high rate of refugee's story sharing on social media had a strong impact on the citizens. 81% of them considered the humanitarian situation as being "desperate", since the stories and experiences were dramatic. 57% declared that they shared their experience on-line and use social media to ask for help and to coordinate with others.

Hence, the psychological impact was significant and in association with specific social and moral values determined a high level of involvement in refugees' support.

As such, we determined that the stronger the psychological impact was, the more motivated to help the citizens were.

Regarding the geographical proximity, data show that only 32% of the respondents were locals or had any connection with the border regions – family / acquittances or other ties. The rest went there from major cities (like Cluj–Napoca, Iași, Suceava) to better support the humanitarian actions. Besides, the resources mobilized were located in various localities and regions across the country (in major cities from Transylvania, Moldova and southern Romania were established specialized centres for donations collection). Thus, an unofficial support transportation network was developed in order to deliver food, clothes, drugs and other basic goods to the borders. As such, the volunteers moved from one area to another in order to cover all the circumstance. In this regard, the last hypothesis is neither confirmed, nor invalidated, since there were no data to validate the assumptions made above.

Conclusions

This article analysed the main drivers of Romanian citizens' mobilization (both on-line and in the field) immediately after the war outbreak. It argues and tests the explanatory power of five potential determinants: economic self-interest, deontological motivations, psychological dispositions and cultural/religious context. Complementary, we take into consideration the social and cultural environment as a general factor that can shape the willingness to voluntarily participate in such actions. The analysis uses individual-level data from a survey conducted in 2022 on a sample of 117 Romanians directly involved in humanitarian work with Ukrainian refugees and allows us to draw several conclusions. First, the Romanian citizens involved in humanitarian work with Ukrainian refugees were not drive by economic self-interest, although the facilities promoted by the government few weeks after the war outbreak could raise the number of those financially interested – especially in what concerns long-term accommodation. Secondly, the cultural and social values embedded within the Romanian society lead to a high level of action, although there were reduced previous experiences related to civil mobilization, citizen aid or resource mobilization. The religious factor has no significant impact on individuals' decision to support collective actions. Third, the psychological factor played a salient role, especially for those without previous experience related to conflict areas or war refugee. Forth, even if geographical proximity is assessed as a driver of civil mobilization or grassroot humanitarianism, in this specific case it did not play a significant role.

Thus, we can conclude that the civil mobilization in Romania in the context of humanitarian crisis generated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 can be considered an example of grassroot humanitarianism with complex drivers emerging from the social and cultural background of the citizens.

Moreover, the tremendous coordination capacity originated from the willingness to help and the awareness that without acting like a team the results will not be achieved.

The limitations of our analysis are determined by sample validity (there are no official statistics about the number or profile of those involved in humanitarian support) and further clarification could be provided in order to deepen the arguments provided until know.

The implications of our analysis reach beyond the case investigated here. It brings an important contribution to the study of informal and private collective action networks, that, until now, were localized and very contextualized (e.g. Me-Too, Occupy Wall Street movement). Considering the magnitude of the effort at European level and the variety of humanitarian cases, it shows that individuals have the capacity to rapidly organize and coordinate complex processes that exceed the governmental capabilities. Moreover, the nature and magnitude of such civil mobilization initiatives are determined by the nature of the trigger (in this case a military invasion in close proximity).

Further research could delve deeper into this by looking at other drivers of civil mobilization or discover other explanations for such fast, efficient and unplanned collective actions.

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Notes

[1] The statistics provided by United Nations reflect cross-border movements and not different individuals, but the figures can help us understand the humanitarian impact. Moreover, as it is mentioned on the official website (https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine) more than 100.000 people moved to the Russian Federation from Donetsk and Luhansk regions prior to the invasion (18–23 February 2022).
[2] Although in the last decade, the extensive use of social media and other digital platforms, a certain level of decentralization can be identified and, in urgent situations or when the citizens considered that the institution were not using the proper approach, they organized initiatives aside the official framework.
[3] The Romanian Government does not provide any sort of statistics regarding the amplitude of this program and does not have any sort of control over the quality of the services provided. In this regard, further analysis should be conducted to assess the efficiency of the program.

Fotó/István Péter Németh

Social media – a catalyst for civil society movements and a tool for populism

Evidence from Romania

Cristina Matiuța

Introduction

A spite of studies in political science deal with the great potential of social media to shape our civic and electoral behavior (Rheingold 2002; Gerbaudo 2012, 2018; Karpf 2012; Matiuta 2015; Hemsley et al. 2018; Thiele 2022). Actually, we live a revolution, that of mobile, instant communications, which is completely changing social relationships, from the labor market and how to do business, to interpersonal relations and citizens' relations with political environment and state institutions. The emergence and development of movements such as Occupy, Anonymous, Arab Spring etc. seem to indicate that the classical representative democracy is outdated and a new form of representation is needed. A central element of the new paradigm of 21st Century's democracy is the direct and continuous participation of individuals to any decision concerning them, participation possible through the new information and communication technologies (Matiuța 2015: 139). At the same time, social media has proven to be a very useful tool for populist parties that try to undermine democratic values. The good side of social media, as platforms for organizing and mobilizing people for right causes that support democracy, citizens' rights, the anti-corruption fight, is often diminished by its dark side, which means fake news, manipulation or even incitement to hatred and violence.

This paper aims to examine both sides of social media, both its use for organizing and supporting civic movements, and as a tool for the accession of a far right populist party to the Parliament. The selected cases are from Romania in recent

years, where, on the one hand, a modern civil society and a culture of protest have been developed, supported by a new generation of young people familiar with the new digital technologies and who wants to transform their country into a modern one resonating with European values. On the other hand, as this paper tries to emphasize, the online channels were a tool for maximizing the votes for a new populist party – The Alliance of the Union of Romanians (AUR) – in the last legislative elections held in December 2020.

The article is organized as follows. It begins with a brief description and analysis of several civic protest movements carried out between 2013 and 2017, which attests the development of a culture of protest, the consolidation of the role of the street as an actor in politics and the mobilization of some segments of society dissatisfied with a way of doing politics. The next section makes a short review of the bibliography on the relationship between populism and social media, more precisely of the way in which social media is used by populist parties as a communication tool. Then the paper analyzes how AUR used social networks in the campaign for the 2020 parliamentary elections, focusing on the content analysis of the Facebook account of its main leader George Simion. The last part of the paper summarizes its main findings.

Social networks as a catalyst for civic protests

Romania experienced in the last decade the largest civic protests since the fall of communism, meant to renegotiate the relationship between citizens and political power. Their series began in 2013 and continued in the following years, reaching its peak in February 2017, when hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in Bucharest and the main cities of the country, protesting against the government's intention to modify several laws in the field of justice. This section attempts a brief description and analysis of the civil society movements of these years with the greatest impact on politics, to which social networks were an important medium for protest catalyzing and contagion in mobilizing people.

Thus, in August 28, 2013, a day after the government Ponta adopted a new bill on the exploitation of gold and silver deposits in Rosia Montana perimeter (a mining village in Transylvania known from Roman times, having the Europe's largest opencast gold mine), planning to send it to Parliament, a young environmentalist has bound himself with handcuffs to the government fence, as a sign of protest.[1] The protest' movie, posted on Facebook, gathered soon over ten thousand views. Three days later, after the call to protest on Facebook, several thousand people gathered in Bucharest's University Square, demanding rejection of the law by the Parliament. The protesters accused that starting of gold mining by the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC) company will produce not only an ecological disaster (by the use of cyanide in the extraction process) and the destruction of villages and rich cultural area, but also damage to the Romanian state, which would receive

too small royalties fees from this exploitation. Representatives of state institutions and political parties were accused of lack of transparency, incompetence and corruption, favoring a private foreign company. By the end of 2013, being organized on social networks, tens of thousands of people protested, almost weekly, in Bucharest and the main cities, transforming this movement into the largest civic protest after the anti-communist protest in Bucharest in 1990. As a result, politicians have postponed a decision on the draft law on starting exploitation of gold and silver deposits with cyanide, concluding that they cannot ignore public opinion. The law was rejected by the Parliament, not meeting a majority.

The next crucial protest movement took place during the month of November 2015, following a devastating fire that happened in the "Colectiv" nightclub in Bucharest and which led to the death of over sixty people and the injury of many others. It was the deadliest fire in the country's history, caused by a lack of appropriate safety measures. People gathered to protest against the way licenses for public places are granted, but also against the conditions in the hospitals that treat burn patients. In fact, the revolt was directed against an incompetent political class, considered responsible for all major problems in Romanian society. Tens of thousands of people gathered in Bucharest and in the big cities of the country, mobilized on social networks, and in the diaspora as well, chanting slogans against the government and the corruption that kills. The result was the resignation of the government led by Victor Ponta and of the mayor of the Bucharest sector where the night club operated. After this moment the protests lost their intensity and shortly after President Klaus Iohannis appointed Dacian Ciolos as Prime Minister, to lead a government of technocrats until the next elections.[2]

Having this solid build-up, the biggest protests in the country's post-communist history took place in February 2017. Shortly after its investiture, following the December 2016 elections, the PSD government led by Sorin Grindeanu passed, on the night of January 31, 2017 an emergency ordinance that pardoned some acts of corruption and modified the criminal code by decriminalizing abuse of office (often committed by party representatives while in public office). As soon as the information became public, several thousand people, mobilizing on social networks, gathered in front of the government, chanting slogans such as "Like thieves, in the night!". The protests continued in the following days, reaching their peak on February 5th, when more than 600.000 people took to the streets in Bucharest and across the country, despite the fact that the ordinance was repealed. The most contested person by the protesters, the Minister of Justice, resigned and then became the president of a special parliamentary committee on justice issues. Although they decreased in intensity, the protests continued until the end of February, the demonstrations taking place under the symbol *#resist*, a hashtag with which many internet users identified themselves on social networks. The protests found a wide echo in the international press and inspired other anti-corruption demonstrations in neighboring countries.[3]

Who were the participants to these protests? They were people from all social layers, especially young professionals, students, teachers, NGO activists, artists, engineers, but also retired or unemployed persons. They were united not by a common ideology, but rather by indignation against a style of governing, a way of doing politics, accusing politicians that they don't act in the interest of citizens who elected them. "USL and PDL-the same misery"– was one of the slogans chanted during Rosia Montana protest marches, referring to the political parties in power at that time. "We have a corrupted government that is not really listening to our opinions," said another protestor (Matiuta, 2015).

A feature of these civic movements was their non-hierarchical structure, egalitarian, having no official leaders, being organized through social networks. The protesters were categorized as hipsters, old-fashion hippies, unrealistic, starry-eyed, manipulated or even paid by those who have an interest in blocking Romania's development. Seems to be difficult, for politicians especially, to accept the idea that such actions could be coagulated without hidden reasons and obscure interests, just because people want their voice to be heard and their opinions to be taken into account. Rather, this horizontal organization and network communication get protests closer to what Howard Rheingold called "smart mobs", a type of group that possesses both communication and computing capabilities (Rheingold, 2002). Times in which we live- said Rheingold-, as the result of super-efficient mobile communications, cellular phones, wireless paging and Internet access devices, allow us to connect with anyone, anytime, anywhere. And the real impact of this kind of communication comes from how people use it and adapt it (in beneficial or destructive manner, to support democracy or to coordinate terrorist attacks).

The protests conform very well to the new forms of engagement, communication through social networks being essential. "Do not go to protest without charge your phone before- said one participant in Rosia Montana protest… On Facebook you find out how much people gathered, how many gendarmes are, in what direction protesters take, what avenue will be occupied that evening, who and what was said….And still there are the attempts to organize future protests and groups of volunteers to go through the neighborhoods and talk to people about the reasons why we continue to go out into the street"[4]. At the same time, they were generally peaceful. Some actions such as blocking the traffic on the main streets in Bucharest, Iasi or Timisoara and the tentative to get into the government headquarters were rather isolated. This occupation of public spaces may symbolize the re-appropriation of citizens on public space that was confiscated by the state. The occupation of University Square in Bucharest, considered the starting point of Romanian democracy, means restoring the democracy and restarting its meaning by inclusion of citizens in decision-making through consultation and transparency (Lupea, 2014). By such actions, these protests enroll among similar movements in countries such as Greece, Spain, Türkiye, Portugal, from which the Romanian protesters were inspired, primarily through social networks.

The protests had both short-term and long-term effects. On the short term,

politicians postponed or withdrew the draft laws they intended to adopt, concluding that they cannot ignore public opinion. Moreover, ministers or even the entire government resigned following these protests, as was the case with the Ponta government in 2015. On the long term, politicians have understood that a new generation has emerged, one of people educated in post-communism, apolitical, but interested in political issues, civic involved and aware of its rights and responsibilities (Saftoiu, 2014). They also realized that these manifestations cross the border of simple protests and express the solidarity of people against the inability of the state institutions to represent and to defend the interests of citizens.

Populism and Social Media

Social media is not only a tool for civil society movements that support democracy, but often an equally useful tool for various populist parties that undermine democratic values. Debates on populism and its ability to use the new technologies have intensified in recent years, with the rise of populism movements that are a challenge to political stability and democracy across Europe and in the United States. As political scientist Cas Mudde points out (Mudde 2007), in its original form, populism is an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups- "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite"- and argues that politics should be an expression of the "general will" of the people. At least three conditions classify an political actor as populist, according to Jan Werner Müller: the first one is that populists are critical of the elite (although not everyone who criticizes the status quo is populist); the second that they are anti-pluralists, claiming that only they represents the people (this claim of the exclusive representation of the people is a moral one: the elites are immoral and corrupt, they and the people are morally immaculate), and the third-that populism is a form of identity politics threatening democracy through the idea of a single, homogeneous and authentic people (Müller 2017). Populism cannot be defined in terms of right, left of center, because "it is not an ideology, but a political logic- a way of thinking about the politics" (Judis 2016: 14). There are rightwing, leftwing and centrist populist parties. An important feature of the populist parties, say Judis, is that they often function as warning signs of political crisis, arising in circumstances when see the prevailing political norms as being in contradiction with their hopes, fears and concerns. The populists express the neglected concerns and frame them in a politics that puts the people against intransigent elite, becoming thus catalysts for political change.

The way in which populists use social media is widely debated in the bibliography (de Zúñiga et al. 2020; Thiele 2022; Moffitt 2019; Engesser et al. 2017; Gerbaudo 2015, 2018; Despa–Albu 2021). Populists are particularly interested in a close connection to the people and social media is an useful tool in this regard. Investigating how populist parties manifest themselves on social media, Engesser et

al. (2017) conducted qualitative text analysis of Facebook and Twitter accounts of populist politicians in four West European countries during a period of six months, from January to June 2013 (representatives of Freedom Party in Austria, Swiss People Party, Five Star Movement in Italy and the UKIP-United Kingdom Independence Party). The authors analyze five key elements of populism derived from the literature (emphasizing the sovereignty of the people, advocating for the people, attacking the elite, ostracizing others, and invoking the heartland) and conclude that "social media are particularly well-suited to meet the communicative preferences of populist actors and that they provide them with a convenient instrument to spread their messages" (p. 1123). Another scholar, Paolo Gerbaudo (2018) underlines "the populist hi-jacking of social media", these channels hosting conversations whose political content raises a fundamental challenge to democratic order, providing platforms both for right-wing and left-wing populist movements "to invoke the support of ordinary people against the liberal establishment that has supposedly victimised them" (p. 745). Social media is a tool for anti-establishment digital mass politics called by Gerbaudo (2015) "populism 2.0". Populism 2.0 designates an ideological orientation that sees social media as means to address "the people", just as traditional populism used the press and broadcasting to fulfill the same purpose.

Studying the relationship between populism and social media, Benjamin Moffitt (2019) focuses on the top-down social media use by populist leaders (leaving aside the usage of social media by populist social movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the Indignados) and finds that there is a wide variation in how populists use social media. He depicts four categories of populist leaders in relation with their presence in social media: populists with a weak social media presence (such as Silvio Berlusconi and Jean-Marie Le Pen, with a low level of engagement, who use social media infrequent and their posts are generally simple links to their official websites or flattering press articles about them); populists with a moderate social media presence (such as Jimmie Åkesson and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who use different social media platforms relatively frequently, occasionally engaging with or reposting messages from followers, but their social media usage is generally one-sided, top-down, as an semi-official public relations channel and their success is not perceived as strongly linked with the social media channels); populists with a strong social media presence (such as Geert Wilders or Pauline Hanson, who utilize interactive tools on different social media platforms, including occasional live-streams of speeches and engagement with/responses to their followers and whose Twitter and Facebook pages are daily updated); populists with a very strong social media presence (such as Donald Trump "America's first Twitter president" whose almost non-stop Twitter usage has been seen as the core of his political success; Beppe Grillo and Pablo Iglesias, who are seen as "digital populists" not only for using social media for speaking/listening and responding to "the people", but also for using the ICTs potential for better participation of members within their parties). This gradational range of categories identified by Moffitt

brings more clarity about populists' relationship with social media, emphasizing that populist use of social media is not homogenous and uniform.

Populism is on an upward trend in recent decades. The financial crisis in 2007–2008, the Europe's refugee crisis in 2015 and more recently the health crisis caused by COVID–19 pandemic have contributed to the rise of populist parties challenging the establishment. Romania is no exception to this trend, the parliamentary elections in December 2020 bringing to parliament a populist party almost unknown until then- The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), founded in December 2019. The party participated to local elections held in September 2020, but got a very modest result: 21.876 votes, representing 0,29% of the total number of votes. AUR succeeded to elect only 3 mayors and 79 local councilors and no county councilors. The real breakthrough of the AUR was in the parliamentary elections organized in December 2020. AUR got 535.831 votes, representing 9,3% of the total votes and becoming the 4th party at the national level. AUR got 33 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 14 seats in the Senate.

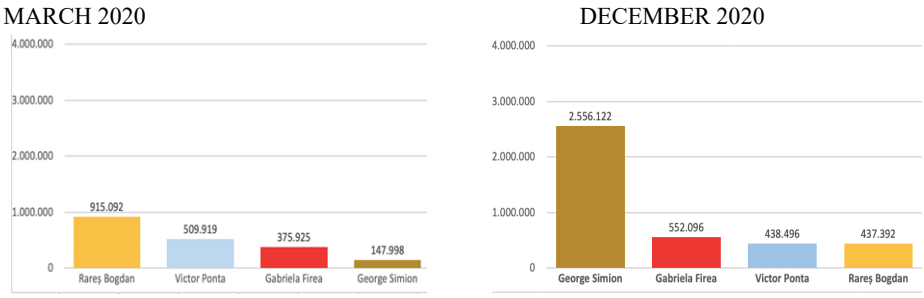
This unexpected success could be explained by the pandemic context (the party having an anti-restrictions, anti-mask-wearing, anti-vaccination message to a population not very educated in health issues and exploiting the frustrations caused by government-imposed restrictions); by the lower voter turnout in Romania's parliamentary elections since the fall of communism (only 33%); by the distrust of traditional parties, as well as by an online social media campaign that enjoyed a wide audience.

The next section aims to examine the role of social networks in the party's communication strategy. To investigate how this party spread its messages on social media, the research draws on content analysis of the Facebook page of George Simion, the leading candidate of the party, collecting his post during the electoral campaign, between 6th of November and 5th of December 2020. Monitoring George Simion's Facebook account is motivated by the fact that he is the politician with the most visible online activity, his posts generating the highest level of engagement (likes, followers, comments, replies, and shares), being certainly a driving force for his party, and monitoring the posts on Facebook is because it is the most used social platform in Romania, with approximately 11 million users in 2020, according to statistics.[5]

AUR and the use of social networks in the campaign for 2020 parliamentary elections

In December 2020, George Simion's Facebook page reached over 2.5 million reactions in the last 30 days, according to data calculated by Crowdtangle, a tool from Facebook/Meta that helps to follow, analyze, and report on what's happening with public content on social media. That means, according to the Facebook projection, over 70 million visits in a single month.

The charts bellow show the ranking of the reactions gathered in March 2020 (first chart) and December 2020 (second chart) by the Facebook pages of four politicians anchored in social media, from four different political parties, (Rareș Bogdan, Victor Ponta, Gabriela Firea and Geoge Simion). The explosive growth of George Simion's page is noticeable in December when parliamentary elections took place.



Source: Emilian Isăilă,[6] based on data calculated by Crowdtangle

The explanation of the huge impact generated by George Simion's posts from March to December 2020 lies in their content as well as in the state of mind generated by the pandemic among a large category of the Romanian population. He touched on the most painful issues of the last 30 years: illegal deforestation, the politicization of public institutions, the corruption of the political class. On top of that, he added the problems caused by the pandemic, such as the precarious condition of hospitals and the health system, the closure of restaurants and the closure of markets. There are also very simple messages that this party sent to voters (like Trump in the US): "Romania without foreigners," "Orthodoxy," "No to abortion," "No to homosexuals," "Union with Bessarabia" – topics that traditional parties have avoided addressing.[7]

The party leaders speculated to the maximum the potential of the social networks. George Simion's messages catch on ordinary people, exasperated by the political class and the effects of the pandemic: "Messages are simply worded, and present issues in black-and-white terms: all mainstream politicians are corrupt, the values of the Christian family are under threat, Romania is being used as a rubbish heap with garbage imported from other European countries, and so on" (Doiciar –Cretan 2021: 246).

During the 30 days of the election campaign the Facebook page of George Simon is highly active; I counted 108 posts during the 30 days of electoral campaign (57 are written posts and 51 are video recordings and most often live videos from his election tournaments in different corners of the country). Thousands of followers immediately share everything he posts. In terms of their content, several categories – part of the discursive arsenal of populists everywhere – could be identified.

These are:

a). *criticism of the ruling parties, of the "establishment"* – The ruling parties are presented as incompetent and corrupt, they are seen as representatives of a wicked system that has kept Romania captive for three decades now. The country is ruled, says Simion, from top to bottom, in all institutions, by people appointed on the basis of political affiliation and obedience to party leaders, not on the basis of professional merit. This situation can lead to tragedies, as happened at the hospital in Piatra Neamt (where the intensive care unit was destroyed by a devastating fire on November 15,th 2020 and several Covid–19 patients died; the hospital was run in one year by eight managers appointed on political criteria).

b). *criticism of the restrictions imposed by the government in the pandemic context* – All the restrictions imposed by the governing parties in the context of the pandemic are criticized, such as the quarantine of the population, seen as equivalent to the loss of freedom; the closure of the markets (a measure that bankrupts the small domestic producer and favors foreign hypermarkets); the closure of hotels and restaurants leading to job losses in this sector; the closure of schools and moving classes online; the fact that patients suspected of COVID–19 have to wait a long time in the cold at the sorting tents in the hospital yard. In this category could also be included the live streamed videos to his followers from various cities of the country, from rallies organized by the party, despite the restrictions. An example is from Alba Iulia where the supporters of the party organized a rally on December 1st for the National Day of Romania, even if the city was in quarantine, chanting "Happy Birthday, Romania! and "Freedom!" The messages are imperative, such as: "Stop the destruction of jobs!" "Romanians are losing their bread these days and no one is defending them!" "These are not leaders, but criminals, let's get rid of them on December 6!" (the voting day).

c). *the country is sold to foreigners by irresponsible and corrupt politicians* – This category includes several accusatory messages against the mafia-type political system, against the treacherous political class that sold the country to foreigners. Simon says that the time to regain control of the riches of this country has come, the time to send away the robbers. Video posts such as "from the granary of Europe we have become Europe's landfill" (November 23rd) or "AUR is the only political party fighting for Romania's forests, while the current parliamentary parties are hand in hand with Austrian companies" (November 11th), allusion to the massive deforestation of recent decades- gather tens of thousands of likes and shares.

d). *AUR seen as a solution to make things right, to build a new country project* – The party is presented in opposition to the old political class: "Will you vote with AUR or with Basescu's daughter?" asks Simion in one of his posts (daughter of the former president of Romania, seen as an exponent of a vile system; she also running for deputy on the lists of the Popular Movement Party). AUR is the salvation of Romania, it is the party that the Romanian people within the country and in diaspora need it; it is the true exponent of the Romanians able to disrupt the mafia system and to build a country project. In this category we find several mes-

sages in which the party's candidates are presented, together with the appeal to vote for them, as well as posts urging to make donations for AUR, "the only party that opposes the financing of parties from the state budget and which is transparent in financing the election campaign" (November 17th). A special place is occupied by messages for the Romanians in the diaspora, who are urged to promote AUR in their communities; by the posts in which he expresses his orthodox faith ("I came to worship St. Nicholas, the protector of children and the poor" – December 5th; "Blessed Sunday, I am sending you from the Land of Apuseni Mountains! Nihil sine Deo!" – November 22nd), but also several posts in which Simion presents his new book, entitled "Romania has a country project." Many of these posts end with the party's slogan – "Justice for Romania!"

e). *call for vigilance on the day of elections to prevent election fraud* – The last category of messages are those that urge vigilance to stop the electoral fraud that the ruling parties are preparing. These messages are frequent in the last week of the election campaign, when AUR supporters are advised to register themselves as accredited delegates in the polling stations to assist in counting the votes and guarding the AUR votes. Simion's press conference on this topic was live on his Facebook page; he claims that he has received information about the great fraud that is being prepared and communicates a phone number and a website (www.nefura.ro) on which irregularities in polling stations may be reported. In other posts on this topic he says that in some counties (Gorj and Giurgiu) the ruling parties have printed samples of ballot papers without AUR on them (December 2nd) and that hundreds of votes by mail are canceled and the mobile ballot box will not get to some localities (December 5th).

It is important to mention the interactive dimension of George Simion's Facebook page. In an interview for Free Europe Romania, a few days after the elections, Simion said that one of the secrets of AUR's success was interaction with people to keep them close and interested: "I haven't campaigned for a month; I've been campaigning for a year. They're the same kind of videos. I interacted, that social networks means, not to do as Cioloș does – put a post, then stop responding to people. I answer people, I make videos, and I answer videos. Some say we have unrealistic numbers on interactions. They are real, as long as you talk to people."[8] Important to mention, the online campaign was doubled by the presence on the ground, in all corners of the country, in an electoral tournament held throughout the electoral campaign, the direct meetings with the people being broadcast online. "We used all the ways – messages on Facebook, on WhatsApp, groups of supporters on Facebook. Things that are used in 2020 on Facebook. I made videos, content that went viral. It is useless to put money in sponsorships if that content is not viral," explains George Simion, criticizing traditional parties that reckless spends money. "Parties in Parliament should be accountable for taxpayers' money, which they have spent. They put millions of euros on television and Facebook and did it wrong. They didn't target anything, they didn't have viral messages. They put the picture of the candidate and let it go on Facebook. That doesn't work in the

real world anymore". The data available in the Facebook advertising library show that George Simion spent modest amounts for advertisement on Facebook; the total amount his Facebook page has paid for ads in the last three years is less than 5,000 euros (23278 lei).[9]

Party activists were also very active throughout the election campaign; they created events broadcasted to a huge, waiting audience that passed them on. AUR used closed Facebook groups to communicate directly with fans of their messages - sometimes extreme messages, with polarizing potential, which other parties avoided: anti-abortion, anti-gay, anti-mask. Being accused of having illegal tools such as Cambridge Analytica behind his online success, Simion tells Free Europe Romania that the "scary secret" is the Nation Builder software. This software, created by a US company, has been used in many elections and marketing campaigns around the world, including Donald Trump's campaign in 2016, Emmanuel Macron in 2017 or the pro-Brexit campaign in 2016. The software is a contact organizer, using criteria such as location, interests and voting preferences of users who agree to disclose such information or who are already public online. For an election campaign, it is a very good tool to know where the fan base is, but also to manage the communication with them, through newsletters or mass messages. "We cultivated our own bubble. We targeted the ads, they are public information that Facebook provides. We did not use a specific targeting on tastes, colors, as was the case with Cambridge Analytica. We really had problems, we wanted to give a mass message on Messenger and due to the European GDPR restrictions, we found out right in the campaign month that we cannot send messages to the 160,000 subscribers to our Messenger. We used targeting and advertising to those who interacted with our posts. I went by quantity, not micro targeting. Every day I had a professionally made video, which fit into the times of Facebook, meaning to be short enough", explains Simion to Free Europe Romania the secrets of AUR success.[10]

Social networks were the main tool for mobilizing voters in the diaspora as well. AUR obtained 60,935 votes in the diaspora, meaning around 25% of the total votes cast abroad, following an almost exclusively online campaign. A reportage of the video-journalism platform Recorder[11] after the announcement of the election results shows how AUR's campaign was conducted on social networks, being interviewed representatives of the party that coordinated the election campaigns in Spain, UK and Italy. In Italy, where AUR gets the highest percentage, 35% of the vote, Ramona Lovin, a Romanian married to a Bessarabian, inspired by George Simion's unionist messages, led the party's campaign: "We were in lockdown, everything was blocked in Italy and it was impossible to get out of the houses. That's why I had time to promote the party and I started from scratch. I started to take from George Simion's page everything I could and I posted them on all the groups, with my Facebook account, with my husband's account, with my brother-in-law's account, with my nephew's account, with all the accounts I had available, on all groups of Romanians in Italy. I joined a hundred such groups and I posted in all of them so that they reach the ears of Romanians that this party was born.

Every like I received or comment…, I followed them all. I sent a friend request to every person who liked it, I approached him in private, I invited him in our internal groups, to find out about AUR and to come with us". The passage is relevant for the way in which an almost unknown party managed to use social networks as a campaign tool. Romanians in the diaspora, seen until these elections as exponents of liberal reforms and pro-European values, preferred AUR at unexpected levels, illustrating that in the electoral area things often change suddenly and unpredictably.

Conclusions

Case studies presented in this paper demonstrate the great potential of social networks to shape the civic and electoral behavior. Through social networks people connect with each other, organize themselves and discover the feeling of "togetherness." The civic movements briefly described here were raising public awareness of the influence of the street as actor in decision-making process. The online environment becomes a community of indignation that call to action. People using this medium are more politically sophisticated, their exposure to information as well as their propensity towards civic engagement is greater and their political knowledge increased over time. They ask to be partners for dialogue and their opinion to be taken into account in order to find better solutions and to take legitimate decisions.

At the same time, the paper tried to show the potential of social networks to serve the goals of a far-right party, in the context of an electoral campaign conducted more online due to the pandemic. This new party adapted best to this type of communication. In the absence of territorial organizations with active members, AUR incorporated digital technologies into external communication with a targeted audience. The content analysis of George Simion's Facebook page during the thirty days of the election campaign indicates a mixture of ideas and narratives common to populist parties. AUR campaign focused on creating and developing groups of supporters to spread and amplify party views. As George Simion said, the party has cultivated its own bubble to spread its narratives. These narratives – such as the malign influence of the West that plunders Romania's resources and undermines country's sovereignty, the moral decay of the West and the decline of family values, the foolish government-imposed restrictions to limit the spread of COVID–19 – often overlapped with those of Russian propaganda, spread in other European countries as well and meant to weaken the cohesion of the European Union and to generate political instability. Even if its leaders refused any rapprochement with Russia because in Romania the communist past and the years of Soviet domination are still present in the collective memory, they were at least "indirect promoters of speeches or narratives written in Kremlin labs that are often reproduced or re-released depending on the context". (Despa–Albu, 2021)

The election results showed how fragile the democracy in Romania is (and also in other European countries) because an online election campaign (sometimes in the most hidden corners of the Internet, using fake accounts and fake news) can bring in the Parliament an extremist, underground and marginal movement. And, in the context of the economic crisis, with the deepening economic gaps between regions and socio-professional categories, with increasing insecurity and fears, a party like AUR can increase in the next electoral cycles.

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Notes

[1] https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/societate/adevarul-despre-noii-revolutionari-cine-sunt-si-1499202.html

[2] For more details on this protest, see: https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/the-romanian-protest-wave-a-path-to-a-new-political-era/

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[5] https://www.statista.com/statistics/1178634/romania-number-of-facebook-users-by-month/

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[7] https://recorder.ro/cum-a-ajuns-aur-a-patra-forta-politica-din-romania/

[8] https://romania.europalibera.org/a/secrete-succes-aur-online-mesaje-tintite-soft-trump-macron/30992626.html

[9] Data available here: https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?active_status=all&ad_type=all&country=RO&view_all_page_id=2212856535602171&search_type=page&media_type=all (accessed on June 5th ,2022).

[10] https://romania.europalibera.org/a/secrete-succes-aur-online-mesaje-tintite-soft-trump-macron/30992626.html

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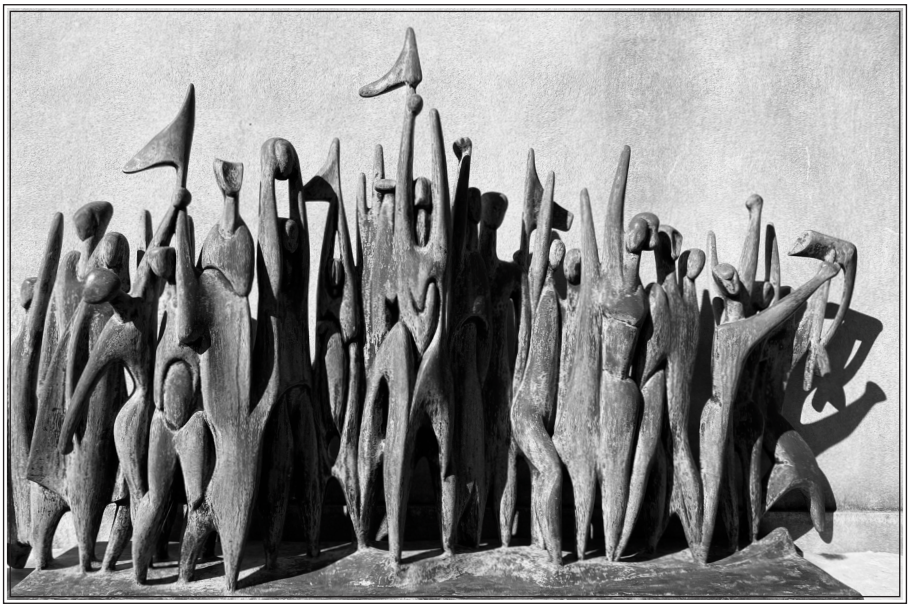

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The role of Civil Society in Avoiding Water Conflicts and Promoting Hydrosolidarity

Zoltan Zakota–Nicu Cornel Sabău

Introduction

Most of us live, at first glance, in places where we feel safe, at least compared to many other parts of the globe. But even here there are often unpredictable risks. Natural or man-made hazards threaten our property or even life, natural environment and cultural heritage. Disaster management policies generally aim to address these risks through prevention, response and recovery actions. Policy makers adopt policies that focus on preventing disasters and reducing the risk of undesirable environmental events. At the same time, an important area of disaster prevention work is to increase the resilience of infrastructure, ecosystems and society.

One of the most dramatic effects of climate change is the shortage of drinking water due to extreme weather, droughts and floods. In many areas of the world, the reduction of fresh water resources is a serious problem; it creates social tensions and leads to migration, which can also affect our smaller region. (Clement et al. 2021) The water issue knows no borders. Traditional approaches to water security assume that water will be the primary means of conflict in the future and may actually lead to war between states or armed groups within states. This can be counterbalanced by emancipation based on the study and practice of water security, which can point out the limitations of the connections between water scarcity and traditional security. Complex relationships exist between individuals and communities and scarce water resources that defy simple, traditional views of

security to classify them as competitive and protectionist. An individual's relationship with water is characterized by a wide and changing confluence of personal and social needs and identities.

As stated in the United Nations University's Report "Global Water Crisis: The Facts", issued in 2017: "The perception of water as a human right and a common public and environmental good is often opposed by the view of water as a commodity that needs to be priced to ensure efficient and sustainable use. Not only nations but provinces and communities will need to align water perspectives to allow for peaceful and effective integrated water resource management and sustainable use." (UNU–INWEH 2017) Thus, individuals and political communities take a variety of approaches to managing their relationships with water and, more broadly, with each other. In particular, the concept of „hydrosolidarity" can be seen as a possible emancipatory alternative to hostility, strategy and conflict in water relations.

In the first decade of our century, „hydrosolidarity", the concept that water management should include ethical and equity aspects, influenced international approaches to environmental research and water policy development. Since its inception in the 1990s, the term appears frequently in a wide spectrum of water-related research and has accordingly permeated discourses and publications on water management. Such rapid spread of the concept facilitated the transition from conflict management to cooperative efforts between users of different parts of the basins, and the development of a complex paradigm that links human and environmental well-being. Although the idea has many applications, it has also provoked various reactions. But it cannot be denied that the concept can help frame the negotiations between the implied states and influence the conclusion of contracts and the institution-building between the parties of river basins.

Even in Europe, according to the website of the European Environment Agency, currently only 40% of surface water bodies can be considered to be in a good ecological state. Furthermore, even if EU countries have succeeded in reducing the pressures on them, the state of our marine ecosystems remains critical, both in terms of species and habitats. More efforts are needed to achieve European environmental objectives in the field of fresh and marine water. (EEA)

Water conflicts and hydrosolidarity

Water scarcity

Freshwater bodies include both natural and man-made objects, such as rivers, lakes, estuaries, underground networks, canals, pools and reservoirs. They can fulfil industrial, agricultural, commercial or defence roles, they can be travel opportunities or the basis of expansion and development. Water and humans have entered into an interaction system in which we can shape, utilize and pollute our fresh water resources in order to achieve our goals, and at the same time, water marks

the limits of our expansion and creates a barrier to our economic and cultural development. Water scarcity is, alongside other ecological factors, maybe the most important environmental basis of political stability.

In some respects, fresh water is a very special resource. "Unlike other important commodities such as oil, copper, or wheat, fresh water has no substitutes for most of its uses." Any change in its quantity, quality or distribution has numerous, often untraceable effects. "Fresh water is now scarce in many regions of the world, resulting in severe ecological degradation, limits on agricultural and industrial production, threats to human health, and increased potential for international conflict". (Postel–Daily–Ehrlich 1996)

Usually, people associates water scarcity with the lack of drinking water, although this constitutes only a very small consumer of resources. Not even the industrial sector, that may consume several times as much as the households, is the biggest one. And sanitary revolutions could further reduce consumption in both sectors. "The water scarcity problem is primarily a food problem. […] Apparently, the per capita water requirement primarily depends on our food needs and habits. Consequently, the main question to address is: how are we going to feed an ever-growing population on our limited land and water resources." (Savenije 2000)

When looking for the primary causes of water scarcity, we can outline roughly three main categories:

– geographical: location of different climate systems and zones, spatial development of surface and underground waters, relief and soil conditions, boundaries of land and oceans;
– social: amount of population and its growth rate, migration, degree of urbanization, consumer habits;
– economic: degree of industrialization, state of the agro-food sector, infrastructure.

Water conflicts

As stated in the before mentioned report: "[…] water is becoming a pressing societal and geopolitical issue – in some regions, it is already of critical national concern […]; up to 40% of the world's population will be living in seriously water-stressed areas by 2035; and the ability of ecosystems to provide fresh water supplies will become increasingly compromised." (UNU–INWEH 2017) The report also enumerates six inter-related contexts, in which water crises may appear:

– water scarcity and insecurity,
– water related disasters,
– water, sanitation and health (WASH) crisis,
– water infrastructure deterioration and destruction,
– unsustainable development, and
– ecosystem degradation. (UNU–INWEH 2017)

Water conflicts accompany the entire history of mankind, as already reported in the oldest written records. According to one of the ever first documents, when the Lagash-Umma border dispute started, Urlama, King of Lagash (2450 to 2400 BC), diverted water from the region in order to deprive Umma of water. The practice of using water as a weapon is continued by his son who cuts off the water supply to Girsu, a city in Umma. (Hatami–Gleick 1994) Utilizing water as either defensive or offensive means of warfare continued throughout human history, in every corner of our planet.

The excellent Water Conflict Chronology site, maintained by the Pacific Institute, enumerates not less than 1298 water-related conflicts from 2500 BC until now. (Pacific Institute 2023) It presents 121 conflicts in 2021, 74 in 2020, 632 in the last decade, 223 in the preceding one and 83 in the'90s. Although we can only associate the figures with an indicative character, the trend resulting from them is quite alarming. The most affected regions are Southern Asia (India, Pakistan, Iran), the Middle East (Palestine, Israel, Yemen, Syria), Sub-Saharan Africa (Somalia, Kenya) but also Latin America (Mexico, Venezuela, Peru). In the last years, Eastern Europe became also a stage for this kind of warfare, due to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Regarding their nature, among them we find terrorist actions, protests, retaliations, but most of them are directly or indirectly related to intra- or interstate conflict situations.

International aquifers can be a considerable source of danger, as the states located in the upper water course are not only in a better strategic position, but also have influence on the resources of their downstream neighbours. As a result, they can generate conflict even without the immediate danger of water shortage. They also can regulate the quantity and quality of the fresh water arriving in the downstream region, since the environmental, natural and social consequences are not faced by the given state.

Some of the most notorious cases of water conflict are related to our most important water flows. "China, India, and Bangladesh are locked in a dispute over the Brahmaputra, one of Asia's largest rivers, with China and India actively constructing dams that have raised fears of water diversion. India's government has used water-flow diversion to punish Pakistan for terrorist attacks. Dam-building on the Nile by Ethiopia has raised the ire of downstream Egypt. […] In fact, there are long histories of conflict over the waters of many major rivers, including the Nile, the Amazon, the Mekong, and the Danube." (Ghosh 2019) But water scarcity generates not only conflicts between states or rival groups inside the borders of one country. It also causes tensions between rural and urban communities and among agricultural, industrial, and household consumers.

Sustainable water management

The United Nations Agenda for 2030 includes 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) intended to apply universally to all countries, being a commitment to eradicating poverty and achieving a sustainable world. These are (UN 2015), as follows:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industri alization and foster innovation.
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

As we can see from the above list, the protection of fresh waters does appear expressly only once, in goal 6, but several objectives are directly or indirectly related to the theme of environmental protection (such as: 7, 9, 12–15). Of these, goal 14, on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, is the one that specifies expressis verbis, the protection of oceans and seas. Objective 17 is of particular importance, due to the fact that it links the issue of sustainable development to the need to establish a global partnership in the field. The first three goals, aiming at ending poverty and hunger,

achieving food security and ensuring healthy lives by improved nutrition cannot be achieved without promoting sustainable agriculture which presupposes sustainable water management. Let us not lose sight of the fact that water management and climate change are deeply interrelated, so any measure taken in order to ameliorate one of those (13) will have beneficial effects on the other one too. Goal 10, aiming to reduce inequality within and among countries cannot be achieved when some countries are constantly facing water shortage or, even worse, are using their water reserves as weaponry against their neighbours.

Sustainable development is also a fundamental principle of the Treaty on European Union and a priority objective for the Union's internal and external policies, so the Union "has contributed to both setting and implementing the SDGs. It has committed to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through its internal and external policies, as outlined in the Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030 reflection paper, the European Green Deal and the European Commission's political priorities and work programme. To measure their progress towards achieving the goals, EU Member States prepare voluntary national reviews, in line with UN guidelines. […] The Sustainable Development Goals also have a regional dimension, sometimes called ‚localisation'. It is estimated that the achievement of approximately 65% of the objectives requires the participation of local and regional authorities. (EP 2020)

Integrated management of water resources in transboundary river basins

In 2009, the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) in collaboration with the Global Water Partnership (GWP) published a Handbook for Integrated Water Resources Management in Basins (GWP–INBO 2009) in which they are identified and described the key issues regarding the integrated management of water resources within the hydrographic basins. According to the authors, these are mainly the following:

3. Establishing basin management systems
   - 3.1. Political will and basin management systems.
   - 3.2. Law and policy.
   - 3.3. Water management framework.
   - 3.4. International agreements.
4. Roles and types of basin organisations
   - 4.1. Roles of basin organisations.
   - 4.2. Types of basin organisations.
   - 4.3. Complementary roles of water management bodies in basins.
5. Finance
   - 5.1. Uses of finance.
   - 5.2. Sources of revenues.
   - 5.3. Financing transboundary basins.

6. Involving stakeholders
   6.1. Identifying stakeholders.
   6.2. Getting stakeholder participation.
   6.3. Stakeholder advisory groups.
7. Strategic long-term planning
   7.1. Identifying issues.
   7.2. Setting priorities.
   7.3. Models and decision-support tools.
   7.4. Identifying management options.
   7.5. Assessing risks.
8. Basin action plans
   8.1. Developing basin action plans.
   8.2. Implementing basin action plans.
9. Basin information systems and monitoring
   9.1. Organising collaborative basin information systems.
   9.2. Technical aspects and practical implementation.
   9.3. Monitoring and evaluation.
10. Communication
11. Raising awareness.
12. Education.
13. Communication tools.
14. Feedback and learning.

In March 2012, as a supplement, The Handbook for Integrated Water Resources Management in Transboundary Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers appeared. (INBO–GWP 2012) It is developed starting from the premise that the integrated approach to water resources management (IWRM) is the „backbone" of the management of transboundary basins. "The catchment area of a river, lake and aquifer is indeed the space where hydrological, social, economic and environmental interdependences appear and where integrated development and management of water resources and territories have the potential to yield the greatest success." The role of integrated water management is "[a]chieving the equitable, reasonable and sustainable use of the world's shared water resources, and moving us all towards increased water security are aims that must be pursued fully."

This latter handbook contains theoretical and methodological updates and additions to the chapters of the first, but also introduces some new chapters, such as those related to cross-border challenges or capacity building and development.

The need for a cross-border approach

Aquifer systems constitute a substantial part of a region's available water resources which, much more commonly than transboundary rivers, can be shared between several countries that generally use them independently and often intensively for the supply of drinking water, industry and especially for irrigation. Their often poorly managed use leads in many cases to groundwater pollution, which in turn creates local tensions and the risk of crises and conflicts between countries.

Pressure on groundwater is increasing due to changes in consumption habits and growth in world population and its corresponding needs such as agriculture, drinking water, industry, power generation, etc. The impact of these pressures can be very damaging (lowering of groundwater levels, changes in water quality, land subsidence, salt water intrusion, pollution, loss of biodiversity, etc.), leading to an irreversible situation or requiring major remedial costs. Experience has shown that certain aquifer systems are managed in an unsustainable manner, due to extraction rates that are higher than the recharge threshold, which compromises access to water by the populations concerned.

More than half of the Earth's population and many socio-economic activities depend on groundwater: 65% is used for agriculture, 25% for domestic use and 10% by industry. However, this distribution is very different between regions: in many developed countries groundwater is the main source of drinking water, as in Europe, where it covers 70% of such needs. In arid and semi-arid countries, where surface water is scarce, intermittent or even completely absent, groundwater usually covers most of the mobilized or potentially mobilized water resources. (Machard de Gramont 2011)

The main issue is always – and everywhere – a matter of reconciling the legitimate interests, usually different, sometimes even opposing, between uses, users and territories, at all levels: local, national and supranational regarding transboundary waters. Such collaborative management must, obviously, respect the principles of sustainable development mentioned above, which aim to reconcile economic progress with social equity and respect for the environment.

In 1992, in Dublin, during the International Conference on Water and Development, the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) was formulated for the first time officially, subsequently consolidated, progressively, within the community international in the last three decades. It is defined as „a process that promotes the development and coordinated management of water, land and related resources, to maximize the resulting economic and social well-being in an equitable manner, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems." (GWP TAC 2000)

The need for a multidisciplinary approach

The international character of a transboundary aquifer makes its management more complex than that of one located within a state's borders. An informed and sustainable management of the shared aquifer requires adequate knowledge of its characteristics, current status and trends. To acquire this knowledge, periodic monitoring and assessment of the transboundary aquifer must be carried out.

The assessment of a transboundary aquifer is only possible when the states involved are willing to cooperate to ensure sustainable management of shared water resources. Governments, through the responsible ministries, are the initiators of the evaluation. Considering the multidisciplinary nature of the assessment and the complexity of the institutional approach to domestic groundwater resources, it is desirable that various ministries (for the environment, agriculture, etc.) and other governmental organizations (knowledge centers, specialized commissions) are involved in the assessment. UNESCO's Global Groundwater Center (International Groundwater Resources Assessment Center – IGRAC), within the international hydrological program (IHP), published in 2015 some guidelines for the multidisciplinary assessment of transboundary aquifers. (IGRAC–UNESCO-IHP 2015)

Hydrosolidarity

Water, used in all human activities, constitutes a material link of interdependence, creating solidarity between beneficiary populations and physically linking them to their territory, especially to groundwater. In order to designate this idea, the notion of „hydrosolidarity" has recently been used. Social and territorial hydrosolidarity is accompanied by a temporal one with future generations. (Machard de Gramont 2011: 37)

For surface waters, water solidarity is clearly linked to a river basin, a fact increasingly recognized in many countries and used as an appropriate basis for implementing an IWRM. For groundwater, invisible and difficult to identify and map, it is much more difficult to recognize and understand the same kind of solidarity. Paradoxically, however, in this case hydrosolidarity is even stronger than for surface waters, for two reasons:

– in the case of aquifers, hydrosolidarity extends through space in three dimensions;
– the complexity and slowness of the diffusion of quantitative and qualitative impacts through aquifer systems implies a long-term temporal hydrosolidarity, especially in the case of non-renewable aquifers.

Sustainable water management in the European Union

The Water Information System for Europe

The Water Information System for Europe (WISE) is the European information portal for water-related issues, from inland to marine, being a partnership between the European Commission (DG Environment, the Joint Research Center and Eurostat) and the European Environment Agency. (WISE)

The General Directorate for the Environment leads the policy and strategy of WISE. It liaises with Member States, particularly on official water reporting requirements. (EC) The European Environment Agency hosts the Water Data Center and the WISE thematic web pages. (EEA) The Joint Research Center conducts environmental monitoring and water resource modeling, including assessment and forecasting services. (EC) The centre carries out its activity in the field, in three directions: droughts, floods, respectively the fate and impact of pollutants. Eurostat collects and disseminates water statistics, including as part of WISE data and themes, and provides a significant contribution to the development of the GIS part of WISE, and in particular liaises with INSPIRE. (Eurostat)

WISE was launched as a web service for public use in 2007 on World Water Day. The portal currently has four sections, namely:

– EU water policies (directives, implementation reports, etc.).
– Data and themes (reported datasets, interactive maps, statistics, indicators, etc.).
– Modeling (current situations and forecast for all of Europe).
– Projects and research (inventory for links to recently completed and ongoing water-related projects and research activities).

WISE addresses several user groups, mainly:

– EU institutions, as well as national, regional and local administrations of the Member States working in the development or implementation of water policy.
– Professionals from public or private organizations, working in the field of water.
– Scientists working in the field.
– The general public, including those working in private or public entities not directly related to water policies, but with an indirect interest in water (regularly or sporadically).

The WISE platform has two main components, WISE Freshwater and WISE Marine, which, as their name indicates, are focused, the first on the waters inside the continent (fresh waters, spa waters, etc.), respectively marine waters.

The Water Framework Directive

Water is a resource of crucial importance to humanity, sustaining life and generating economic and social prosperity. It also plays a central role in the functioning

of ecosystems and in the regulation of climate cycles. The Union Water Framework Directive, adopted in 2000, constitutes a pioneering approach in the field of water protection based on natural geographical formations, namely, river basins. It sets a precise timetable, with 2015 being the deadline for improving the quality of all European waters. Europe's waters are under pressure due to economic activities, population growth and urbanisation, especially fresh waters. Unless more drastic measures are taken, 47% of the EU's surface waters will not have a satisfactory ecological status. About 25% of groundwater is in an unsatisfactory chemical state due to human activities. The chemical status of 40% of surface waters is unknown, showing that monitoring is inadequate in many Member States. The 2012 plan to protect Europe's water resources identifies the obstacles to better water management, offers concrete solutions and sets the EU policy agenda in the field for the coming years. (DGE) The Directive is based on seven findings of fact:

– Europe's waters are under pressure due to pollution, overloading and hydromorphological changes due to industry, agriculture, urban developments, flood defence, electricity generation, navigation, recreation, sewage disposal and more.
– EU action is necessary because watersheds and pollution cross borders. The watershed approach is the best way to manage water.
– Waters must achieve good ecological and chemical status to protect human health, natural ecosystems and biodiversity.
– Public support and involvement is a prerequisite for water protection. Without popular support, regulatory measures will not succeed.
– There is some progress, but there is more to do.
– Water management is linked to many policies, integration being the only way forward for sustainable water use.
– Climate change creates challenges for the future, on the one hand through lower rainfall and higher summer temperatures, especially in the south and east, on the other hand through more rain and a greater risk of flooding, especially in the north.

The protection of water resources, freshwater and saltwater ecosystems, drinking water and spa resources is one of the cornerstones of environmental protection in Europe. The stakes are high, the problems cross national borders and concerted action at EU level is needed to ensure effective protection. The framework directive requires member states to prepare river basin management plans, programs of measures for each district, including international river basins. Since 2001, a joint implementation strategy has been operating, bringing together national experts, stakeholders and the Commission, initially for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and later for the implementation of the Floods Directive. (EC)

A recommendation following the 2012 Plan states that, in order to speed up the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, water issues should also be taken into account in other EU policies and funding mechanisms. This will help to achieve the objectives of the water improvement directive. The European Commission is working closely with Member States and stakeholders to achieve better

integration of the Framework Directive with other Union policies. Operational and rural development programs for 2014-2020 were assessed to measure their contribution to EU water policy. By highlighting the progress made so far, the resulting reports can help improve future integration. (EC)

Water scarcity and drought

Currently, Europe is largely considered to have adequate water resources, but water scarcity and drought is an increasingly frequent and widespread phenomenon in the Union. The main overall objective of the EU's water policy is to ensure access to good quality water in sufficient quantity for all Europeans and to ensure the appropriate status of all waters in Europe.

It was estimated that by 2007, at least 11% of Europe's population and 17% of its territory were affected by water scarcity, and the cost of droughts in Europe over the past thirty years amounted to €100 billion. The Commission expects the water situation in Europe to further deteriorate if temperatures continue to rise as a result of climate change. Water is no longer the problem of a few regions, but now concerns all 500 million Europeans. (EC)

The major challenge of water scarcity and drought was recognized in the European Commission's Communication entitled „Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union" adopted in 2007. The implementation of the Communication is regularly assessed through annual reports. (COM 2007) Based on regular monitoring results, assessment of river basin management plans and additional information, a review of water scarcity and drought policies was completed in November 2012, which is part of the „Report on the Review of the European Water Scarcity and Droughts Policy" adopted by European Commission on 14 November 2012. The review concludes that the overall objective of water scarcity and drought policy, to reverse the trends, has not been achieved, even though some progress has been made. (COM 2012)

Flood risk management

Between 1998 and 2009, Europe experienced more than 213 major damaging floods, including the catastrophic floods along the Danube and Elbe rivers in the summer of 2002. The severe floods of 2005 further emphasized the need for concerted action. Between 1998 and 2009, floods in Europe caused about 1126 deaths, the displacement of around half a million people and at least €52 billion in insured economic losses. (EC)

Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks entered into force on 26 November 2007. It requires Member States to assess the exposure of waterways and coastlines to flood risk, map the area, assets and people

at risk, in these areas and take appropriate and coordinated measures to reduce the risk. This directive also strengthens the public's rights to access this information and to have a say in the planning process. (EP&C 2007)

Other EU regulations on water protection

Directive 2008/105/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy (EP&C 2008)

Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) (EP&C 2008)

Directive 2006/118/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration (EP&C 2006)

Directive 2006/7/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 concerning the management of bathing water quality (EP&C 2006)

Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (EC 1998)

Council Directive of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste water treatment (EEC 1991)

Council Directive of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources (EEC 1991)

Existing legislation in the EU with indirect relevance for water protection

Consequences for water protection in other laws are largely derived as a result of achieving environmental objectives that are not explicitly focused on water, such as reducing pollution, offsetting GHG emissions and preventing other threats to the environment. Among the more important norms from the point of view of our topic, we can list the following:

– Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage (EP&C 2004)
– Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) (EP&C 2010)
– Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (EP&C 2011)
– Council Directive on the protection of the environment, and in particular of the soil, when sewage sludge is used in agriculture (Council 1986)

– Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules on the making available on the market of EU fertilising products (EP&C 2019)
– Regulation (EU) 2017/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council on mercury (EP&C 2017)
– Regulation (EU) 2018/841 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (EP&C 2018)
– The common agricultural policy (CAP).

The role of civil society in managing water conflicts

Levels of action

As I explained above, the management of water shortages requires an increasing social and international cooperation. The solution options can be classified in several ways, but the most important factor is the stage of the water shortage in which the problem is treated. Accordingly, we can talk about prevention or treatment.

We can speak of prevention if the given country still has the opportunity to recognize the dangers of the impending water shortage and can take measures to avert its consequences. The tools for this can be: searching for new water sources, the construction of water reservoirs and canals, building sewer and water pipeline systems, solving wastewater treatment or introducing new agricultural irrigation technologies, the construction of monitoring systems and the formation of society's environmental awareness.

Of course, if the possibility of water shortage is not recognized in time, all these steps can be taken just post facto as parts of the treatment. The biggest problems arise when the water shortage has reached such a scale that to deal with it, it is also necessary to solve the mitigation of serious social consequences, such as health and food aid, or reception, accommodation and resettlement of ecological refugees.

When talking about treatment, we can distinguish between three main categories of solutions:
– political: a well-functioning water policy, efficient water and environmental protection authorities, appropriate monitoring and coordination mechanisms;
– economic: developments that greatly contribute to the water supply of certain regions or reduce the water needs of certain sectors;
– social: raising society's awareness of potential problems and mitigating negative effects.

Depending on the extent of the affected areas and the parties involved, problem solving can be done on different levels: local, regional, national or international.

Fields of action

The implementation of political aspirations, the realization of large investments and the introduction of new innovations can be carried out much more easily if society feels the problem to be solved as its own and accepts the proposed solution. Civil organizations can play an important role in the process of social acceptance, as they are able to make the dangers associated with increasing water scarcity widely known. At the same time, they can facilitate the acceptance of those central decisions by the population, during which certain rights may be impaired or they may have to give up part of their usual welfare habits in order to protect water bases.

Civil organizations can, of course, also play a major role in communication in the opposite direction. Due to their social embeddedness and role, they know much better the opinions, reactions and expectations of the population in relation to certain water and environmental protection strategies or laws and can convey them more effectively to the decision makers.

Social solutions alone are not, or only partially, suitable for dealing with problems. Their role can be primarily in prevention and short-term, quick-reaction actions. In this case, civil organizations can also provide a significant amount of help, since they have adequate local knowledge, on the basis of which they can provide effective assistance to higher-level administrative bodies on the one hand, and on the other hand, they can support or even take over the running of their actions at the local level.

In making the problems known to a wider audience, the role of the media is most important, the main purpose of which should be to raise awareness of the problem and inform the adult population. The existence of an independent media that conveys not only government decisions to the population, but also the views of the affected social groups, especially in cooperation with civil organizations, can play an important role in the development and implementation of effective crisis management solutions.

Another area where the role of civil organizations can be significant is education. In the current situation, in a constantly deteriorating ecological situation, the importance of an environment-oriented teaching is increasing. One of the goals of this should be to inform the population in time of the necessity of water conservation, the consequences of water pollution, the potential solutions, and to make them aware that we are facing a global problem. Although the formal education system is tasked with training suitable water and environmental protection professionals, there is a good chance that non-profit organizations can also participate in their further training and in the development of an interdisciplinary approach.

Since most water problems are not local in nature, but extend to wider regions, solutions can only rarely be found at the local level. Moreover, as I have already illustrated above, this often requires cooperation at the international level. International non-profit organizations can play a major role here, due to their larger size and advocacy power.

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Global Citizenship Education during and after the COVID–19 Pandemic

A Delphi study on responses from previous research in four universities in Romania

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Introduction

Global citizenship education (GCE) is, according to an established definition, a holistic "framing paradigm which encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a world which is more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and sustainable" (UNESCO 2014: 9). It constitutes a framework for civic learning and involvement, projected as an educational strategy, but also as a form of granting citizenship a symbolic and active role in addressing global issues of political, economic, social and environmental nature. Global citizenship is viewed, for this purpose, as "a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity… emphasizing political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and the global" (UNESCO 2015: 14). In this sense GCE interferes with policies and goals expressed by sustainability policies and it is very similar, in its intention and practice, to sustainable education policies (Steele–Rickards 2021).

The major principles underpinning the GCE approach deal with strategies of awareness and action. This is, primarily, expressed as "global consciousness", reflecting the moral and ethical aspects of global issues articulated together with "global competency", calling attention about the need to learn and develop expertise in addressing global issues. Secondly, it assumes the need of acting and offering strategies to participating in changing and developing the world (United Nations 2015; Dill 2013). There is an obvious local dimension of these strategies, knowledge and practice, but this is meant to be understood and approached for a larger,

global relevance and impact. The ideas of global consciousness and competency are, thus, expressed through local elements perceived as reflecting or impacting global conditions, while the ideas of action and involvement are assumed as local skills or strategies that may be, ultimately, relevant and efficient at a global scale.

The COVID–19 pandemic affected drastically the education practices and outcomes, in their possibilities to express goals and develop skills formulated by GCE, including at higher educational levels. In the same time, as a global phenomenon, the COVID–19 pandemic created a framework for adjustment and reflection that can contribute to better understand and refine these practices and goals for the future.

Box 1. GCE goals as established by UNESCO (2015: 16)

- *develop an understanding of global governance structures, rights and responsibilities, global issues and connections between global, national and local systems and processes;*
- *recognize and appreciate difference and multiple identities, e.g. culture, language, religion, gender and our common humanity, and develop skills for living in an increasingly diverse world;*
- *develop and apply critical skills for civic literacy, e.g. critical inquiry, information technology, media literacy, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, negotiation, peace building and personal and social responsibility;*
- *recognize and examine beliefs and values and how they influence political and social decision-making, perceptions about social justice and civic engagement;*
- *develop attitudes of care and empathy for others and the environment and respect for diversity;*
- *develop values of fairness and social justice, and skills to critically analyze inequalities based on gender, socio-economic status, culture, religion, age and other issues;*
- *participate in, and contribute to, contemporary global issues at local, national and global levels as informed, engaged, responsible and responsive global citizens.*

Research problem

Our research primarily aimed at investigating the principles of GCE through questioning experiences, opinions and evaluations of university education in pandemic context in Romania. This has been developed through the reflexive methodology of a *Delphi study* with selected *experts* for evaluation and recommendations on the basis of an already existing qualitative research involving semi-structured

interviews with four categories of respondents (students, educators, administrative staff and external stakeholders) in four Romanian universities. We utilized data and results of a study on online teaching during the COVID–19 pandemic that analyzed the perception of these stakeholders on the educational changes and experiences that the pandemic brought (Barth–Pantea 2022). This offered a rich material and directly illustrated the issue of online education during the pandemic, as direct experience evoking a global condition of the interviewed people, through which we could inquiry and develop the GCE-related analysis. For that matter we involved a critical-constructivist perspective on various principles, factors and elements interfering with the actual developments and expectations of GCE policies. We considered the topic relevant for a critical-prospective assessment of GCE as principle and practice because – despite various efforts and programs developed at the level of curriculum execution by both the Ministry of Education and several NGOs – Romanian academia has only incipiently implemented sustainable development goals in education (Keller et al. 2014: 44; Firoiu 2019). Secondly, we found the pandemic context suitable for this kind of investigation because it forced adjustive measures in education practice and curricula that reflected sustainable development goals and, thus, might be seen as an opportunity to offering alternative, creative and socially- and globally-sensitive responses and strategies to education (see Pradhan et al. 2021).

Ionescu et al. in their research on e-learning education during pandemic in Romania concluded that students participated relatively enthusiastically in online learning, and a large number of teachers appreciated the easiness and flexibility of conducting the courses (Ionescu et al. pp. 11–12). Nevertheless, as Barth and Pantea (2022) have noticed, for a more suitable understanding of course contents and their adaptability for the pandemic context in terms of sustainability there is a need for a different kind of approach. Conclusions on enthusiasm and flexibility request a deeper analysis meant to evaluate how students and educators (and also administrative staff or external stakeholders) address and appropriate the pandemic condition to programs, processes and objectives of learning larger than the limited context of their practice (such as the institutional or departmental levels). For that matter, we suggest, that the very condition of pandemic as global condition may delve into (at the level of research) and reveal (at the level of analysis) important connections with and clarifications of GCE principles, goals, skills and impacts. The critical situation brought forward by the pandemic radically influenced, primarily, the interaction between students, students and teachers and students and educational infrastructure, while limiting possibility to engage socially in a series of activities supposed by the GCE.

Our research problem may be stated primarily in relation with fundamentals of sustainability in educational practices, as expressed by realization of some GCE goals in education, which are critically questioned. Additionally, we granted relevance to the crisis context within which these were evaluated, as explained above. GCE appeared, thus, at the intersection of some factors given by the specificities

of local practices, revealed in the critical situations determined and instilled by the pandemic. For the inconsistencies of GCE principles in specific practices we took into consideration a model for interpreting moral and political dimensions of GCE (Veugelers 2011) adjusted for pandemic context, and previous researches that indicated sociological characteristics for the targeted subject and region during pandemic (Ionescu et al. 2020; Edelhauser–Lupu-Dima 2020) and demonstrated the creative adjusting responses offered by learning experiences as response to the COVID–19 pandemic (Pradhan et al. 2021; Massaro 2022).

We developed a constructivist perspective in order to understand how references to experiences, values and behaviors are creating meaningful realities for those involved and questioned. We addressed ourselves the following research questions:

Box 2. Research problems

- How are the GCE principles and goals expressed and practiced?
- What deserves more attention? Which key competencies are the most relevant for sustainable development and how are they developed?
- How is there put the theory behind GCE into teaching?
- Is it possible to select key competencies in the context of Romanian universities for sustainable development? Are they accordingly recognized, identified and put at work as such?
- Which differences are visible within the main GCE concepts that reflect and respond to global contexts/situations/crises such as that illustrated by the COVID–19 pandemic in given educational and cultural context?

The informative and discussion points envisaged through the interviews taken by Barth and Pantea (2022) helped us at developing understandings about key learner attributes defined by UNESCO, including appreciation about how much the educational context provided *informed and critically literate; socially connected and respectful of diversity* as well as *ethically responsible and engaged* components, skills and achievements. The presentation of interview situations and actual development of some interviews called us attention about how various other researchers on GCE pedagogy (Fonteijn 2019; Nygren et al. 2020; Lazarov–Semenescu 2022) and on online education during the COVID–19 pandemic (Hollings 2020; Salas-Pilco–Yang–Zhang 2021; Lidegran et al. 2021) referred to such issues as: *the online teaching experience; whether, how much and how specifically students perceived themselves as both learners and citizens; whether, how much and how specifically they learned through communicative practices outside the classroom (among classmates, with educators); whether, how much and how specifically they perceived themselves as agents of collaborative help or change; how much, how specifically they developed global competences (and of what kind).*

These allowed us to outline – taking also into consideration our own academic experience with online teaching with university students during the COVID–19 pandemic – a framework for understanding positive and negative experiences they had (and of what kind); whether they connected, participated, shared experiences or problems, and understood better the global crisis in what they did, and if not, why (what kind of limitations or what impeded their connection, participation and understanding); whether they perceived the pandemic context as prohibitive/favorable for the involvement; whether they considered themselves unable, unprepared, restricted or disenfranchised for that, or if, on the contrary, they perceived the pandemic experience as a challenging/engaging one, providing them new perspectives, while pushing them to develop creative ideas about their future and the world's future – and how all these were perceived by educators, other university staff and external stakeholders. This ideational framework, when resonated on the actual considerations made by Barth and Pantea (2022), constituted the catalyst through which we created the Delphi Method hypotheses for the expert discussion recommendations.

Method of analysis

Our research topic can be understood as a construction of references, experiences, reflections and evaluations. This is suitable for a constructivist methodological perspective that we projected, based on already existing empirical material and conclusions about the topic under investigation. *The Delphi Method* has been vigorously utilized in educational research (Green 2014) and has often been used to investigate and refine curricular aspects regarding several sub-domains or subject-specific issues of education fields, such as, for example scientific education (Schulte 2015). This method is capable to evaluate these constructivist views in the contexts of curricula and learning strategies, to be assessed and improved for the benefit of larger goals, GCE principles included, as reflected in the global experience that both internal (learners, educators and administrative staff) and external stakeholders had, as impacted by the global pandemic in their interaction and activities.

We used a *group communication technique* according to Delphi Method standards established by Linstone and Turoff (2002: 8), based on a single interaction in a *formal conference/seminar format.* We invited five experts in GCE, specialists in sustainable development and peace studies from three universities (University of Marburg, Germany; Coventry University, UK; and University of Coimbra, Portugal): T. B., professor of peace and conflict studies specialized in postcolonial and postwar political conflicts, and the role of victims in transitional justice as well as in sexual and reproductive rights as a global field of conflict; C.B., professor of peace and conflict studies, specialized in conflict analysis, political development and international conflict resolution and peace building; D.C., professor of conflict

resolution studies, SDG expert; D.N., professor of international relations, expert in human rights, peacebuilding and humanitarian action; and M.R.F. professor of international relations, expert in security studies, foreign policy and peace studies. The formal conference/seminar format for discussion was provided by a face-to-face workshop organized at the Babeș–Bolyai University of Cluj–Napoca, Romania, within a project of Integration of Work-based Learning in Peace, Conflict and Security Studies (INCOPS) where abovementioned universities and experts were co-participants.

Adapting a model of analysis put forward by Schulte (2015: 81–84) we addressed the following research question and hypotheses, taking into consideration the impacts on educational curricula and student perspective. Considering the topical researches mentioned before we expected that stakeholders assign priority to some GCE aspects at the expense of others as well as to some pedagogical strategies that would determine the implementation of GCE principles and the realization of GCE goals.

Table 1. Delphi Method research questions (adapted from Schulte 2015).

Questions	**Hypotheses**
1. What expectations of desirable GCE can be identified in the stakeholders' view?	*Hypothesis 1a:* Through the expert Delphi method, a valid clarification for desirable aspects of GCE can be reached. *Hypothesis 1b:* The aspects of desirable GCE expressed by the participants of this study relate to recommendations from bibliography and to aspects collected in previous curricular studies associated with GCE, but also include additional aspects. *Hypothesis 1c:* The aspects of desirable GCE expressed by the participants of this study relate to actual teaching experiences and to circumstances given by the teaching format and conditions, social interaction and educational national/regional cultures.
2. What emphases can be identified in the stakeholders' views?	*Hypothesis 2a:* Highest priority is given to aspects related to GCE. *Hypothesis 2b:* Lowest priority is assigned to aspects related to GCE. *Hypothesis 2c:* The priority of aspects depends on the level of engagement.

3. To what extent are aspects of desirable GCE realized in practice according to the stakeholders' views?	*Hypothesis 3a:* Aspects related to students' living environment, ethical references, and critically judging social communication and public messages are assessed with highest extent of realization in their education. *Hypothesis 3b:* Aspects related to students' living environment, ethical references, and critically judging social communication and public messages are assessed with lowest extent of realization in their education. *Hypothesis 3c:* The extent of realization depends on the level of engagement and increases with more advanced/diversified forms of engagement, including non-academic engagement.
4. How much the strategy/the method of implementing GCE determined their fulfillment and acceptance?	*Hypothesis 4a:* For the majority of the aspects, GCE is smoothly integrated, regardless of teaching methods or strategies. *Hypothesis 4b:* For most aspects, their realization falls short regardless of teaching methods or strategies. *Hypothesis 4c:* For most aspects, a prominent role of creative, experimental strategies are needed in order to foster and improve implementation, and successfully achieve them.

The evaluative discussion constantly invoked the pandemic context as relevant concept for reflecting on a global situation/crisis and modifier of practices, stakeholders' references and priorities.

Theoretical and interpretive considerations

The theoretical framework of GCE suggests that specific global relevance exists for any experience reflecting on a critical context which affects major social situations. The educational system – with those directly involved within, or connected with its functioning and purposes – was one of the most evident systems that were affected by the pandemic. Accordingly, any social practice offering functionality for the system, such as the online education, provides empirical material for researching/understanding the global dimension of the problem and the corresponding strategies, solutions, effects and opinions.

Following Veugelers (2011) we took into consideration that the pandemic context created conditions for *competency-based GCE* ("to be aware of global interdependency," "to equip with knowledge and skills required in the competitive world" in Veugelers' terms); for *moral GCE* ("to be aware of global issues and take responsibilities," "to engage in solutions") and for *critical GCE* ("to recognize global issues in terms of global structure/systems and power relations," "to transform structures") at the level of "purpose on education," as well as suggestions for

a reconsideration/better integration in the educational curricula, in the future, of such educational topics as "global economy," "international organizations," "global issues," "human rights," "different cultures" or "power relations/dynamics."

In the expert discussions' exemplifications we could assign relevance to such GCE aspects as: *empathy, tolerance and critical thinking.* Obviously, the logic of Delphi Method wasn't that of confronting with an already existing (or anticipated) content of reference selected from interviews or other empirical material, but that of clarifying a framework of reference in GCE for any content. For that matter, the incidence of topics or meanings attached to them (if any) found in the interviews taken by Barth and Pantea (2022) or any other similar research is irrelevant, because what the interpretation may reveal is how suggested topics, such as empathy, tolerance and critical thinking may be articulated within contents about online learning during the COVID–19 pandemic. Nevertheless we utilized that illustrative already existing qualitative research on the topic in order to identify, capture and correlate items of reference to experienced situations of educational practices.

We may notice that, firstly, at the level of *focus, general approach and pedagogical approach,* may exist different perceptions and problems about how GCE principles may be efficiently mingled (and integrated) with more traditional principles, which exist inevitably in all educational systems to some extent. Moreover, as Schugurensky and Wolhuter (2020: 8–10) have noticed, there may be problems regarding the perception (and rejection) of some GCE principles as being granted exaggerated importance at the expense of already existing matters or topics of study, and even possibility to create unbalanced relations and reinforce hierarchies and discriminations, against its intentions.

Accordingly, something apparently unambiguous and desirable such as those sets of recommendations existing in UNESCO's handbooks of GCE and sustainable education as: "Learners develop their understanding of the world, global themes, governance structures and systems, including politics, history and economics; understand the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups", "Learners learn about their identities and how they are situated within multiple relationships as a basis for understanding the global dimension of citizenship" or "Learners are expected to reflect on ethical conflicts related to social and political responsibilities and the wider impact of their choices and decisions" (UNESCO 2015) may be, in various cases, surprisingly difficult to be successfully adopted in school curricula of any level and actual educational practice. This is due not only to persisting traditional educational contents and traditional formats of learning, teaching and assessing, but also to inabilities to adjust to circumstances that call for change. That's why one may find in interviews constant references to the pedagogical and moral/civic aspects of online education, as well as to the need to develop a new kind of engagement and capacity (Barth–Pantea 2022). They were perceived as important, yet not very well adapted to the given pandemic context, even if, let's say the technological aspect of adaptation (the online education) was apparently a successful adjustment.

Findings and recommendations

The Delphi Method discussion confirmed the following hypotheses:

"The aspects of desirable GCE expressed by the participants of this study relate to actual teaching experiences and to circumstances given by the teaching format and conditions, social interaction and educational national/regional cultures" *(Hypothesis 1c):* This was confirmed by discussions at the expense of the other two hypotheses which suggested that a valid clarification of desirable GCE principles could be reached from simple consultation or Bibliography recommendation.

In the case of the second hypothetical point we established that the priority of aspects depends on the level of engagement *(Hypothesis 2c),* with the observation that clear distinctions are needed to be made for circumstances in which a good evaluation of how to establish "real" engagement is difficult to be done.

For the formulation of *Hypotheses 3a* and *3b* ("Aspects related to students' living environment, ethical references, and critically judging social communication and public messages are assessed with highest extent of realization in their education") we could acknowledge, after the discussion, how: the first item, "students' living environment" was only superficially referred, and thus received minor relevance; how the second item, "ethical references" may be seen relevant for the discussion on empathy and tolerance whereas "critically judging social communication and public messages" is relevant for critical thinking, as detailed further. As a confirmation of what we hypothesized there was nevertheless a more clear option for "The extent of realization depends on the level of engagement and increases with more advanced/diversified forms of engagement, including non-academic engagement" *(Hypothesis 3c),* with the observation that some GCE aspects were given priority at the expense of others according to adaptability and "elasticity" of the nature of the aspects: for example, "empathy" or "critical thinking" are obviously more adjustable to a variety of situations, whereas, for example "environmental concern" (which wasn't referred) is obviously more focused on a specific aspect and domain.

Finally, for most aspects, a prominent role of creative, experimental strategies were deemed necessary in order to foster realization and successfully achieve them *(Hypothesis 4c),* with the observation that in many cases strategies may be developed from actually existing creative skills in learners.

The expert evaluation conducted with the help of the Delphi Method offered us three major types of recommendations, on: *distinctions* (DIST), *conditions* (COND) and *strategies* (STRA). They were then referred for developing an analytical framework useful for educational practices, implementation and deeper understanding of stakeholders' needs, possibilities and expectations.

Distinctions referred to the need to conceptualize situations according to agency and to approach realities of dual relationships according to the specificity of each conceptual element. Dual concepts such as learners/teachers or learners/citizens where mentioned, but also those referring to more abstract dualisms, such as:

goals/skills or values/structures. They were mentioned in order to clarify important perspectives or circumstances within which the qualitative material was exposed.

Conditions referred to actual situations within which something was judged, or someone positioned himself/herself according to what was said or interpreted about it or himself/herself. The participants to online teaching illustrated various conditions, from the overall pandemic condition, to such more specialized conditions of internet user or academic citizen. Accordingly, their position/role/engagement in society was filtered or interpreted through the "objective" condition within which such realities/actors existed socially, but also to the "subjective" condition that they perceived/was assigned to them by other discourses.

Strategies were suggested for adjustment of educational principles and goals, actual pedagogical activities and skills, implementation, improvement and projection. They identified experimental, creative and critical aspects of GCE as developed in a given context (the pandemic context), for a particular socio-political-cultural profile, as that recognized or implied when references were made to the Romanian educational system and practices.

These three focuses are obviously linked and are separated here only for analytical purposes: for example, *distinctions* may apply to an observation made within *conditions* (objective/subjective), whereas *strategies* may refer also to something observed at the level of conditions (such as lack of tolerance).

Table 2. Summarizing table on expert comments gathered with the Delphi Method, with the three major focuses identified from discussion.

Focus	Illustrative *references, concepts, ideas* selected from the Delphi study discussion
DIST	learners/citizens; goals/skills; values/working structures; knowledge/apply knowledge
COND	"pandemic condition"; engagement (students *apparently* less-engaged; students already engaged in the GCE problematic without consciously reporting/reflecting on that); empathy/tolerance (students "empathetic *but not* tolerant")
STRA	methods of applying/improving GCE; conflict analysis; self report; class experiment; GCE developed outside of the academia; social media; messages; critical thinking

Interpretation and discussion

The major findings referred to GCE pedagogy in critical circumstances, such as those provided by the global pandemic and beyond. The educators-students relationship, the educational contents, goals and approaches, as well as the likelihood to include as many as possible societal values in education were mostly invoked. The experts' observations revolved around students' engagement and teachers' need for more experimentation in evaluation and teaching.

It was noticed that numerous students (but also educators and other stakeholders) are connected with each other in some ways, many of them not so evidently from the perspective of the online education procedure and control. Moreover, students (and educators) are connected/engaged in other (extra-academic) activities, such as on social media or even already engaged civically or politically, an engagement about which they do not necessary think as useful for education purposes or skills. This is nevertheless crucial in capacitating them for understanding the importance of reflecting on these connections and engagements, and to communicate about them. In the pandemic context, students as well as the other stakeholders were already "engaged" in the pandemic tribulations and efforts for finding solutions to several critical circumstances that the pandemic put on them. From a reflection on the global pandemic (which, more or less, anyone may recognize having had) individuals may develop (and even change) attitudes, that in an educational context, may be facilitated by the educators: developing global awareness about critical aspects such as those dealing with health systems, environmental issues, social inequalities or developing empathy, tolerance, interest for social/civic engagement for help or civic/public involvement. As such, expert discussions confirmed that pandemic crisis may function as a stimulator for global awareness and activator for effective responses brought to/about global responsibility and need to adopt/develop a responsible attitude. This may be also explained through a fundamental condition that was stipulated form the very beginning in our research design (that of subject of the pandemic context) and the way in which the expert discussion referred to condition (COND) as a key element of its evaluative recommendation.

Referring to the evaluation strategies, expert discussions challenged the methods through which educators figure out if respondents adopt a desirable attitude (for example, "are *empathetic*") and how accurately this may be deduced from their responses. Hence, they suggested the need to have an interpretation or an analytical tool refined enough so as to determine if students respond something related to a GCE goal because they perceive it as a must, or because they are really engaged (such as in the abovementioned example "really empathetic") and how this can be proven. This opened up an interesting discussion on a particular case, which may be considered illustrative for what we refer further as the role played by the national/regional culture. In the point of discussion suggested it was called into attention the attitude of *tolerance,* and how it, as a recognized value or desir-

able mind-set, is acknowledged as an important self-referred quality or behavior, but when put into context it is revealed as lesser practiced or manifested. The cases of immigrant or gay rights were invoked here as good illustration of this dissonant positioning to which educators, as both evaluators and facilitators, need to know how to relate when developing educational activities. Individuals declaring that they are tolerant, but manifesting hostility and intolerance about a given subject need to be properly situated as subjects of education, together with such distinctions (DIST) as "empathetic/tolerant in one context"/ "not empathetic/not tolerant in another context", but also "perception" (like opinion)/"reaction" (like act). This distinction then helped us to understand better possibilities of situations or conditions (COND) of individuals acting like "empathetic but not tolerant".

Finally, this problematization called attention about the need to adopt suitable strategies (STRA) in educational activities at various stages of the pedagogical process. For the GCE goals, accurate models of assessing both knowledge and how they are applied (DIST) are crucial. Accordingly, there is need to develop strategies capable of determining how values are reflected and transferred into skills, and principles into structures. One recommendation is meant to *consider the methods of improving as methods of applying* GCE, including such strategies as granting possibility for decision and leadership to students and inviting them to reflect and elaborate self reports as formats through which evaluation is made. For example, the subject of "dealing with diversity" could be address by recognizing that students are already familiar with diversity, but yet they need to acknowledge and learn more about some aspects dealing with moral dimension, social responsibility, responsible citizenship, development of values and, not lastly, how to engage in diversity causes (STRA). On the other hand, some students may be well engaged in diversity causes (or other comparable social/civic causes) without acknowledging that (students *apparently* less-engaged) through their simple (global) engagement in social media/Internet-based interaction or in some infra-institutional/community practices. In this type of scenarios it is very important to identify or call into attention the existence or possibility of conflicts. Anchored on their social or global experience students may want to develop skills in analyzing conflicts and integrating empathy. Pedagogically, this may be done more successfully with the help of some creative methods (STRA), including class experiments (such as showing images of ethnic violence and requesting reflection on emotion or distress) aiming at discussing the nature and effects of hostility against diversity. As these kinds of experiments rely on the utilization of images and production of arguments it is very important to entail them in practices of *critical thinking* and create frameworks of analysis that enable students understand that critical thinking skills, in themselves, should be perceived as important values, knowledge and GCE acquisitions.

Several authors (Biesta–Lawy 2006; Prowse–Forsyth 2018) have highlighted the dangers of decontextualizing the individual and have talked about the need to move from "teaching citizenship to learning democracy" (Biesta–Lawy 2006: 63),

and that this kind of learning is something that is done in society and not just by educators. Our pandemic context of analysis showed that this may be even more complicated because the online education system apparently succeeded to put in contact learners with educators, learners with educational contents and learners with educational institutions and external stakeholders, by concealing, however, that GCE skills are ultimately obtained in and through a *diversity* of mediums (not only online) and practitioners (not only teachers).

Further researches are needed in order to understand how sustainability principles are developed in educational practices and beyond, in activities within which students engage as citizens (outside the educational systems) and after finishing the formal education, in their professional lives. This recommendation belongs to a series of sustainable development goals which were difficult to be assessed as they develop in (larger, social) reality, while we limited, for methodological purposes, to the pandemic online educational activities. Nonetheless, such requirements expressed in several GCE pedagogy documents (UNESCO 2014; United Nations 2015; Brooking Institution 2017) as: "students have to perceive themselves as both learners and citizens," "learning should be also done through communicative practices outside the classroom" or "students should be encouraged to see themselves as agents of change" might be understood in their profound pertinency and adopted as goals to be, in a way or another – regardless of impeding conditions or limitations – fulfilled.

Conclusions

The theoretical framework within which we developed our analysis on existing qualitative research and expert discussion revealed how online courses forced participants to adjust, but also to understand differently their condition and situation: the difficulties to manage the online communication provoked them an emotional response, which expressed itself jointly with forms of awareness and reconsideration of their global belonging. As such, the COVID–19 crisis became a relevant context for global awareness and effective situation for talking about global responsibility and adopting/developing a responsible attitude, not lastly a unifying context for shared experiences.

GCE aspects are relevant only studied in contexts (such as the pandemic context) capable of shedding light on details, circumstances, experiences, reflections and solutions that may be articulated coherently, from a deep qualitative and reflexive methodological perspective.

For that purpose, we adopted a model of research, through which materials produced by qualitative interviews were interpreted and eventually proposed for expert discussion. Our analysis integrated the interpretations and critically commented the expert recommendations taking into consideration and bringing together principles (values, goals, objectives as expressed by regulatory policies by

UNESCO and educational bodies implementing GCE), and experiences (as revealed by the chosen illustrative qualitative research, topical bibliography and own experiences as university teacher).

We launched and verified a set of hypotheses for the expert discussion which were eventually inserted into a complex analysis taking into consideration the problematic as reflected in various bodies of empirical, interpretive and theoretical materials. As such we integrated contents revealed by researches on online teaching experience during the COVID–19 pandemic with the Delphi Method references to distinctions, conditions and strategies of evaluating the educational practices during this global crisis.

All these points of analysis were expressed for a given population in a particular socio-cultural and political-global circumstance according to what a previous qualitative analysis could identify as relevant topics. They corresponded to a population defined as: stakeholders in four Romanian universities developing online education during the 2020–2021 global pandemic, whose experiences and reflections were interpreted with the purpose of investigating their relevance for GCE, with the help of a Delphi study.

In sum, we were able to respond to our research questions as follows:

– GCE principles and goals are expressed and practiced in various forms, and they are clearly influenced by global and cultural *contexts*, as the empirical framework of research (pandemic context, Romanian universities) and independent expert reflection demonstrated.
– The theory behind GCE is to be put into teaching by carefully adapting curricula and educational practice to already existing needs, skills and cultural backgrounds; there are *distinctions*, *conditions* and *strategies* which could have been identified and integrated in analyses revealing that.
– We cannot state that something deserves more attention, that some competencies (only) are most relevant for sustainable development and that they should be developed in a unique, standardized way; we may rather conclude that some GCE aspects come into relevance according to specific needs and preoccupations, that are determined by cultural, political, social and educational specificities: they may be detected at the level of some general *topics* that semi-structured interviews may disclose.
– As a result, it may be said that in order to select key competencies in the context of Romanian universities for sustainable development, one may develop a kind of research on a given educational institution and population *(students, teachers, non-academic staff and external stakeholders),* focusing on what is expected and what can be done and following how actors respond to these strategies (STRA) and conditions (COND), while noticing possible distinctions (DIST) emphasized by research.
– Some particularities are evidenced within the main GCE concepts that reflect and respond to global contexts/situations/crises such as that illustrated by the COVID–19 pandemic; among them: a more accentuated preoccupation for ped-

agogical adjustments and technical support (as a typical focus of discussions about online education); a concern about (but also creative solutions offered to) aspects related to moral/civic issues, engagement and capacities.

The major findings and interpretation in Barth and Pantea (2022) showed that engagement is well represented, confirming the experts' observation (The Delphi Method) that students are already connected and engaged before and beyond the online format. The GCE strategies may more suitably develop skills and connections where there already exist connections or activities opened towards what sustainable development goals target. However, since at the level of educational topics, some ethical aspects appear salient (Barth–Pantea 2022: 242–243) this may suggest that stakeholders perceive the need for guiding formats/examples of civic involvement even if (or, more exactly, because) they are not very much manifested or exhibited in actual practice. This observation is equally consonant with one point of the experts' discussions on the Romanian political-cultural profile as society.

The exemplification of such GCE topics as *empathy, tolerance and critical thinking* suggested, firstly, that the specificity of topics create their particular way of integration in curricula and educational strategies. There does not exist something like a general, all purposeful way to integrate them. Secondly, it suggested that some topics, such as empathy are more "elastic" or capable to play mediating roles or intermediary positions between different themes, than, for example, one that would have been too specific. This may be supported also by the argumentation put forward by Duarte showing that "global citizenship means different things to different people" (Duarte 2021).

According to Barth and Pantea (2022) that was expressed a good perspective for future online or hybrid education at university levels in Romania. All four categories of stakeholders advanced opinions and suggestion about continuing in a way or benefiting from the good experience that the online education created. Nevertheless, some unpleasant experiences were mentioned at the level of their responses as critical remarks about the rules, relations and continuing bureaucratic style (Barth–Pantea 2022: 240), despite the imagined possibilities that the online communication might have correct them. Based on our Delphi study we may add other critical observations to that: the dangers of decontextualizing the individual and the need to move from "teaching citizenship to learning democracy." And this learning is something that is done in society, outside and beyond the educational system.

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Fotó/István Péter Németh

Șerban VăetișI

Transgressive tactics through marginality and hybridity. Social practices at the intersection of indigeneity, gender and class in the Andean communities

Indigenous women of the Andes have been continuously adapting their social practices to regulatory institutions and modernizing processes since colonial times. They continued to be involved in informal social, economic, legal, administrative and political affairs, playing key mediating roles in society and contributing to the success of indigenous movements in countries as Bolivia and Peru over the past decades. They always mediated between different roles such as: Indian – mestizo, rural – urban, "dirty" – "clean", traditional – emancipated, conservative – innovative. These interplays made them visible and fashionable socially and culturally. These forms of hybridization continues in new and creative ways; some are directed by others, but some continue to be adaptively adopted by the indigenous women themselves in their own interest and for the benefit of their families, communities, and ultimately the indigenous movements. While some studies suggest that indigenous movements are organized by political leaders only, that the indigenous women emancipation is produced on the model of Western feminism and that their condition is a mere example of intersectionality, we show in this article that indigenous women of the Andes participate in society based on their social traditional skills, they adapt to modern society through practices and processes resulting in hybrid forms and deliberately adopting tactics of transgressions in their transactions and relations with the state and the market. The best example of these hybridizations is "the chola" – originally a derogatory term for urbanized Indians in Bolivia and Peru, which received positive connotations due to the activity and visibility of these women. As a result they increasingly used this identity and hybridizations for negotiations in basic economic transactions and with official institutions. Since, more recently, their active image and fancy hybrid forms are manipulated by marketing agencies in the global economy of ethnic products, we conclude on the ongoing function of continuous production of hybrid cholas, as cholification, a process that may further characterize and explain regional social-political practices and evolutions in the Andean and larger Latin American area.
Keywords: Indigeneity; indigenous women; Latin America, cholas; transgressive tactics.

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Transzgresszív taktikák marginalitás és hibriditás által. Társadalmi gyakorlatok az őshonosság, a nem és az osztály találkozásánál az andokbeli közösségekben

Az Andok bennszülött női a gyarmati idők óta folyamatosan adaptálják társadalmi gyakorlatukat a szabályozó intézményekhez és a modernizációs folyamatokhoz. Továbbra is részt vettek informális társadalmi, gazdasági, jogi, adminisztratív és politikai ügyekben, kulcsfontosságú közvetítői szerepet játszottak a társadalomban, és hozzájárultak az őslakos mozgalmak sikeréhez az elmúlt évtizedekben, olyan országokban, mint Bolívia és Peru. Mindig különböző szerepek között közvetítettek, mint például: indiai – mesztic, vidéki – városi, „piszkos" – „tiszta", hagyományos – emancipált, konzervatív – innovatív. Ezek a kölcsönhatások társadalmilag és kulturálisan is láthatóvá és divatossá tették őket. A hibridizáció ezen formái új és kreatív módon folytatódnak; néhányat mások irányítanak, de néhányat továbbra is maguk a bennszülött nők vesznek fel adaptív módon saját érdekükben, családjuk, közösségeik és végső soron az őslakos mozgalmak javára. Egyes tanulmányok azt sugallják, hogy a bennszülött mozgalmakat csak politikai vezetők szervezik, az őslakos nők emancipációja a nyugati feminizmus mintájára jön létre és állapotuk pusztán az interszekcionalitás példája. Ebben a cikkben bemutatjuk, hogy az Andok bennszülött női hagyományos társadalmi készségeik alapján vesznek részt a társadalomban. Alkalmazkodnak a modern társadalomhoz olyan gyakorlatok és folyamatok révén, amelyek hibrid formákat eredményeznek és szándékosan alkalmazzák a kihágások taktikáját az állammal és a piaccal való kapcsolataikban és tranzakcióikban. Ezeknek a hibridizációknak a legjobb példája a „chola" – eredetileg Bolíviában és Peruban az urbanizált indiánok becsmérlő megnevezése, amely pozitív konnotációkat

kapott e nők aktivitása és láthatósága miatt. Ennek eredményeként egyre gyakrabban használták ezt az identitást és hibridizációkat az alapvető gazdasági ügyletek és a hivatalos intézményekkel folytatott tárgyalások során. Mivel a közelmúltban aktív imázsukat és képzeletbeli hibrid formájukat marketingügynökségek manipulálják az etnikai termékek globális gazdaságában, arra a következtetésre jutunk, hogy a hibrid cholák folyamatos előállításának, mint cholifikációnak, a folyamata továbbra is fennáll, amely folyamat a továbbiakban jellemezhet és megmagyarázhat regionális társadalmi-politikai gyakorlatokat és folyamatokat az Andok és a tágabb latin-amerikai térségben..
Kulcsszavak: Őshonosság; őslakos nők; Latin-Amerika; chola; transzgresszív taktikák.

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Sergiu Mișcoiu–Ana Gabriela Pantea

"Praised be the woman!" Opinions of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians' voters about the social and political role of women

Our research intends to advance our understanding of the perception of the gender roles among the voters of The Alliance for the Union of Romanians party. More specifically, we are going to depict the social and political expectations towards women, and for this matter, we are going to start our analysis with the premise that populism entails the construction of the identity of "self" in contradistinction to the "other" – for example, the image of traditional wife versus the empowered woman. On one hand, women are prized as docile wives or mothers, and on the other hand, it is supported to fight on the public space for the traditional family values.
Our research was conducted through the following methodological questions: 1. According to the AUR voters, should the party restore this traditional division of gender roles within the Romanian society?; 2. What are the main expected characteristics of women in politics, and in which extend traditional roles and values of the candidate count for voting for a women in political life?; 3. What are the main threats against the Romanian society's moral integrity, especially referring to gender, sexual identity, and sexual education. This qualitative research was conducted between December 2020 and January 2021, and it consisted in 21 interviews with AUR voters (twelve men and nine women). As AUR has a clear view on the social and political expectations towards women, the success of the party in the last elections was gained through its ethno-nationalist, familialist and religious agenda, and a firm anti-empowering discourse on women. The results of the study show the variations of how AUR voters approach gender issues. But the common element remains their common view on the promise of a heterosexual and Orthodox society in which their vision will succeed.
Keywords: Gender roles; perception on women; populism; ethno-nationalist; familialism; ultra-Orthodoxism.

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Sergiu Mişcoiu–Ana Gabriela Pantea

Dicsértessék az asszony! A Szövetség a Románok Egységéért (AUR) párt szavazóinak véleménye a nőkkel szembeni társadalmi elvárásokról

Kutatásunk célja, hogy jobban megértsük a nemi szerepek megítélését a Szövetség a Románok Egységéért párt szavazói körében. Pontosabban a nőkkel szemben támasztott társadalmi és politikai elvárásokat fogjuk ábrázolni és ezzel kapcsolatos elemzésünket azzal az előfeltevéssel kezdjük, hogy a populizmus az „én" identitásának felépítését jelenti a „másik"-kal szemben – például a hagyományos feleség képe a felhatalmazott nővel szemben. A nőket egyrészt engedelmes feleségként vagy anyaként értékelik, másrészt támogatják a hagyományos családi értékekért való nyilvános harcot. Kutatásunkat a következő módszertani kérdések mentén végeztük: 1. Az AUR szavazói szerint, a pártnak vissza kell-e állítania ezt a hagyományos nemi szerepmegosztást a román társadalmon belül? 2. Melyek a nők főbb elvárásai a politikában és milyen mértékben számítanak a jelölt hagyományos szerepei és értékei a politikai életben egy nőre való szavazásnál? 3. Melyek a fő veszélyek a román társadalom erkölcsi integritásával szemben, különös tekintettel a nemre, a szexuális identitásra és a szexuális nevelésre? Ez a kvalitatív kutatás 2020 decembere és 2021 januárja között készült és 21 interjúból állt AUR-szavazókkal (tizenkét férfi és kilenc nő). Mivel az AUR világosan látja a nőkkel szemben támasztott társadalmi és politikai elvárásokat, a párt sikerét a legutóbbi választásokon etnonacionalista, családi és vallási programjával, valamint a nőkkel kapcsolatos határozott felhatalmazás-ellenes diskurzusával érte el. A tanulmány eredményei bemutatják, hogy az AUR-szavazók hogyan viszonyulnak a nemi kérdésekhez. De a közös elem továbbra is közös nézetük a heteroszexuális és ortodox társadalom ígéretéről, amelyben elképzelésük sikeres lesz.

Kulcsszavak: Nemi szerepek; nők megítélése; populizmus; etnonacionalizmus; családcentrikusság; ultraortodoxizmus.

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Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean

Some considerations on the usefulness of the EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III for fostering conflict resolution in the Western Balkans

The analyses pertaining to the newest EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, or IPA (2021–2027) often consider its transformative role in the key policy areas that enable the beneficiary countries to advance their integration bids. While it is a fact that the IPA is tailored in such a way as to provide a policy-based toolset, with the thorniest chapters of the acquis in the limelight, it is also significant to investigate the extent to which it encompasses concrete and coherent conflict resolution mechanisms, to meet the specific context in the Western Balkans. Thus, the purpose of this research is to delve into the root priorities pursued by the IPA in the current multiannual financial framework, so as to assess its genuine capabilities in the area of conflict management, with specific priorities and funding opportunities made available not only to public authorities, but also to meaningful civil society entities in the four candidate countries from the Western Balkans. Several methods are explored for this purpose, including an analysis of the achievements and setbacks of the previous IPA, the structure and financial allocations of the current instrument, as well as the types of projects and the beneficiaries that can gain access to the areas of funding

where there is potential for conflict resolution. A set of recommendations is merged with the evaluation indicators proposed for the aforementioned objective, some of which tackle the preparedness of NGOs in the four countries to gain access to a source of funding that entails tangible advancements in matters of conflict resolution.
Keywords: Western Balkans; European Union enlargement; European funds; normative power; conflict resolution.

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Néhány megfontolás az EU III. Előcsatlakozási Támogatási Eszközének hasznosságáról a nyugat-balkáni konfliktusmegoldás elősegítésében

A legújabb EU Előcsatlakozási Támogatási Eszköz (IPA 2021–2027) elemzései gyakran figyelembe veszik annak átalakító szerepét azokon a kulcsfontosságú szakpolitikai területeken, amelyek lehetővé teszik a kedvezményezett országok számára, hogy előremozdítsák integrációs pályázataikat. Bár tény, hogy az IPA-t úgy alakították ki, hogy politikai alapú eszköztárat biztosítson, miközben az acquis legbonyolultabb fejezetei állnak a figyelem középpontjában, azt is fontos megvizsgálni, hogy az milyen mértékben terjed ki a konkrét és koherens konfliktusmegoldási mechanizmusokra, hogy megfeleljenek a Nyugat-Balkán sajátos környezetének. Ennek a kutatásnak a célja elmélyedni az IPA által a jelenlegi többéves pénzügyi keretben követett alapvető prioritásokba, felmérve reális képességeit a konfliktuskezelés területén, a négy nyugat-balkáni tagjelölt ország hatóságai és civil társadalmi alakulatai számára nyújtott konkrét prioritásokkal és finanszírozási lehetőségekkel. E célból számos módszert alkalmazunk, beleértve az előző IPA eredményeinek és kudarcainak elemzését, a jelenlegi eszköz szerkezetének és pénzügyi allokációinak vizsgálatát, valamint azt, hogy milyen típusú projektek és milyen kedvezményezettek juthatnak hozzá a finanszírozási területekhez, ahol lehetőség nyílik konfliktusok megoldására. Egy sor ajánlást egyesítünk a fent említett célkitűzéshez javasolt értékelési mutatókkal, amelyek egy része a négy ország civil szervezeteinek felkészültségét célozza, mellyel olyan finanszírozási forráshoz juthatnak, amely kézzelfogható előrelépést jelent a konfliktusok megoldásának terén.
Kulcsszavak: Nyugat-Balkán; Európai Unió bővítése; európai alapok; normatív hatalom; konfliktuskezelés.

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Laura-Maria Herța

Does social learning lead to reconciliation in Serbian–Kosovar relations? The role of civil society in Serbia

The paper aims to investigate the role of the European Union in conflict transformation and conflict resolution in the Western Balkan region. Theoretically and methodologically, the paper will explore Serbian–Kosovar relations, as well as the European Union's relations with the two countries (noting, of course, that Kosovo is not recognized by five EU member states), from a social-constructivist interpretation. Additionally, the analysis will rest on interviews taken in Belgrade in autumn 2021, with academics and policy makers, and on opinion polls conducted in Serbia and in Kosovo. The main research questions that guide this research are as follows: are the European Union's tools able to transform identities and interests is Serbia and Kosovo and to foster reconciliation? What is the role of civil society in this transformation (or lack thereof)?

The paper will be structured across the following lines. Firstly, the goal is to problematize Europeanization understood as process meant to set and export norms, rules and expected behaviours. Also, two main elements employed by the European Union will be explored in this respect: social learning and passive enforcement. According to scholars (Checkel 1999; Checkel 2007; Tocci 2007: 10–18), international institutions or regional organisations have the capacity to create senses of community and belonging and to socialize actors, id est neighbouring countries. Consequently, social learning, as part of EU's approach on conflict resolution in its neighbourhood, leads to the transformation of perceived interests, because the countries voluntarily internalize the norms and comply with EU's expectations. Moreover, efficient passive enforcement, as another tool of EU's approach on conflict resolution, is meant to trigger "a sense of belonging with Europe and/or desires cooperation/integration with it" (Tocci 2007: 17). Consequently, countries in the EU's neighbourhood do not perceive strings attached in their relations with the EU, but rather are expected to gradually incorporate the rule as part of a process through which they recurrently respect the rule. Secondly, the paper will present the European Union's relations with Serbia and Kosovo, respectively, and will explore the ways in which both Serbia and Kosovo respond to the EU's expectations. Finally, the paper will analyse civil society actors and their role in shaping interests and identities, as well as attitudes towards the European Union and towards the tools employed in order to foster reconciliation and, ultimately, conflict resolution.
Keywords: Europeanization; Serbia; social learning; passive enforcement; civil society organizations.

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Laura-Maria Herța

Vezet-e a társadalmi tanulás megbékéléshez a szerb–koszovói kapcsolatokban? A civil társadalom szerepe Szerbiában

A tanulmány az Európai Unió szerepét kívánja megvizsgálni a konfliktusátalakításban és -megoldásban a nyugat-balkáni térségben. Elméletileg és módszertanilag a tanulmány a szerb-koszovói kapcsolatokat, valamint az Európai Unió kapcsolatait a két országgal (megjegyezve természetesen, hogy Koszovót öt EU-tagállam nem ismeri el) szociálkonstruktivista értelmezésben vizsgálja. Az elemzés emellett a 2021 őszén Belgrádban, akadémikusokkal és politikai döntéshozókkal készített interjúkon, valamint Szerbiában és Koszovóban végzett közvélemény-kutatásokon alapul. A kutatást irányító fő kutatási kérdések a következők: vajon az Európai Unió eszközei képesek-e átalakítani Szerbia és Koszovó identitását és érdekeit, és elősegíteni a megbékélést? Mi a civil társadalom szerepe ebben az átalakulásban (vagy annak hiányában)? Az írás a következőképpen van strukturálva. Egyrészt a normák, szabályok és elvárt magatartások meghatározására és exportálására szolgáló folyamatként értelmezett európaizáció problematizálása a cél. Emellett az Európai Unió által e tekintetben alkalmazott két fő elemet is megvizsgálunk: a társadalmi tanulást és a passzív végrehajtást. Egyes tudósok szerint (Checkel 1999; Checkel 2007; Tocci 2007: 10–18) a nemzetközi intézmények vagy regionális szervezetek képesek a közösség és az összetartozás érzését kelteni és szocializálni a szereplőket, azaz a szomszédos országokat. Következésképpen a szociális tanulás, mint a konfliktuskezelési megközelítés része az EU szomszédságában, a vélt érdekek átalakulásához vezet, mivel az országok önként internalizálják a normákat és megfelelnek az EU elvárásainak. Sőt, a hatékony passzív jogérvényesítés, mint az EU konfliktusrendezési megközelítésének másik eszköze, „az Európához tartozás érzését és/vagy az Európával való együttműködésre/integrációra vágyó érzést" hivatott kiváltani (Tocci 2007: 17). Következésképpen az EU-val szomszédos országok nem érzékelnek kötöttségeket az EU-val fenntartott kapcsolataikban, inkább elvárják, hogy fokozatosan beépítsék a szabályt egy olyan folyamat részeként, amelynek során ismételten tiszteletben tartják a szabályt. Másodszor, a tanulmány bemutatja az Európai Unió Szerbiához, illetve Koszovóhoz fűződő kapcsolatait és megvizsgálja, hogyan reagál Szerbia és Koszovó az EU elvárásaira. Végül a tanulmány elemzi a civil társadalom szereplőit és szerepüket az érdek- és identitásformálásban, valamint az Európai Unióhoz és a megbékélést, végső soron a konfliktusmegoldást elősegítő eszközökhöz való viszonyulásukat.
Kulcsszavak: Európaizáció; Szerbia; Koszovó; társadalmi tanulás; passzív érvényesítés; civil társadalmi szervezetek.

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Mircea Brie–Islam Jusufi–Polgár István József

North Macedonia's internal and external identity disputes. Role and implication for the civil society

The present research is intended to be an analysis of the implications and the role of the civil society in North Macedonia's identity disputes. Based on this, we are taking into account the internal differences, which appear between the Macedonian and the Albanian communities and the external ones, focusing on the relationship of North Macedonia with Greece and Bulgaria. Tensions created by the mentioned disputes were possible to settle only through external intervention with the aim of solving the conflict by reaching an agreement or a resolution. Practically, our research follows the evolution, the role and the implication of the civil society in the dispute solving process. 1. The Ohrid Framework Agreement from August 13, 2001, which ended a developing internal armed conflict. (NATO intervention in the north and the west part of the country stopped the evolution of the conflict after which the Macedonian government agreed to grant more political power and respect to the Albanian culture and minority. The Albanian side agreed to renounce to its secessionist intentions and recognize all Macedonian state institutions); 2. The dispute with Greece and the agreement which was focusing on changing the name of the state. (on February 12, 2019 the Republic of Macedonia officially change its name to the Republic of North Macedonia, as it was foreseen in the Prespa Agreement signed in 2018); 3. The dispute with Bulgaria, regarding the recognition of the Bulgarian minority community and the much more complicated issue regarding the Macedonian language identity, led to a long delay in the start of the EU accession negotiations. Finally, with French mediation, state that held the presidency of the EU Council, the parliament in Skopje voted on July 16, 2022 for a compromise requested by the Bulgarians. Because of the last two disputes (with Greece and Bulgaria), the small Balkan state was kept away from NATO and the EU for a long time. We propose to test two different hypotheses in terms of meaning and expression: 1. Civil society, aware of the need for dialogue, pressured the political actors to reach the three mentioned agreements; 2. Politics influenced an insufficiently developed civil society to be its voice. We propose to follow both premises in their diachronic evolution.
Keywords: North Macedonia; civil society; identity; minority; Greece; Bulgaria; EU.

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Mircea Brie–Islam Jusufi–Polgár István József

Észak-Macedónia belső és külső identitásvitái. A civil társadalomra gyakorolt hatása és következményei

Jelen kutatás célja az észak-macedóniai civil társadalom identitásvitákban betöltött szerepének ás ennek következményeinek elemzése. A kutatás figyelembe veszi mind a macedón és albán közösségek közötti belső különbségeket és problémákat, mind a Görögországhoz és Bulgáriához való viszonyból származó külső problémákat. Ezek a viták, amelyek időnként feszült formákat öltöttek, bizonyos szinten külső közvetítői beavatkozást igényeltek. E külső beavatkozás elengethetetlen volt a konfliktushelyzetek kiegyenlítésére irányuló megállapodások és megoldások kezdeményezéséhez és megkötéséhez. Kutatásunk gyakorlatilag a civil társadalom evolúcióját, szerepét és vonzatát követi nyomon a vitarendezési folyamatban. 1. A 2001 Augusztus 13-án aláírt Ohridi Keretmegállapodás, amely véget vetett egy kibontakozó belső fegyveres konfliktusnak. (A NATO beavatkozása megállította az ország északi és nyugati részén kibontakozó konfliktust, ami után a macedón kormány beleegyezett abba, hogy nagyobb politikai mozgásteret biztosít az albán kisebbségnek és kultúrának. Az albán fél beleegyezett abba, hogy lemond elszakadási szándékairól, ill. elismerje az összes macedón állami intézményt); 2. A Görögországgal folyó vita és az állam nevének megváltoztatásáról szóló megállapodás. (2019. február 12-én a Macedónia Köztársaság hivatalosan Észak-Macedónia Köztársaságra változtatta nevét, ahogyan azt a 2018-ban aláírt Preszpai Megállapodás is előírta); 3. A Bulgáriával kialakult vita, a bolgár kisebbségi közösség elismerése és a macedón nyelvi identitás sokkal bonyolultabb kérdése, az EU-csatlakozási tárgyalások megkezdésének hosszú késedelméhez vezetett. Végül az EU Tanácsának elnöki tisztét betöltő Franciaország közvetítésével a szkopjei parlament 2022. július 16-án megszavazta a bolgárok által kért kompromisszumot. A legutóbbi két vita (Görögországgal és Bulgáriával) sokáig távol tartotta a kis balkáni államot a NATO-hoz és az EU-hoz való csatlakozástól. Két különböző hipotézis vizsgálatát javasoljuk: 1. A civil társadalom a párbeszéd szükségességének tudatában nyomást gyakorolt a politikai szereplőkre a három említett megállapodás megkötése érdekében; 2. A politika befolyásolta a nem kellően fejlett civil társadalmat. A kutatásban mindkét premissza diakronikus fejlődésének lekövetését javasoljuk.

Kulcsszavak: Észak-Macedónia; civil társadalom; identitás; kisebbség; Görögország; Bulgária; EU.

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Mircea Brie–Ana Maria Costea–Laurențiu Petrila

Perceptions of civil society in Armenia and Azerbaijan in the context of the Nagorno–Karabakh conflict

This paper aims to be a contextual, conceptual and factual analysis of the complicated relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and what are the main perceptions of civil society in these countries in the context of the conflict in Nagorno–Karabakh, which is a dispute over the province's status as a major source of tension between the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the leadership of the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno–Karabakh, in the mediation of which other international actors got involved, such as OSCE, the Minsk group consisting of France, the Russian Federation and the USA. Overall, whereas Armenia tends to be on a progressive scale with some concerns over the possibility to return to a non-democratic regime, Azerbaijan is already placed on a regressive scale. Given

the topic of the paper, we had a closer attention to the 2020–2021 period of time since the Nagorno Karabakh war took place in the autumn of 2020 – thus, 2011 being the first year when the European Commission launched the European Integration Index for the Eastern Partnership states and 2022 being the year with the most recent data regarding the topic. In what regards the results of our research, both civil societies have been involved in the conflict resolution, but with various degrees, taking into consideration the different national ex-ante conditions. Armenia proved to be more resilient over the years, thus, although facing mass protests ending with the Parliament building being temporally seized, with a general feeling of fear towards the possibility of regressing, the democratic level remained the same, in 2021–2022 being declared as a partly fee country, whereas in the case of Azerbaijan it fell under the regressive paradigm with: a practically non-existent independent media, very limited tools to hold the state accountable, measures that were taken against the activists that declared themselves against the war and civil society organizations that do not have access to foreign funding.
Keywords: Conflict; Armenia; Azerbaijan; civil; society; perceptions.

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Az örmény és azerbajdzsáni civil társadalom megítélése a hegyi–karabahi konfliktus kontextusában

Ennek a tanulmánynak az a célja, hogy kontextuális, fogalmi és tényszerű elemzést nyújtson Örményország és Azerbajdzsán bonyolult kapcsolatairól, valamint arról, hogy ezekben az országokban mi a civil társadalom főbb felfogása a hegyi–karabahi konfliktussal összefüggésben. A tartomány jogállása körüli vita a feszültség fő forrása Örményország és Azerbajdzsán kormánya, valamint a magát Hegyi–Karabahnak kikiáltott köztársaság vezetése között, amelynek közvetítésébe más nemzetközi szereplők is bekapcsolódtak, mint az EBESZ, vagy a Franciaországból, az Orosz Föderációból és az USA-ból álló Minszk csoport. Összességében, míg Örményország progresszív skálán helyezkedik el, bár némi aggodalmat keltve egy nem demokratikus rezsimhez való visszatérés lehetőségével kapcsolatban, Azerbajdzsán máris egy regresszív skálán van. A lap tematikájából adódóan, alaposabban szemügyre vettük a 2020 őszi hegyi–karabahi háborút követő 2020–2021-es időszakot – így 2011 volt az első év, amikor az Európai Bizottság elindította az Európai Integrációs Indexet. a keleti partnerség államaiban és 2022, amelyre a legfrissebb

adatok állnak rendelkezésre a témában. Kutatásunk eredményeit tekintve, mindkét civil társadalom részt vett a konfliktusrendezésben, de eltérő mértékben, figyelembe véve az eltérő nemzeti ex-ante viszonyokat. Örményország rugalmasabbnak bizonyult az évek során, így bár a Parlament épületének ideiglenes elfoglalásával végződő tömeges tiltakozásokkal szembesült, a visszafejlődéstől való általános félelem uralkodott el és a demokratikus szint változatlan maradt, 2021–2022-ben részben szabad országnak deklarálták. Ezzel szemben, Azerbajdzsán a regresszív paradigma alá került egy gyakorlatilag nem létező független médiával, állam elszámoltathatóságának nagyon korlátozott eszköztárával, a háborúellenes aktivistákkal szembeni intézkedésekkel és a civil szervezetek külföldi finanszírozáshoz való hozzáférésének megakadályozásával.

Kulcsszavak: Konfliktus; Örményország; Azerbajdzsán; civil társadalom; megítélések.

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Ciprian Bogdan

Engaging with refugees in times of conflict and social acceleration: Romanian civil society and the war in Ukraine

An important feature of modern and contemporary society lies in its accelerating tendency (Koselleck 2004, Scheuerman 2004, Rosa 2013). According to Hartmut Rosa, civil society understood as the locus of a larger participatory and deliberative will-formation used to be a facilitator of this social acceleration by having the capacity to address various interests in a rapid and flexible way. However, neoliberal capitalism mostly defined by economic and technological acceleration has turned civil society into an agent of social deceleration, while also being marked by the growing "desynchronization" between people who are able to adapt to the temporal pressures imposed of society by speeding up and others who are cut off from it by slowing down.
The present paper tries to put these ideas to work by focusing on the way Romanian NGOs engaged with the refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. Using a qualitative approach based on interviews with several representatives of Romanian NGOs operating in the main historical regions of the country (Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia), we focus on the way these organizations in relationship with state institutions were able both to accelerate as a reaction to the emergency and to synchronize with other organizations, but also authorities and Ukrainians refugees. In the

last part of the paper, we conclude that Rosa's conceptual framework can shed a new light on the tensions and dilemmas which arise in the process of engaging with refugees. But at the same time, our case study also indicates the need to better contextualize and partially revise this framework.
Keywords: Civil society; refugees, social acceleration; deceleration; synchronization; conflict.

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Ciprian Bogdan

Menekültekkel való kapcsolat konfliktusok és társadalmi felgyorsulás idején: a román civil társadalom és az ukrajnai háború

A modern és kortárs társadalom fontos jellemzője a gyorsuló tendenciája (Koselleck 2004, Scheuerman 2004, Rosa 2013). Hartmut Rosa szerint a civil társadalom egy szélesebb részvételen alapuló és mérlegelő akaratformálás helyszíneként eleve elősegítette ezt a társadalmi felgyorsulást azáltal, hogy képes volt különböző érdekeket gyorsan és rugalmasan kezelni. A neoliberális kapitalizmus azonban, amelyet többnyire a gazdasági és technológiai felgyorsulás határoz meg, a civil társadalmat a társadalmi lassulás ágensévé változtatta. Mindeközben az is jellemzi, hogy egyre fokozódik a „deszinkronizáció" azon emberek között, akik képesek alkalmazkodni a társadalom időbeli nyomásához a gyorsítással, és a többiek között, akiket lassítással elzárnak tőle. A jelen írás ezeket az gondolatokat próbálja alkalmazni azáltal, hogy megvizsgálja hogyan viszonyultak a román civil szervezetek az ukrajnai háború elől menekülőkhöz. Kvalitatív megközelítést alkalmazunk, amely az ország fő történelmi régióiban (Erdély, Moldva és Havasalföld) működő román civil szervezetek több képviselőjével készült interjúkon alapul. Arra összpontosítunk, hogy ezek a szervezetek az állami intézményekkel kapcsolatban hogyan tudtak felgyorsulni a vészhelyzetre reagálva és hogyan tudtak szinkronizálni más szervezetekkel, de a hatóságokkal és az ukrán menekültekkel is. Az írás utolsó részében arra a következtetésre jutunk, hogy Rosa fogalmi kerete új megvilágításba helyezheti a menekültekkel való kapcsolattartás folyamatában felmerülő feszültségeket és dilemmákat. Ugyanakkor esettanulmányunk azt is jelzi, hogy szükséges jobban kontextusba helyezni és részben felülvizsgálni ezt a keretet.
Kulcsszavak: Civil társadalom; menekültek; társadalmi felgyorsulás; lassulás; szinkronizálás; konfliktus.

Ciprian Bogdan a romániai Babeș–Bolyai Tudományegyetem Európai Tanulmányok Karának oktatója. PhD-fokozattal rendelkezik filozófiából. Kutatásai főként a német kritikai elméletre összpontosítanak. Számos cikket publikált Jürgen Habermas munkásságáról, valamint könyvet (román nyelven) Theodor Adorno ideológiai megközelítéséről. A közelmúltban Hartmut Rosa társadalmi gyorsítással foglalkozó munkája iránt érdeklődik.
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Laurențiu Petrila–Felix-Angel Popescu

The role of protests in Romania for the development of democratic government, the formation of a participative legislative assembly and the maintaining of an impartial judicial system

Since Romania lacks the democratic experience and the culture of political debates, demonstrated by European Union reports on issues related to the rule of law and the independence of justice, it can be said that the experience of the domination of the communist regime made the task of reforming the governing, legislative and judicial system difficult, therefore , even after joining the European Union (in 2007), one cannot realistically expect a total recovery of the perception of doing politics, of serving the interests of the citizens, and in turn, the people to become aware of their decision-making potential ensured by democracy through free and transparent elections, and not through protests. On the contrary, it is obvious that political parties in Romania have and will continue to have the tendency, as their first instinct, to secure their positions. The repercussions of such behavior, frequently accused, both internally and externally, of being unconstitutional, materialize in attempts to undermine the independence of justice and limit the prerogatives of public institutions, realities that have led to countless protests from civil society.

The way of perception and approach to the issue of protests by the vast majority of the population represents a problem of national political culture, an even more aggravating matter in this sense constituting the sudden alternations of power, respectively the mentality of political parties not to respect their governing program or as appropriate, to promote laws in the interest of the citizen.
The more it was expected that, after joining the European Union, Romania's political life would deepen its path from a purely communist vision to a pro-democracy one, the more it degenerated, as evidenced by the fact that the protests generated by civil society tend to counteract these shortcomings. Of course, the usual counterarguments can also be imposed, namely the fact that certain slippages can be considered inherent and that, in general, periods of stability were exceptions rather than normality.
Keywords: Protests; civil; society; Romania; governance; legislative; judiciary.

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Laurenţiu Petrila–Felix-Angel Popescu

A romániai tüntetések szerepe a demokratikus kormány fejlesztésében, a részvételen történő törvénygyűlés kialakításában és a pártatlan igazságügyi rendszer fenntartásában

Mivel Romániában hiányzik a demokratikus tapasztalat és a politikai viták kultúrája, amit a jogállamisággal és az igazságszolgáltatás függetlenségével kapcsolatos kérdésekről szóló európai uniós jelentések mutatnak, elmondható, hogy a kommunista rezsim uralmának tapasztalatai megnehezítették megreformálni a kormányzási, törvényhozási és igazságszolgáltatási rendszert. Ezért az Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozást követően (2007-ben) sem lehet reálisan elvárni a politizálást, a polgárok, illetve az emberek érdekeinek kiszolgálásának, felfogásának teljes helyreállítását, szabad és átlátható választásokon keresztül nem pedig tiltakozásokon tudatosítani a demokrácia által biztosított döntési potenciáljukat. Ellenkezőleg, nyilvánvaló, hogy Romániában a politikai pártok hajlamosak továbbra is, hogy ösztönük szerint biztosítsák pozícióikat. A hártánya az e fajta hozzáállásnak, hogy alkotmányellenes magatartáshoz vezet, melynek következménye az igazságszolgáltatás függetlenségének aláásására és a közintézmények előjogainak korlátozására tett kísérletekben nyilvánulnak meg, amelyek a civil társadalom számtalan tiltakozásához vezettek. Az, hogy a lakosság túlnyomó többsége hogyan érzékeli és közelíti meg a tiltakozások problémáját, a nemzeti politikai kultúra problémáját képviseli, ebben az értelemben még súlyosbítja a helyzetet a hirtelen hatalomváltások, illetve a politikai partok által beigért és nem betartott kormányzási programok, vagy adott esetben, törvények amelyek nem a polgárok érdekeit képviselik.
Minél inkább várható volt, hogy az Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozást követően Románia politikai élete a tisztán kommunista víziótól a demokráciapárti irányzat felé elmélyül. Ezt a tényt az is bizonyítja, hogy a civil társadalom által generált tiltakozások hajlamosak. ezen hiányosságok ellensúlyozására. Természetesen a szokásos ellenérvek is felhozhatók, mégpedig az, hogy bizonyos csúszások eredendőnek tekinthetők, és általában véve a stabilitás időszakai inkább kivételek, semmint normalitások.
Kulcsszavak: Tüntetések; társadalom; civil; Románia; kormányzás; törvényhozó; igazságszolgáltatás.

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Paula Mureșan

Russia-Ukraine War: Celebrities Involvement in Conflict Resolution

Although the Ukrainian crisis started in 2014, it has turned into a global one due to the attacks of the Russian army on the capital and ample parts of Ukraine in February 2022. The goal of our paper is to discuss the role of celebrities in conflict resolution processes, with a focus on Angelina Jolie and Milla Kunis' engagement in the Russia- Ukraine's war. Due to their notoriety, celebrities play an important role in the awareness and concern of the public opinion regarding a conflict resolution process, especially in the digitalized world. Nowadays they dominate social media due to the impressive number of followers, thus becoming an influential social group that can play an active role in crisis management. They have drawn the public's attention to disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, famine and wars, either as individuals or as UN ambassadors/members of NGOs and, consequently, their involvement in terms of humanitarianism has been discussed and analysed worldwide.
Methodologically, we have started from the following hypothesis: celebrities with or without Ukrainian roots have manifested a positive engagement in conflict resolution. The study presents new data on the involvement of celebrities in this endeavour, showing that the root is not the only determinant factor that prompts action. The research is multidisciplinary and at the crossroads of international relations and communication, attempting to contribute to a better understanding of the role of the civil society amid the various stages of conflict resolution processes worldwide.
Keywords: Conflict; resolution; celebrities; multidisciplinary; war; Russia; Ukraine.

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Paula Mureșan

Az orosz–ukrán háború: hírességek szerepvállalása a konfliktus megoldásában

Az ukrán válság ugyan 2014-ben kezdődött, de az orosz hadsereg 2022 februárjában a főváros és Ukrajna nagy része elleni támadásai miatt globálissá vált. Tanulmányunk célja a hírességek konfliktusmegoldásban betöltött szerepének megvitatása, Angelina Jolie és Milla Kunis orosz–ukrán háborúban való szerepvállalására összpontosítva. Ismertségüknek köszönhetően a hírességek fontos szerepet játszanak a közvélemény tudatosításában és a konfliktusmegoldási

folyamatokkal kapcsolatos aggodalmában, különösen egy digitalizált világban. Napjainkban, követőik impozáns számának köszönhetően, uralják a közösségi médiát, így befolyásos társadalmi csoporttá válnak, amely aktív szerepet játszhat a válságkezelésben. Felhívták a közvélemény figyelmét az olyan katasztrófákra, mint az árvizek, hurrikánok, földrengések, éhínség és háborúk akár magánszemélyként, akár ENSZ-nagykövetként/nem kormányzati szervezetek tagjaként, és ennek következtében a humanitárius szerepvállalásukat világszerte megvitatták és elemzik.
Módszertanilag a következő hipotézisből indultunk ki: az ukrán gyökerekkel rendelkező vagy anélküli hírességek pozitív elkötelezettséget mutattak a konfliktusmegoldásban. A tanulmány új adatokat közöl a hírességek ezen törekvésébe való bekapcsolódásáról, ami azt mutatja, hogy nem a gyökerek képezik az egyetlen meghatározó tényezőt, amely cselekvésre késztet. A kutatás multidiszciplináris, a nemzetközi kapcsolatok és kommunikáció metszéspontjában áll és megpróbál hozzájárulni a civil társadalom szerepének jobb megértéséhez a konfliktusmegoldási folyamatok különböző szakaszaiban, világszerte.
Kulcsszavak: Konfliktus; megoldás; hírességek; multidiszciplináris; háború; Oroszország; Ukrajna.

Paula Mureșan a kolozsvári Babeș–Bolyai Tudományegyetem Európai Tanulmányok Karának docense, valamint az egyetem Irodalmi és Történelemtudományi Karának is végzőse. A Babeș–Bolyai Tudományegyetemen szerzett judaisztikai mesterfokozatot. Kutatási tevékenysége a szélsőséges ideológiák és mozgalmak, intézményi kommunikáció és diszkurzuselemzések témakörére összpontosul.
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Elena Grad-Rusu–Marius Grad

Helping those in need: Civil mobilization in Romania in the context of the war in Ukraine

The escalation of the international armed conflict in Ukraine has forced the civilians to flee their homes, seeking safety, assistance and protection. In this context, the receiving countries mobilized human and material resources in order to provide the needed help. But, in some cases, the institutions were slow or inefficient and the civil society became the main provider of humanitarian aid. The existing literature extensively discuss about resource mobilization, citizen aid and social movements, but little attention has been paid about the main drivers of these initiatives. This article aims to fill that gap and seeks to explain the main drivers of Romanian citizens' mobilization (both on-line and in the field) immediately after the war outbreak. The qualitative analysis is based on the data collected from an on-line survey conducted among actively involved Romanians in providing humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian refugees. The preliminary results indicate four potential drivers: economic self-interest, deontological motivations, psychological dispositions and cultural/religious context.
Keywords: Civil society; conflict; citizens' mobilization; humanitarian aid.

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Elena Grad-Rusu–Marius Grad

A rászorulók megsegítése: civil mozgósítás Romániában az ukrajnai háború kapcsán

Az ukrajnai nemzetközi fegyveres konfliktus eszkalációja arra kényszerítette a civileket, hogy elhagyják otthonaikat biztonságot, segítséget és védelmet keresve. Ezzel összefüggésben a fogadó országok emberi és anyagi erőforrásokat mozgósítottak a szükséges segítségnyújtás érdekében. Néhány esetben azonban az intézmények lassúak voltak vagy nem voltak hatékonyak és a civil társadalom lett a humanitárius segítségnyújtás fő szolgáltatója. A meglévő szakirodalom széles körben tárgyalja az erőforrások mobilizálását, az állampolgári segélyezést és a társadalmi moz-

galmakat, de kevés figyelmet szentel e kezdeményezések fő mozgatórugóinak. Ez a cikk ezt a hiányt kívánja pótolni és meg kívánja magyarázni a román állampolgárok aktivizálásának fő mozgatórugóit (online és terepen egyaránt), közvetlenül a háború kitörése után. A kvalitatív elemzés az ukrán menekültek humanitárius segítségnyújtásában aktívan részt vevő románok körében végzett online felmérés adatain alapul. Az előzetes eredmények négy lehetséges mozgatórugót jeleznek: a gazdasági önérdek, a deontológiai motivációk, a pszichológiai beállítottság és a kulturális/vallási kontextus.
Kulcsszavak: Konfliktus; megoldás; híresség; multidiszciplináris; háború; Oroszország; Ukrajna.

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Cristina Matiuța

Social media – a catalyst for civil society movements and a tool for populism. Evidence from Romania

The paper aims to evaluate the potential of social media in shaping civic and electoral behavior by analyzing several civic protest movements as well as the role of social networks in the last legislative elections held in Romania in December 2020. It examines both sides of social media, namely its use for organizing and supporting civic movements, and its use as a tool for the accession of a far right populist party to the Parliament. The selected cases demonstrate that social networks are a catalyst for civil society movements pillared by people who are demanding to have their share in the political process and a tool for maximizing the votes of a new populist party. Social media acts as a breeding ground for a vibrant civil society. Through social networks people connect with each other, organize themselves and discover the feeling of "togetherness." Civil society thus becomes an actor that politicians must take into account in the decision-making process, as the civic movements presented here demonstrate. The problems that arise are the way social media is used and the social responsibility of social platforms. The good side of social media, as platforms for organizing and mobilizing people for right causes that support democracy, citizens' rights, the anti-corruption fight, is often diminished by its dark side, which means fake news, manipulation or even incitement to hatred and violence. The social responsibility requires finding a balance between the freedom of expression, one of the greatest gains of modern democracies, and the need to reduce misinformation and manipulation that take place on digital channels.
Keywords: Social media; civic movements; populism; Facebook; elections.

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Cristina Matiuța

Közösségi média – a civil társadalmi mozgalmak katalizátora és a populizmus eszköze. Bizonyíték Romániából

A tanulmány célja, hogy felmérje a közösségi médiában rejlő lehetőségeket a polgári és választói magatartás alakításában több civil tiltakozó mozgalom elemzésével, valamint bemutatja a közösségi hálózatok szerepét a legutóbbi,

2020 decemberében Romániában tartott parlamenti választásokon. A közösségi média mindkét oldalát megvizsgálja, alkalmazható civil mozgalmak szervezésére és támogatására, ugyanakkor eszköze lehet egy szélsőjobboldali populista párt országgyűlési csatlakozásának. A kiválasztott esetek bemutatják, hogy a közösségi hálózatok katalizátorai a civil társadalmi mozgalmaknak, ezek támogatói olyan emberek, akik a politikai folyamatban való részvételt kérnek és közben eszközei egy új populista párt szavazatai maximalizálásának.
A közösségi média táptalajként szolgál egy élénk civil társadalom számára. A közösségi hálózatokon keresztül az emberek kapcsolatba lépnek egymással, szerveződnek és felfedezik az „együttlét" érzését. A civil társadalom így olyan szereplővé válik, akit a politikusoknak figyelembe kell venniük a döntéshozatali folyamat során, amint azt az itt bemutatott civil mozgalmak is mutatják. A média felhasználói azt kérik, hogy legyenek partnerek a párbeszédben és véleményüket vegyék figyelembe a jobb megoldások megtalálása és a legitim döntések meghozatala érdekében. Az online csatornák ugyanakkor egy új populista párt – a Románok Szövetsége (AUR) – céljait szolgálták a Covid–19 világjárvány miatt főként online lebonyolított választási kampányban. Ez a párt alkalmazkodott a legjobban ehhez a típusú kommunikációhoz. Az aktív tagokkal rendelkező területi szervezetek hiányában az AUR beépítette a digitális technológiákat a célközönséggel folytatott külső kommunikációba.
A felmerülő probléma a közösségi média használatának módja és a közösségi oldalak társadalmi felelőssége. A közösségi média pozitív oldala, hogy a közös célok megszervezésének és az emberek mozgósításának felülete, amely elősegíti a nemes ügyeket, mint a demokrácia, állampolgári jogok vagy a korrupcióellenes küzdelem, azonban a jó oldalát gyakran csökkenti a sötét oldala, amely álhíreket, manipulációt vagy akár gyűlöletkeltést és erőszakot jelent.
Kulcsszavak: Közösségi média; civil mozgalmak; populizmus; Facebook; választások.

Cristina Matiuța, a Nagyváradi Egyetem oktatója, ahol Demokráciaelméletek, Politikai pártok és Civil társadalom kurzusokat tart. A kolozsvári Babeș–Bolyai Tudományegyetem Állam- és Közigazgatástudományi Karán szerzett diplomát (1996-ban) és ugyanitt doktorált (2004-ben), szakdolgozatát a liberalizmus és a nacionalizmus kapcsolatáról és Románia modernkori problémáiról írta. Doktori ösztöndíjban részesült a Brüsszeli Szabadegyetemen, valamint posztdoktori kutatási gyakorlatot végzett a Fribourgi Egyetemen (Svájc) és az Európai Egyetemi Intézetben (Firenze, Olaszország). Jean Monnet professzornál az európai integrációs tanulmányok területén, valamint a *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies* szakfolyóirat alapítója és szerkesztője.
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Zoltan Zakota–Nicu Cornel Sabău

The Role of Civil Society in Avoiding Water Conflicts and Promoting Hydrosolidarity

Fresh water is obviously indispensable in our lives and this is increasingly emphasized in various professional and political forums dealing with the possibilities of sustainable development, environmental, and nowadays more and more, political security. The increased shortage of fresh water in some regions can initiate such deep social and political processes that can become a security policy risk factor within a short period of time. In addition to famine, this can be another main reason for eco-migration, which poses serious challenges in areas with a dry climate. Fresh water shortages in international water systems can form the basis of diplomatic disputes and, in extreme cases, conflicting interests in water politics can deepen to the point of armed conflicts. Water degradation and its consequences, such as the numerous disasters that have occurred recently, due to synergetic effects, cannot be effectively solved at the local or regional, or even national, level. Only a coherent and unitary policy at the level of the implied sates could provide a framework for the coordination of efforts to adequately monitor the state of the waters. One of the pillars of such a policy could be hydrosolidarity. The notion has permeated international discourses on water management, but it has received little comprehensive review, although it serves as a well-established socio-ethical annex to integrated water resources management. The purpose of this paper is to briefly present hydrosolidarity, its basic principles, the main institutional and legislative framework in which it encounters water management, the protection of waters, respectively the prevention and management of hydrological disasters, with special regards to the European Union. The paper concludes by examining the potential of hydrosolidarity in addressing civil society and the potential of the latter in implementing these principles.
Keywords: Hydrosolidarity; Water Security; Sustainable Water Management.

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Zoltan Zakota–Nicu Cornel Sabău

A civil társadalom szerepe a vízkonfliktusok elkerülésében és a hidroszolidaritás előmozdításában

A friss víz nyilvánvalóan nélkülözhetetlen az életünkben, és ez napjainkban egyre nagyobb hangsúlyt kap a fenntartható fejlődés lehetőségeivel, a környezetvédelemmel, vagy a politikai biztonsággal foglalkozó szakmai és politikai fórumokon. A megnövekedett édesvízhiány egyes régiókban olyan mély társadalmi és politikai folyamatokat indíthat el, amelyek rövid időn belül biztonságpolitikai kockázati tényezővé válhatnak. Az éhínség mellett ez lehet a másik fő oka az ökomigrációnak, amely komoly kihívásokat jelent a száraz éghajlatú területeken. A nemzetközi vízrendszerekben tapasztalható édesvízhiány diplomáciai viták alapját képezheti, szélsőséges esetekben pedig a vízpolitikai érdekek ütközése fegyveres konfliktusokig fajulhat. A vízromlás és annak következményei, mint például a közelmúltban bekövetkezett számos katasztrófa, szinergikus hatások miatt nem oldhatók meg hatékonyan sem helyi, sem regionális, de még országos szinten sem. Csak egy koherens és egységes politika az érintett államok szintjén biztosíthat keretet a vizek állapotának megfelelő nyomon követésére irányuló erőfeszítések összehangolásához. Egy ilyen politika egyik pillére a hidroszolidaritás lehet. Ez a fogalom áthatotta a vízgazdálkodásról szóló nemzetközi diskurzusokat, de kevés átfogó áttekintést kapott, jóllehet az integrált vízkészlet-gazdálkodás jól megalapozott társadalmi-etikai kiegészítéseként szolgálhat. Jelen írás célja, hogy röviden bemutassa a hidroszolidaritás fogalmát, annak alapelveit, a főbb intézményi és jogszabályi kereteket, amelyekben találkozik a vízgazdálkodással, a vizek védelmével, illetve a hidrológiai katasztrófák megelőzésével és kezelésével, különös tekintettel az Európai Unióra. A tanulmány azzal zárul, hogy megvizsgálja a hidroszolidaritásban rejlő lehetőségeket a civil társadalom megszólításában, valamint az utóbbiban rejlő lehetőségeket ezen elvek végrehajtásában.
Kulcsszavak: Hidroszolidaritás; vízbiztonság; fenntartható vízgazdálkodás.

Zakota Zoltán villamos és környezetvédelmi mérnök, a nagyváradi Partiumi Keresztény Egyetem oktatója, ahol jelenleg számítástechnikai és gazdasági tárgyakat ad elő. Emellett a Debreceni Egyetem Mérnöki Karán oktat számítástechnikai és villamosságtani tárgyakat. Az évek során az oktatás mellett a magán- és civil szférákban is dolgozott. Számos hazai és nemzetközi projektben vett részt, főként az oktatás és a kutatás területén. Fő érdeklődési területei az információs és tudásalapú társadalom, valamint az IKT társadalomra, gazdaságra és oktatásra gyakorolt hatása. Jelenleg két nagyobb projektben vesz részt: az egyik az európai felsőoktatással, a másik pedig a román-magyar határon átnyúló együttműködés regionális hatásaival foglalkozik.
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Şerban Văetişi–Ana Gabriela Pantea

Global Citizenship Education during and after the COVID–19 Pandemic.
A Delphi study on responses from previous research in four universities in Romania

The article addresses the topic of Global Citizenship Education in the context of global pandemic and online education as developed in Romanian higher education between 2020 and 2022. How are the GCE principles and goals

expressed and practiced in a particular context? Is it possible to select key competencies for a given context and experience for GCE as education for sustainable development? are two of our research questions. We relied on already existing qualitative researche on online education during the COVID–19 pandemic and framed a model of analysis for a Delphi Study expert evaluation starting from observations made from this literature. For this method we used a group communication technique for which we invited in a conference format five experts in the field of GCE and education for sustainable development. The major findings refer to processes of online education as relevant for understanding more deeply themes evidenced by previous research, through further integrating them in analyses about GCE on distinctions, conditions and strategies of critical evaluation and implementation. Given the COVID–19 pandemic context of our research and analysis, we acknowledged that GCE priorities were determined by the pandemic situation, in forms not always evident or anticipated and, consequently, important for study. The exemplification of such GCE topics revealed by expert discussion as engagement, empathy or critical thinking suggested that the specificity of topics create their particular way of integration in curricula and educational strategies. These consideratio ns may help understanding the prerequisites and competencies needed in the future for GCE and sustainable education, in a post–COVID context.
Keywords: Global citizenship education; online education; Romanian university education; Delphi method; comprehensive approach in education.

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Globális állampolgárságra való nevelés a COVID–19 világjárvány alatt és után. Delphi-tanulmány a korábbi kutatások válaszairól négy romániai egyetemen

A cikk a globális polgárság oktatásának (GCE) témájával foglalkozik a világjárvány és az online oktatás kontextusában a romániai felsőoktatásban 2020 és 2022 között. Két kutatási kérdésünk: hogyan fejeződnek ki és gyakorolják a GCE alapelveit és céljait egy adott kontextusban? kiválaszthatók-e kulcskompetenciák egy adott kontextushoz és tapasztalathoz a GCE-hez, mint a fenntartható fejlődést szolgáló oktatáshoz kapcsolódóan? A COVID–19 világjárvány idején már létező kvalitatív kutatásokra támaszkodtunk az online oktatással kapcsolatban, és egy elemzési modellt állítottunk össze a Delphi Study szakértői értékeléséhez az e szakirodalomból származó megfigyelések alapján. Ehhez a módszerhez egy csoportos kommunikációs technikát alkalmaztunk, amelyhez konferencia formátumban öt szakértőt hívtunk meg a GCE és a fenntartható fejlődésre nevelés területén. A főbb eredmények az online oktatás folyamataira utalnak, amelyek relevánsak a korábbi kutatások által alátámasztott témák mélyebb megértéséhez, azáltal, hogy tovább integrálják azokat a GCE-vel kapcsolatos elemzésekbe a kritikus értékelés és végrehajtás megkülönböztetéseiről, feltételeiről és stratégiáiról. Kutatásunk és elemzésünk COVID–19 pandémiás kontextusára tekintettel elismertük, hogy a GCE prioritásait a világjárvány helyzete határozta meg, olyan formákban, amelyek nem mindig nyilvánvalóak vagy előre láthatók, és ebből következően fontosak a tanulmányozás szempontjából. A szakértői megbeszélések során feltárt témák, mint elkötelezettség, empátia vagy kritikai gondolkodás, azt sugallták, hogy a témák sajátossága megteremti a tantervbe és az oktatási stratégiákba való beilleszkedésük sajátos módját. Ezek a megfontolások segíthetnek megérteni az érettségihez és a fenntartható oktatáshoz a jövőben szükséges előfeltételeket és kompetenciákat a COVID utáni kontextusban.
Kulcsszavak: Globális állampolgári oktatás; online oktatás; román egyetemi oktatás; Delphi-módszer; átfogó szemlélet az oktatásban.

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Fotó/István Péter Németh

■■ As AUR has a clear view on the social and political expectations towards women, the success of the party in the last elections was gained through its ethno-nationalist, familialist and religious agenda, and a firm anti-empowering discourse on women.

(Sergiu Mișcoiu–Ana Gabriela Pantea)

■■ [S]ocial learning, as part of EU's approach on conflict resolution in its neighbourhood, leads to the transformation of perceived interests, because the countries voluntarily internalize the norms and comply with EU's expectations.

(Laura-Maria Herța)

■■ The present research is intended to be an analysis of the implications and the role of the civil society in North Macedonia's identity disputes […] taking into account the internal differences, which appear between the Macedonian and the Albanian communities and the external ones, focusing on the relationship of North Macedonia with Greece and Bulgaria.

(Mircea Brie–Islam Jusufi–Polgár István József)

■■ „While it is a fact that the [Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance] is tailored in such a way as to provide a policy-based toolset […] it is also significant to investigate the extent to which it encompasses concrete and coherent conflict resolution mechanisms, to meet the specific context in the Western Balkans."

(Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean)

■■ This paper aims to be a contextual, conceptual and factual analysis of the complicated relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and what are the main perceptions of civil society in these countries in the context of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh […].

(Mircea Brie–Ana Maria Costea–Laurențiu Petrila)

■■ The more it was expected that, after joining the European Union, Romania's political life would deepen its path from a purely communist vision to a pro-democracy one, the more it degenerated, as evidenced by the fact that the protests generated by civil society tend to counteract these shortcomings.

(Laurențiu Petrila–Felix-Angel Popescu)

■■ The exemplification of such [Global Citizenship Education] topics revealed by expert discussion as engagement, empathy or critical thinking suggested that the specificity of topics create their particular way of integration in curricula and educational strategies.

(Șerban Văetiși–Ana Gabriela Pantea)

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