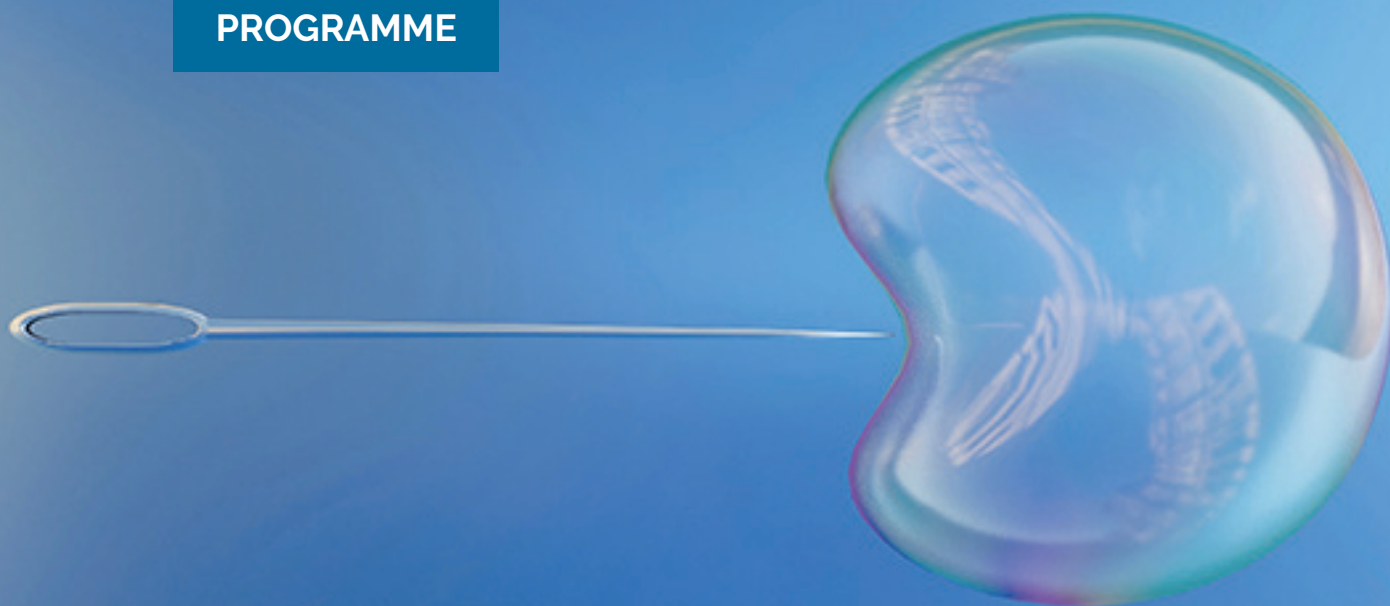


DEMOCRACY &
RESILIENCE
PROGRAMME



DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE INDEX

A pilot project in Romania, Hungary
and the Republic of Moldova

Coordinators: **Oana Popescu-Zamfir, Dani Sandu**

Commissioned by

B | S | T The Black Sea Trust
for Regional Cooperation

A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

A project by



Bucharest, Romania

March, 2021

The report can be accessed at www.global-focus.eu

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Argument and methodological explanation

by Dani Sandu and Oana Popescu-Zamfir

One of the most influential beliefs that surfaced at the end of the Cold War was that countries all over the world were authoritarian, democratic or soon-to-be democratic (e.g. Fukuyama 1992). This belief was soon to be turned on its head, when we started seeing that some "transitional democracies" did not actually transition toward democracy but found a type of intermediary equilibrium between a full-fledged autocracy and a full-fledged democracy (Levitsky and Way 2002). These polities acquired different names in time and, slowly, the study of democracy evolved from a binary separation of autocracy versus democracy into a wide spectrum of potential political regimes. More so, some of these polities were seen to swing across this spectrum, either in a slow and progressive pace toward democracy or in abrupt stumbles toward autocracy.

The most obvious such examples are offered by Central and Eastern European (CEE) former communist countries, such as Hungary or Poland, which were initially hailed as the leaders of one of the fastest and most solid transitions from autocracy to democracy and started to show strong signs of democratic backsliding more than twenty years after their transition. While we can see there is a regime back-and-forth movement along the autocratic-democratic spectrum, there is no real consensus as to why these movements occur. Apart from the why question, which we seem to be far from solving, we are also facing a more pressing question: how to predict or at least detect these movements before they cause irreversible harm?

The necessity of such an instrument is clear, especially for policy and governance institutions, national and international, which are interested in an early-warning system. Democratic resilience can be consolidated through targeted investment in civil society or political pressure on national

leaders, but these are costly instruments, which need to be deployed at the appropriate time to maximise their potential. If such an instrument is clearly necessary, we are forced to deal with the question of whether it is also achievable. Our answer is an unequivocal yes. While scholarship regarding democracy, democratic backsliding and democratic resilience has not achieved consensus regarding the reasons why these phenomena occur, this research has produced a generous quantity of knowledge about individual red flags and factors which indicate when democratic disequilibria occur. By its nature, most of this research is academic and divided into various strands of literature, each with different theoretical underpinnings and often based on separate empirical approaches.

To that end, we develop the Democratic Resilience Index, with the main purpose of uniting the research regarding democratic resilience under a unique empirical framework and measurement, covering the main factors pertaining to democratic disequilibria. The purpose of this instrument is to construct a framework that brings together the most important empirical findings from democracy research related to democratic disequilibria or short-term movements along the autocracy-democracy axis.

The Index relies on the state-of-the-art social science literature concerning democratic transitions, democratic backsliding and democratic resilience. It starts from a wholesale account-taking of the literature and the isolation of factors, events, mechanisms or features that are seen as consequences or correlates of this type of micro-transition. The intuition we rely on is that an index need not necessarily measure the causes of democratic micro-transition, which are not always integrated, but also on correlates or covariates of these causes and phenomena. What is important for an Index is to be the alarm mechanism that indicates movement. For that, it needs to detect as soon as possible and as efficiently as possible the processes connected to democratic micro-transitions. To evaluate that there is a fire we can also use the fact that there is smoke, as long as we take into account the potential limitations of this indicator.

THE DIMENSIONS

After these factors are identified, the following step is to categorise them into an integrated framework that allows for individual variation and measurement, by country of interest. In our framework, we categorise them into a four-by-four table with horizontal and vertical groups. Centralising factors under this framework brought us to four vertical categories (1. Political; 2. Society; 3. External Affairs; 4. Economy) and four horizontal categories (a. Institutions and structures; b. Elite agency; c. Critical junctures and path dependency; d. Buffers and legacies). For a detailed view of the four-by-four table, see the matrix in Annex I below (page 8), 'Multi-dimensional Assessment of Democratic Resilience'.

While the vertical categorisation is relatively straight-forward in the way it is constructed, the horizontal separation requires further clarification. The first horizontal category under which we group democratic resilience factors is Institutions and Structures, which aligns relatively well with

the political science literature concerning institutions and political structures, especially Acemoglu and Robinson (2006; 2012). This category contains the individual institutional settings that societies might find themselves under, which tend to be relatively stable over time, but have a very large influence over the overall regime equilibrium.

The second horizontal category taken into consideration is that concerning Elites and the decisions or behaviours that may influence the stability of the political regime. This category is where most of the literature concerning populist political parties, populist political leaders, bureaucracies or other types of political agents tend to interact with each other and political structures. While the goals of these elites are generally regime-neutral or power-maximising within any potential regime outcome, their actions might have consequences that disturb the general political equilibria of the regime, thus creating a micro-transition in the autocracy-democracy spectrum. Their evaluation is extremely important, especially as recent literature on Central and Eastern Europe has been deeply interested in how democratic backsliding would have potentially been influenced by the personalities of the political leaders in charge of the major mainstream political parties (Kelemen et al 2016; Cianetti, Dawson and Hanley 2018; Bauer and Becker 2020; Vachudova 2020).

The third horizontal category evaluated in our framework is that of Crisis triggers, grouped under path dependency and critical junctures in a state's development. This dimension takes into account the possibility that particular contexts where societies can find themselves might trigger regime-altering micro-transitions. One of the most famous examples of such critical junctures has been the study of how the migrant crisis in the CEE and the whole of Europe may have facilitated or even determined some democratic backsliding tendencies (Kreko and Enyadi 2018; Steinmayr 2017). The literature here is significantly richer, including other types of critical junctures, such as the rise of cosmopolitan social values (Kuhn et al 2017), certain economic transitions (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012) and many other such factors (Waterbury 2018; Sedelmaier 2014; Greskovits 2015; Bohle and Greskovits 2012). In order to make a coherent and unique measurement framework based on such varied findings, we adjust our instrument to the specificities of the countries under study here.

The fourth horizontal category we analyse is that of Buffers or democratic legacies. The literature on un-democratic legacies is rich and has been quickly expanding in recent years, especially in what concerns the CEE region, which is the current area of analysis. We group factors connected to democratic resilience or lack thereof based on the intuition that there are factors in a country's past that influence its present and either make it more or less likely to be caught in a micro-transition. As an example, countries that have a history of authoritarianism may have some micro-level remnants of yearning for an autocratic leader who does not need to worry about Parliament or elections (Foa 2018; Foa and Ekiert 2017). At the same time, we have some reasons to believe some countries that went through an authoritarian spell have embedded into their institutional structure some strategic inefficacies that slow down or prevent any one institution or leader from ever achieving full political control without revolutionary changes (Tsebelis 2002; Hammond 1997; Fong 2019).

In general, our exercise intends to favour causes or general factors involved in democratic resilience where there is a solid literature of generalisable effects, or effects that are quantified in studies involving countries in the wider European world. For example, we do not necessarily look at colonisation or army takeovers/ coups as much as the literature would encourage us to do when researching, say, Africa or South America.

Whilst our inclusion of some factors in a particular dimension, either vertical or horizontal, might be challenged, with good reason and cause, we consider this exercise as a starting point to a long-term effort to evaluate and quantify democratic resilience, which is clearly perfectible. We employ a general methodology that borrows heavily from other academic-policy relevant crossovers, such as the Varieties of Democracy research, the Economist Intelligence Unit evaluations and others. In fact, to further clarify and operationalise our instrument, we borrow the V-DEM practice of using factor analysis operations to simplify, validate and smooth our index and avoid potential issues of measurement colinearity or other such problems.

HOW TO MEASURE AND COMPARE WITH THE DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE INDEX

Our Index takes a cue from the state-of-the-art measurement projects dealing with democracy in choosing its measurement strategy. Our pilot project has evaluated an expert survey of country experts per field, respecting the general methodology and recommendations put forward by the Varieties of Democracy project (Coppedge et al 2018).

We filtered survey participants by vertical categories, according to their specialisation. We asked them to fill out one or more dimensions of our expert survey questionnaire, so as to ensure some level of inter-coder reliability. We expect our respondents to participate in future waves of our research, so that we can increase the precision of our measurements and make sure variation from year to year of the survey is not owed to variation in the pool of experts consulted. We aimed to include at least 30 different experts per country vertical dimension, but ended up collecting more than that number; clearly though (especially at the start of our exercise) our respondent pool will vary from country to country.

The target of our instrument is for measurements to be conducted on a yearly basis, so as to develop yearly country scores, which can be compared longitudinally. Because of the nature of our instrument, especially in its pilot stage, we do not necessarily expect for cross-country comparability. We ascertain the strength of the instrument we use is in a year-to-year within country comparison that allows us to see country variation in our scores and therefore note where and when countries switch direction and register a significant alternation of democratic trajectory. We take a cue on this from some of the incipient literature concerning democratic backsliding, particularly Waldner and Lust (2018), who posit that democratic micro-transitions (e.g. backsliding) are low intensity granular movements, therefore they are very easy to over-detect or record as false positives. To increase the Index's capacity to offer reliable results, we aim to measure resilience as multiple indicators deteriorating at the same time/over the same length of time.

ANNEX I

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

	POLITICAL	MEDIA / CIVIL SOCIETY	ECONOMIC	EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
Institutional Structure: headline structural characteristics of the sector institutional framework that describe the overall democratic functioning of the society in a particular sector	Quality of institutions, political parties, electoral system, etc	Justice and social justice / redistributive institutions (governmental and non-governmental), their quality, their outreach and efficacy, etc. Size and breadth of media / civil society sectors, how representative they are, their variety, quality, membership, financial stability	Fiscal governance, embeddedness with foreign markets, FDI, reliance on foreign aid or financial support, structure of economy (mineral resources, services, industry, etc), economic growth	Well-serving institutions of diplomacy and defence, participation in international organisations, transparency of intentions and priorities, etc.
Elite agency (includes EU institutional intervention): trends and proven intentions of sector elites to influence and subjugate political power to their benefit or the detriment of democratic equality; actions or shifts that are elite individual/ group specific rather than systemic	Risks stemming from individual or collective actions of political elites, oligarchy, collusion, professionalisation of bureaucracy, authoritarian tendencies of individual leaders/parties, etc	The existence of internal hostile groups, prevalence of clientelism, political instrumentalisation of organisations or outlets, instances of non-political messianism, governance capacity and subsidiarity, media professionalism and accountability, civil society oversight of politics	Free market competition/ collusion, ideologisation of economic elites, size of economic elite class dependent on governmental support, public support of economic elites	Existence of foreign agents/ countries interested in destabilising/ maintaining order in the region, their power, their local assets and capacity, their public support
Crisis Triggers (includes public opinion shifts or regional domino effects): factors that can determine large-scale sector or societal instability that can lead to democratic backsliding; can be ad-hoc or long-running, but should focus on sudden shifts; backsliding factors that are only activated in specific circumstances	Crises not determined solely by political elites, which can be exploited to change equilibria, generate public pressure, legitimacy crises or precedents that make political order less predictable	Legislation supporting free speech, level of media corruption, media support for democratic norms, vulnerability to disinformation, likelihood of overnight legislative change for power-grabbing purposes, societal disenfranchisement	Vulnerability to seasonal economic shocks (agriculture, etc.), cartelisation potential, foreign debt, unemployment levels, low-wage risks, polarisation/ dualisation of economy, trade union-related economic risks, economic nationalism	Prevalence of critical decisional junctures that can be influenced by external agents, local nationalism/ vulnerability to it, corruption/ cronyism within the institutional apparatus, regional domino effects and vulnerabilities
Buffers (including veto points): formal or informal societal characteristics that mitigate or slow down democratic backsliding in general or sectoral sudden shifts and crises, either by design or as a side-effect; elements that slow down Elite Agency vulnerabilities or Crisis Triggers	Characteristics of the political system that block immediate backsliding, be it institutional bottlenecks, power-sharing customs, litigation, etc	High/ low average level of education, significant remittances received from non-/democratic countries, historical non-/ democratic tradition	Sector-related factors that force local equilibria in the economy even under stress, such as access to international financing/ funds, remittances, a sturdy local entrepreneurial sector, self-organisation despite elites, etc	Sector characteristics that protect from under-pressure decision-making, mitigate external anti-democratic influences, i.e. public opinion tendencies toward Western democratic institutions, etc

Political dimension

by Costin Ciobanu

The survey questions for the political dimension of the Index draw on the scholarship on political regimes, democratic transition, and backsliding, but also employ relevant insights from other areas of the literature.

Our approach brings together institutional and behavioural approaches, and, given that the work on democratic backsliding and resilience is still in its infancy (Waldner and Lust 2018), it considers potential buffers and triggers that could make us more apt at making sense of the changes that our newer or older democracies are currently experiencing.

The minimal definition of democracy points towards free and fair elections (Collier and Levitsky 1997; Zakaria 1997). Moreover, free and fair elections and the right to vote are part of the eight institutional conditions necessary for a regime to be considered democratic (Dahl 1971). In what regards institutional setups, one of the most fundamental prerequisites of a stable democracy is the capacity of different state powers to intervene and re-establish the power-balance quickly in case of power-grab attempts from one branch. This refers to the well-known concept of separation of power theorised, among others, by Montesquieu. More formally, this touches on the concepts of horizontal accountability (O'Donnell 1998), that captures the relationship between more or less equal institutions (Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova 2020, 812). This is relevant for the broader idea of rule of law: effective horizontal accountability is the product of networks of agencies (thus involving not only the three key branches of government) committed to upholding the rule of law (O'Donnell 1998). A pathology to be avoided is "encroachment", which occurs when one institution trespasses upon the lawful authority of another (O'Donnell 1998). Horizontal accountability is essential for our understanding of liberal democracies.

One other essential dimension of horizontal accountability is the extent to which the rulings of the Constitutional Court are independent of the political preferences of the government of the day (O'Donnell 1998). To various degrees, this refers to judicial oversight, to the ability of other

bodies to question executive officials and their decisions, and to whether the executive respects the constitution (Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova 2020, 814) by ensuring that a high court has enough room for maneuver to fulfill its duties. Moreover, as some argue (Linz and Stepan 1996), ruling within the confines of the Constitution and being bound by law are necessary conditions in a democracy.

Political scientists argue that "religious institutions should not have constitutionally privileged prerogatives that allow them to mandate public policy to democratically elected governments" (Stepan 2000, 39). However, individuals and religious communities must also have complete freedom to worship privately and to advance their goals as part of civil society, including by sponsoring organisations and movements in political society (Stepan 2000, 39). As some have found, separation of the state and church and secularism are not core features of democracy (Stepan 2000; Fox 2007), but what is indeed consequential is that no democracy goes beyond a certain point of government involvement in religion (Fox 2007).

Diagonal accountability represents the extent to which actors outside of formal political institutions (e.g., media and civil society) hold a government accountable (Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova 2020, 812). We have looked at the extent to which the government engages and compromises with different non-governmental stakeholders, as accountability is an essential part of the definition of a liberal democracy. Other aspects, such as transparency and accountability in policy-making contribute to an engaged society and thus to diagonal accountability. In the end, the role of non-governmental actors is to provide and amplify information about the government, thus facilitating accountability (Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova 2020, 813).

The institutionalisation of the party system is another of the key conditions for democracy (Lipset 2001) – the creation of a stable party system facilitates a better relationship between the government and voters, given parties' role to properly aggregate the citizens' demands (see also Mainwaring and Torcal (2006)). Aspects like internal rules that are universally applicable to party members, as well as recurrent internal democratic procedures are essential to ensuring that parties remain representative.

Another essential element of a liberal democracy is the protection of civil rights and liberties – without it, we would only have an electoral, illiberal democracy (Collier and Levitsky 1997). This dimension is sometimes labeled as constitutional liberalism, i.e., the protection of an individual's autonomy and dignity (Zakaria 1997). The contestation of the role of civil rights and liberties is at the core of today's populist challenge in liberal democracies (Pappas 2016, 28-29).

In what concerns elite agency, clientelism is one of the aspects that have a profound impact on the functioning of democracy, on citizens' attitudes about the quality of democracy, and on the capacity of the governments to produce good public policies (Hicken 2011). Moreover, clientelism directly affects accountability (vertical accountability) and gives rise to "perverse accountability": the voters are not anymore the ones holding the politicians and parties accountable, but the parties and politicians control the voters to keep their part of the deal (Stokes 2005). In instances of vote

buying, free and fair elections become a myth, and not even the minimal definition of democracy (Dahl 1971) is satisfied. Obviously, the extent of vote buying is also an element to factor in, in the sense that a widespread phenomenon is a major threat to a democratic regime. Similarly, corruption – or the use of power to acquire private gains, as defined by us – is known to have a detrimental effect on democracy (Holmes 2006; Jong-sung and Khagram 2005). One channel this erosion operates through is lower trust in public officials and an increase in dissatisfaction with democracy more broadly (Bellucci and Memoli 2012).

The existence of persisting disagreements on the key issues of national interest is one of the markers of political polarisation, “a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension and people increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ ” (McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018). This generates major risks for democracy: gridlock, democratic erosion, and collapse. Moreover, polarisation has often an affective dimension (Iyengar et al. 2019). Affective polarisation has been argued to cause a decrease in satisfaction with democracy (Wagner 2020, 9). Even more importantly, affective polarisation is a threat to democratic norms and institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018; McCoy and Somer 2019).

For a democratic regime to be resilient, the political actors need to adhere to democratic norms. Such elite support of democratic values either through their personal attributes or as part of strategic interactions within the wider political competition has a substantial effect on democratic transitions and could also influence democratic backsliding and resilience, according to agency-based theories (Waldner and Lust 2018).

Another highly relevant dimension of elite agency is represented by the overall influence of illiberal parties, as they can impact the political and policy agenda of mainstream parties (Minkenberg 2013). If they become part of governing coalitions, such parties get to influence certain sensitive policy areas such as immigration (Bergmann, Hackenesch, and Stockemer 2021). Thus, the quality of democracy also depends on how mainstream parties decide to interact with radical ones, from a strategic standpoint at least (Meguid 2005; Golder 2016).

Prevalence of authoritarian ideas and values amongst key political figures is one of the more significant political crisis triggers, as democratic erosion could take place even in consolidated democracies in the presence of leaders with authoritarian behaviour delegitimising political opponents and rejecting democratic rules of the game, all despite the existence of otherwise strong institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). The normative political commitment of political leaders to democracy could impact the quality and level of support for a democracy in a country (Waldner and Lust 2018). Similarly, the density of connections with liberal or illiberal countries as factors related to the international scene could also impact democracy (Waldner and Lust 2018). For example, international economic developments (such as China's accession to WTO in 2001) have generated economic effects that are related to the rise of populist parties in Europe and with Brexit (Colantone and Stanig 2018b; 2018a). Moreover, through leverage and linkage, Western countries have the potential to trigger the transformation of competitive authoritarian regimes into democratic ones (Levitsky and Way 2010).

Ethnocentrism and nationalism could undermine constitutional liberalism and increase polarisation. This is in line with the main strategy of populist radical right-wing parties, who advocate that newcomers are not part of the people, because of their customs and beliefs (Golder 2016). The protection of minority rights is a key part of liberal democracies (Stepan 2000; Zakaria 1997; Collier and Levitsky 1997).

A significant degree of involvement of citizens in political parties is important, as they are an essential mechanism for vertical accountability (Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova 2020): they ensure that the voice of the voters is aggregated and heard by those in positions of power. If political participation is low, then the legitimacy of the parties is reduced, and a main channel for the functioning and fine-tuning of representative democracy is weakened.

Veto players such as members of an independent bureaucratic apparatus are key buffers, having been shown to be influential for the process of political change (Tsebelis 1995; 2002). In some cases, they can prevent negative outcomes, like democratic backsliding and erosion.

Apart from this, inclusion of minorities' interests in the agenda of parliamentary parties has a great potential as a buffer preventing polarisation and potential backsliding. Power-sharing (including at the level of the functioning of the Parliament) and a consociational conceptualisation of democracy (Lijphart 1968) are supposed to generate a more stable democracy by enlarging the group of those who have a stake in the (democratic) game.

Media and Civil Society

by Andrei Tiut, Alex Macoveiciuc and Marius Ghincea

The chapter on media and civil society gives particular attention to how democracy and its associated effects are felt at the level of society: is there relevant dissatisfaction with the delivery of democracy and its promises, or is it favourably perceived? Does governance translate the values and principles of a democratic system into actual perceived benefits for citizens, as per the expectations it sets? On the other hand, we also look at the way society itself is structured in a way that is either conducive to or restrictive of democratic resilience: does the media sector function as a bulwark against democratic backsliding? Does a strong and committed civil society place restrictions on political control and discretionary decision-making?

When it comes to the capacity of the government to decide and implement appropriate policies, the reasoning behind this is twofold. Firstly, an effective government will naturally be more able to resist efforts from outside to dilute democracy (Jee, Lueders, and Myrick 2019). Secondly, an effective government will be able to provide to its citizens the expected public goods, thus diluting or dissipating any general grievances that could constitute the basis for democratic backsliding (Bauer and Becker 2020; Cianetti, Dawson, Hanley 2018; VonDoepp 2020).

Conversely, an effective government may also have the power to resist pressure for deeper democratisation (Ruzza, Gabusi, and Pellegrino 2019; Trantidis 2021). This does not confound our goals, as we measure resilience and not the intrinsic quality of democracy. Of course, it would be a problem if an effective government chose to actually sabotage or undermine democracy. This can be the case, for example, if an ineffective democratic cabinet is followed by a (perceivably) more effective but less democratic one, like the ones of Adrian Năstase (2000-2004) in Romania or Viktor Orban's in Hungary. Therefore, we included questions about the way in which governments use power, whether they engage in proper consultation and debate, or whether these powers are clearly and predictably limited.

When considering the impact of civil society, we assign particular relevance to issues related to the general orientation of the civil society and whether it is strong enough to foster participation and representation of the population, with an emphasis on minority groups. We assume that an elite and a civil society that are democratically inclined will foster democracy, as the democratic values of these two groups will support the institutional and political dynamics within the state (Diamond 1994). When it comes to representation and political participation, our approach has been pragmatic, not normative. We assume that a democracy with better representation of domestic interests and social groups and higher participation is a qualitatively superior democracy. But participation and representation also make democracy stronger and more resilient to outside pressure, because they create political space for those parts of the public who are not fully satisfied with the current state of affairs, and this fosters loyalty to democracy rather than disengagement or, worse, hostility (Burnell and Calvert 1999; Boese et al. 2020).

Such a mechanism is at least partly independent of whether such opinions are democratic or not. Giving a voice to those who are dissatisfied with the status quo (while enforcing democratic boundaries) should allow the democratic majority to identify and resolve legitimate grievances; also, those less democratically inclined may feel to some extent represented. We believe that public debate and political representation are particularly important given the current wave of populism in Europe. Its magnitude is such that it can no longer effectively be kept within a cordon sanitaire, so the question is if democratic forces can reclaim the populist voters and reinstall faith in democracy itself. Having populist politicians in the executive is different from having them in parliament, particularly in countries with lower societal consensus on what democracy means. Once "absorbed" into the democratic institutions of debate and law-making, their ideas get to be tested and discussed in the public sphere and within the rules of the democratic game. In practical terms, they are also exposed to political erosion like anyone else, as is their ideology, which may lose some of its magnetic appeal and messianism when it is confronted with the demands of generating value for the people.

In terms of the media, we analyse it in terms of the extent to which it constitutes a forum for public debate, a venue for the exchange and competition of ideas and views through which public opinion is shaped and democratic consensus is built, and political power is checked.

In that sense, we focus simultaneously on the vectors that carry the news and opinion to the public (the journalists, the pundits, the influencers), and on the organisations behind those vectors of information and opinion (the business and corporate governance side: financial sustainability, legitimacy of business interests, ownership and shareholder structure, editorial independence). On the first count, one important item of analysis is whether the overall media coverage is truly pluralistic and allowing for a fair representation of different views, within the confines of democratic institutions and norms. On the second count, to offer one example, we have checked for elements such as the sources of capital that fund media organisations, which is instrumental for their resilience - in particular, if they benefit from state or private funding, but not only, as state control is only one (albeit the most important) way of shifting public opinion and private interests can be as much at work in some countries as state power.

Overall, we seek to assess media professionalism, as a key structural element, providing the population with objective, reliable, factual reporting, but unpack its constitutive elements and examine them separately. Additionally, we consider that the existence of an autonomous and effective media watchdog is essential both to foster accountability and to ensure a fair competitive environment, which prevents a race to the bottom with outlets lowering standards to grab the attention of audiences, or engaging in spreading misleading content to cater to political/ business interests.

We choose to give considerable weight to institutionalised, mainstream media for the reasons mentioned above, but account also for online and social media: access to internet, ease of entry for media start-ups, citizen journalism, etc.

Economic dimension

by Clara Volintiru

As early as 1959, Lipset claimed that economic development was correlated with democratisation. The modernisation theory was thus formulated, and large cohorts of studies have subsequently explored in the following decades the causal relationship between the two dimensions. While the original arguments pointed to a positive effect of income on democratisation, Przeworski et al (2000) showed that this was true only after democratisation had already happened. Epstein et al (2006) point to the fact that economic development as measured by income levels does prevent democratic backsliding. Different angles point to the fact that inflation and low growth encourage democratisation (Haggard and Kaufman 2018).

It is also important to account for agents of modernisation and economic development. For example, the literature shows how International Organisations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) can contribute to the process of democratisation and prevent democratic backsliding. As early as 2005, De Mesquita and Downs showed this link between development and democracy when IOs broadened loan conditions to include requirements that recipient states supply their citizens with coordination goods, such as basic civil liberties, human rights, and press freedoms.

However, the corpus of the modernisation theory fails to deliver a clear causal link between development and democracy. It is rather that income per capita and democracy are correlated, because the same features of a society simultaneously determine how prosperous and how democratic it is (Robinson 2006).

More recent data goes even in the opposite direction, pointing to a negative impact of regime transition (i.e. democratisation) on the economic wellbeing of citizens (e.g. income) in the first years (Orenstein 2021). Similarly, Kelemen (2020) or Richer and Wunsch (2020) point to the way in which economic prosperity and EU funds can in fact consolidate anti-liberal regimes in Europe.

In the economic dimension of the Democratic Resilience Index, we move beyond the democratisation premises, as we look at countries that have already gone through the transition and are in the consolidation phase, alongside those that have gone only part of the way. What we are interested in is to test those elements that correlate with democratic quality and can strengthen it, to ensure sustainability. Building on a large contemporary academic literature on economic integration and welfare (e.g. Scharpf 1997; Mukand and Rodrik 2020), we evaluate their role in preventing democratic backsliding.

With respect to the structural set-ups of each country, we evaluate a number of institutional indicators that have a clear influence on democratic resilience. Low growth and wealth inequality is a significant element in ensuring the stability and legitimacy of a democratic regime. For the same reasons, uneven economic development is also one of the key economic dimensions of the Fragile States Index calculated annually by the Fund for Peace. Additionally, standard indicators of economic development and welfare, such as income per capita or purchasing power are also examined, given the interrelation between overall economic prosperity and a country's democratic regime stability.

The existence of a robust legislative framework protecting property rights is another key factor. As democracy is linked to the protection of property rights, the presence of clear, well-enforced legislation in this area is in itself an indicator of stability (Knutsen, 2011).

The structure of a country's economy is highly relevant for the strength of its democratic resilience or lack thereof: both the nature and size of its biggest sectors, as well as its export structure have the potential to contain sources of vulnerability or resilience. Thus, we look at the share of the total number of employees working in each of the three main sectors of the economy (agriculture, industry and services), which enables us to observe the presence of certain electorates with particular vulnerabilities - for instance, a large percentage of employees in agriculture could point towards a lower overall economic development, as well as to the existence of a large rural, economically dependent electorate, that is vulnerable to pork-barrel politics and informal transfers.

The number of SMEs, coupled with the commitment to democracy shared by the community of entrepreneurs are two measured indicators of elite agency; a strong sector of small and medium-sized companies, which exhibits a genuine aspiration for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance/ standards is viewed as supportive of a stable democratic environment, as it is usually accompanied by a more robust middle class. Within the same category, we also look at the degree of financial freedom in each country, as a measure of independence from government control and interference in the financial sector.

Our design of survey questions accounts for both indicators generally seen as conducive to democratic resilience, and elements that usually function as constraints/ limiting factors on the same. In the latter category, the degree of state capture (i.e. corporate activity dominated by a few business groups) and the access of political groups to state business opportunities (hindering the promotion of meritocratic and competent management) are two notable such factors.

As with all other sectors of analysis, we have identified crisis triggers, which can determine large-scale sector or societal instability potentially leading to democratic backsliding. To give just two examples, the share of public debt as a percentage of GDP is relevant, as a high degree of indebtedness often significantly limits a country's ability to recover from crisis, thus leading in turn to higher unemployment, slower economic recovery and widespread public discontent; similarly, essential labour market indicators, such as youth unemployment, as well as long-term unemployment are important factors, high values in these areas being often correlated with the existence of a dissatisfied part of the population, more prone to supporting populist forces. In the same logic, the size and nature of the state's involvement in the economy represents a potential source of risk, since organised economic nationalism and a large share of the GDP being generated by the activity of SOEs expose the economy to state interventionism with more far-reaching consequences on the competition environment and fair market practices.

At the other end of the spectrum, among key economic buffers that have significant mitigation potential of democratic backsliding we can count such factors as easy access to international financing, an autonomous, self-organised and dynamic community of local entrepreneurs and significant levels of remittances (large funds transferred from individuals working abroad can support the local population in times of poor domestic economic conditions and offer more individual financial freedom from the government or political forces in general).

External Affairs

by Oana Popescu-Zamfir and Veronica Anghel

The role of foreign policy is instrumental in securing democratic resilience (Whitehead 1996; Burnell and Calvert 1999). In this section, we identify a set of necessary conditions for democratic durability, at multiple levels. We carry this investigation from the perspective of how states may be placed in relation to other actors on the international arena. We also look at what domestic features may render states weak when dealing with exogenous threats that may jeopardise regime stability. As in previous sections, we conduct our inquiry at the institutional and individual level (Merkel 1998).

Among the main features, we have primarily considered elements that limit discretionary decision-making by individual political actors in developing foreign policy; mutual oversight among state institutions and the existence of a negotiation process among multiple voices in society (government, civil society, academia, political parties, etc.) in the elaboration of foreign policy goals and strategies; the strength and inclusiveness of this consensus-building process, with the eventual outcome reflecting widespread agreement in society and among stakeholders on the national interest and paths to achieve it; dependencies on external actors (democratic or non-democratic), which can significantly affect the course of foreign policy; a track-record and/or strategic culture of principled, rules-based foreign policy and commitment to democracy, both in relations with other countries, as well as in domestic decision-making.

Democratic states are targeted by foreign-led campaigns that seek to undermine the basic freedoms that define what it means to be a democratic country (Hartmann 2017; Wigell 2019). These regimes are also more likely to be targeted by transnational terrorist groups because of the type of foreign policy they tend to pursue (Savun and Phillips 2009; Crenshaw 1981). Consequently, the democratic resilient structures require well-serving institutions of diplomacy and defence to deal with such threats and others. Participation in international organisations built around and upholding democratic values enhances the ability of states to resist attacks at different levels (Mäklsoo 2018).

Recruitment policies of those involved in foreign affairs that are built on a high level of professionalism and expertise may also help maintain a sense of democratic collective identity (Cross 2011). Diplomatic systems that are well-organised and meritocratic, rather than based on political appointments could be better equipped to represent the national interest and foreign policy continuity, insulating against excessive or self-serving political influence and potential disruption. At the same time, coordination and co-dependence among institutions may ensure coherence and a uniform approach to foreign policy, and reduce entry points for subversion, through constant oversight.

Whether democracy can be built from the outside is a controversial topic (Heffington 2018). However, from the perspective of the democratic state itself, a foreign policy agenda generally geared toward support for democracy abroad (for instance through development assistance, or democracy-building support, or programmes promoting rule of law and civil rights) is indicative of the importance placed on democracy (Diamond 1992). We identify this may also be conducive to more resilience, through a 'boomerang effect', whereby it helps keep the respective domains in the limelight of public and official attention.

At the same time, a foreign policy defined by emphasis on democratic principles and values-based, like-minded associations/ alliances, reflecting support for the rules-based international order rather than the opportunistic interests of the moment is likely to place further constraints on political behaviour and preserve democracy (Atkinson 2018). Conditionality has been shown to be a more effective democracy promotion strategy than incentives (Ethier 2003). Consequently, membership in international organisations built around the same above-mentioned principles, or the demonstrated commitment to accession to such organisations imposes limitations on potential derailment from democratic standards. Alongside the rules-generating institutional/ organisation structures, dependencies on liberal, democratic actors (whether markets or political and strategic allies) and more generally a high degree of integration with the democratic world will function as incentives and levers to behave in the same way, whereas dependencies on non-democratic actors may lead to the opposite. The existence of oversight mechanisms that look at the way these dependencies are formed (forging alliances, market access for various foreign actors, membership of various organisations) is a further guarantee that there will be no sudden, unhindered change of these conditions; just as the proper balance of powers among state institutions involved in the design and execution of foreign policy insures against discretionary action of any one of them acting in isolation, and transparency and inclusiveness open the process to public and watchdog scrutiny. Direct safeguards against foreign interference, currently a rising challenge, are a further and specific contribution to democratic resilience.

Similar considerations apply at an individual level, especially when looking at trends and proven intentions of sector elites to either influence political decision-making to their own personal benefit, or, on the contrary, to enforce democratic standards. We also assess the presence of disruptors or agents interested in destabilising order/ democracy, their power, their local assets and capacity, their public support. The dimensions that we have probed range from the foreign policy elite commitment to democracy, to a strategic culture in support of democracy within the foreign policy and defence establishment (e.g. support for EU and NATO integration), considering

that individual will can act as a bulwark against institutional backsliding, to the in/ability of the political mainstream to agree on key external affairs topics, national interest, red lines, etc (elite polarisation). Conflict on fundamental foreign policy goals could weaken institutional cohesion and could transfer at the population level and weaken support for democratic policy.

Just like in the case of institutional structures, we have looked at the density of elite/ stakeholder ties to authoritarian/ non-democratic countries, versus ties to democratic countries. We have also checked for the existence of a genuine plurality of viewpoints in crafting and implementation of foreign policy, to ensure that independent voices can be heard and contribute to the permanent debate on foreign policy, as opposed to government policy just being reinforced by echo chambers (for instance NGOs that feature as 'civil society', but are not truly independent). At the opposite end of the spectrum stand influencers on behalf of foreign, non-democratic powers, whether willingly or unknowingly.

In the category of crisis triggers and buffers, we have focused on some of the factors that we have seen at play in recent years. One of these triggers may be the risk of regional domino effects or contagion from strategic/ major partners experiencing democratic backsliding, whether through a coincidence of agendas, or by reducing the pressure to abide by democratic rules and values (Tuathail 1999; Kagan 2015). Since foreign policy is accountable to the electorate as much as any other policy area, public sentiment in favour of anti-democratic (nationalistic, xenophobic, authoritarian) foreign leaders or powers can also weaken democratic resilience at home. Conversely, the perception of disengagement on the part of democratic powers can undermine trust in and support for the principles they represent. The case of the EU in its immediate neighbourhood is telling, as expectations that had been created were gradually frustrated and have fostered scepticism with regard to the realism of the promise of democracy as a whole, and consequently increasing self-reliance and opportunism (Anghel 2020). Where such expectations had never been created and the respective country never had particularly close ties with democratic powers, such an effect may not appear; democratic resilience may never have benefitted from the added pressure of such strategic relations. But where democratic hopes were running high, only to be followed by disillusionment, the impact on democratic resilience could be quite dramatic.

At the other end of the spectrum, high public support for democratic organisations/ sympathy for democratic countries can translate into societies exercising pressure on governments in the sense of preservation of the democratic order. To be clear, in the case of crisis triggers/ buffers, we have not worked with neutral ground, i.e. the absence of ties/ public support for democratic powers; alone, this might not make a significant impact on the overall democratic resilience. We have only taken into consideration active vectors of pressure in one direction or another, i.e. manifest public support for democracy/ democratic/ non-democratic powers or manifest public opposition/ rejection/ disillusionment with the same, which provides a kinetic force of change.

Ultimately, we have examined long-term structural factors, such as a historical anti-authoritarian track-record, hence a sort of 'democratic path dependence' and self-representation among the public in terms of the country's most successful times (under a democratic or non-democratic regime) (Ekiert and Hanson 2003).

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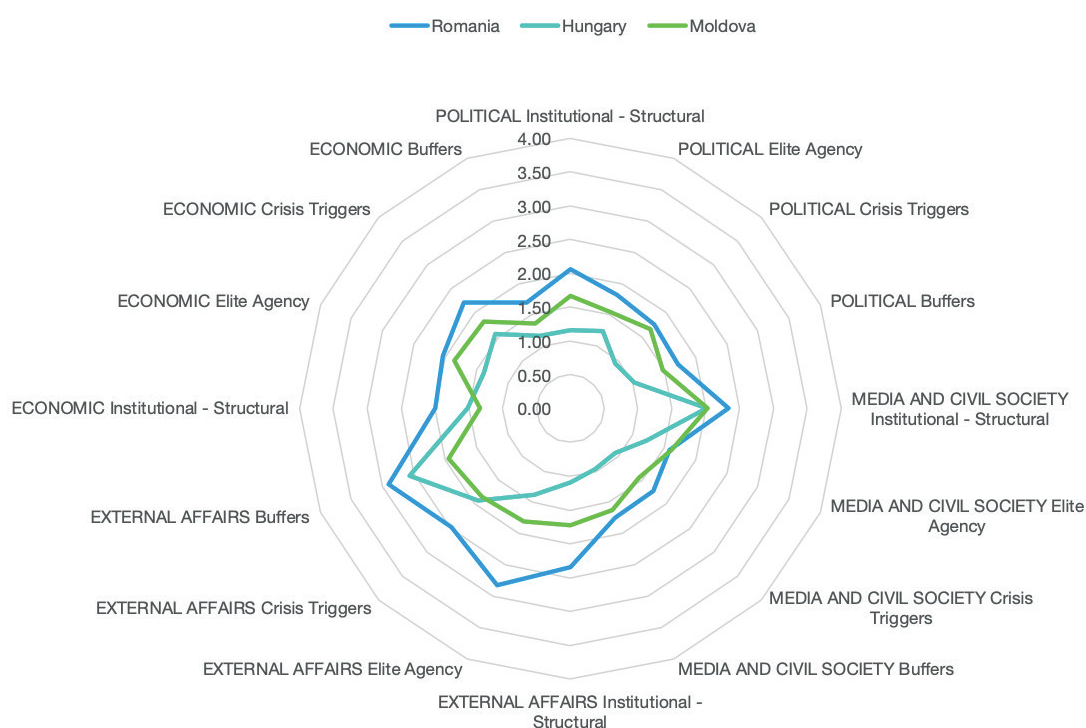
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Data Analysis

by Roxana Voicu-Dorobanțu and Clara Volintiru

Democratic Resilience Drivers



The graph reflects the landscape of the four detailed types of democratic resilience drivers considered in the analysis (i.e., Institutional – Structural / Elite Agency / Crisis Triggers / Buffers) across the four different sectors (i.e., Political, Media and Civil Society, External Affairs and Economy) for the three analysed countries: Romania, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova.

The value of a parallel assessment for each field, highlighting the complexity and volatility of this part of Eastern Europe, is evident. The Institutional/Structural field is largely considered by experts

to be better consolidated in Romania, with all four categories holding a similar level, with External Affairs slightly higher than Media and Civil Society and Economy placed the lowest. For both Hungary and Moldova, Media and Civil Society are given the largest weight, but the similarities stop here, as Hungary has a much lower political and external affairs weight. In the Elite Agency field, the landscape is much more heterogenous, as the weights of all categories differ significantly between countries, more consistent with the Crisis Triggers and Buffers. External Affairs is both an important trigger and a buffer for all countries.

The dashboard reflects the opinions of experts in the three analysed countries, Romania, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova, mapped in a multidimensional landscape. This visual assessment does not represent a ranking of the three countries, but allows for proper identification of specific capabilities and vulnerabilities — all of which can impact the level of democratic resilience in the analysed countries. This detailed assessment of the specific drivers of democratic resilience offers insights into possible areas for improvement.

A series of indicators were collected from the respondents, on a scale of 0 to 4. The average mean of the responses for each indicator is highlighted in the Indicator Level columns. A cell that is full reflects an average mean equal to 4, while a cell that is empty reflects an average mean equal to 0.

SECTOR	TYPE	INDICATOR	RO	HU	MD
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Balance of Power			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Constitutional Court Independence			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Influence of Religious Organisations			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Social Dialogue			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Regulatory Predictability			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Electoral Fairness			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Internal Party Democracy			
POLITICAL	Institutional - Structural	Minority Rights			
POLITICAL	Elite Agency	Political Clientelism			
POLITICAL	Elite Agency	Vote-buying			
POLITICAL	Elite Agency	Party Patronage			
POLITICAL	Elite Agency	Party Cohesiveness			
POLITICAL	Elite Agency	Party support for Quality of Democracy			
POLITICAL	Elite Agency	Influence of Extremist Parties			
POLITICAL	Crisis Triggers	Authoritarian Values in Party Elites			
POLITICAL	Crisis Triggers	Liberal Values in Party Elites			
POLITICAL	Crisis Triggers	Integration of Immigrants			
POLITICAL	Crisis Triggers	Political Activism			
POLITICAL	Buffers	Bureaucratic authority			
POLITICAL	Buffers	Political Representativeness			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Trust in Judiciary System			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Respect for Electoral Results			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Open and Unrestricted Internet Access			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Democratic Support from Public Media			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Media Independence			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Media Support of Democratic Values			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Media Pluralism			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Institutional - Structural	Easiness to Start a Media Outlet/Blog			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Elite Agency	Social Dialogue			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Elite Agency	Gerrymandering and Electoral Interference			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Elite Agency	Quality of Human Resources in Government			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Elite Agency	Politicisation			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Elite Agency	Liberal Values in Civil Society			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Elite Agency	Media Censorship			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Civil Liberties			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Influence of Civil Society			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Media Commitment to Democratic Values			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Social Polarisation			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Social Collaboration in Crisis			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Disinformation and Fake News			
MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Crisis Triggers	Freedom of Speech			

The dashboard does not assign weights to the indicators, each indicator is considered equal to the other, regardless of the field or category. Moreover, being a dashboard of data collected via survey, it bears the biases of the respondents.

There are in total 90 variables that can have a direct or indirect impact on the democratic resilience in each country. For all variables we considered the highest values to reflect a positive contribution to democratic resilience in each country, and lower values to reflect vulnerabilities or threats. The majority of selected variables are conducive factors for democratic resilience. There is also a subset of 30 variables that are factors of potential disruption (e.g., political clientelism, media censorship, economic inequality). For the disruptive variables, we maintained the same scoring directionality, as higher values reflect the absence or weakness of such factors, and lower values reflect potential threats and vulnerabilities.

While there are elements that showcase common vulnerabilities for all selected case studies (e.g., political clientelism), there are other variables that showcase capabilities in the case of Romania (i.e., low influence of non-democratic actors, or strong alignment with international rules), but vulnerabilities in the case of Hungary (i.e., high influence of non-democratic actors, and poor alignment with international rules). Similarly, while in Romania there is low public support for foreign authoritarian leaders, the opposite is true in Moldova. As such, we would encourage the reading of the resulting values of the Democratic Resilience Index in a continuum, not just a unidirectional dimension.

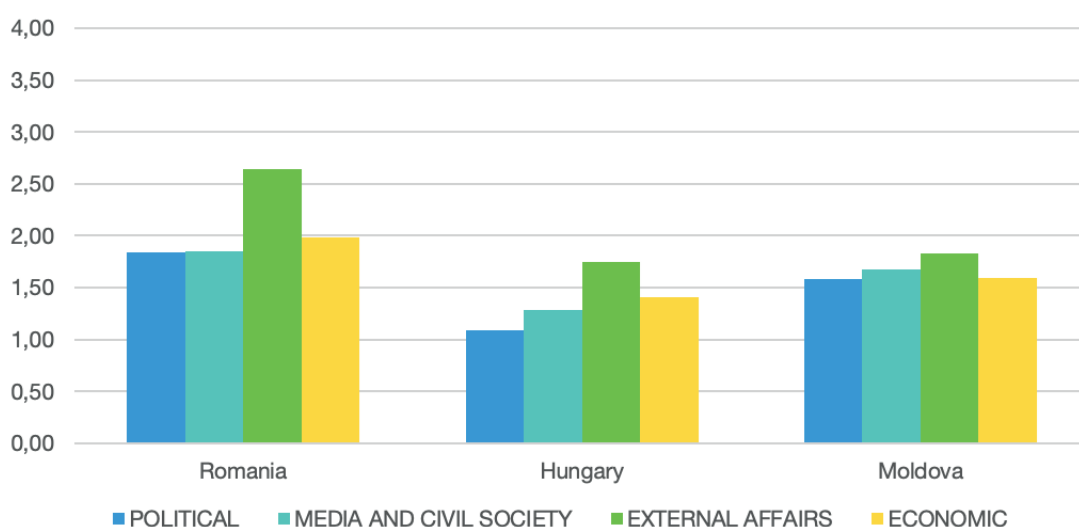
Beyond the many national specificities, it is important to note common democratic resilience drivers. For example, across all three countries, we find a strong capability with regard to the open and unrestricted access to internet, the popular support for international organisations (IOs) (e.g., EU, NATO or UN), the positive role of economic integration, or the widespread support for liberal values within society. Similarly, there are a number of common vulnerabilities, such as political clientelism, politicisation of the media, social polarisation, low political activism, poor quality of human resources in governmental structures and high labour market vulnerabilities (e.g. long-term unemployment, high level of NEETs, low percentage of high-skilled workers, high employment in subsistence farming).

INDICATOR	ROMANIA	HUNGARY	MOLDOVA
Balance of Power			
Constitutional Court Independence			
Influence of Religious Organisations			
Social Dialogue			
Regulatory Predictability			
Electoral Fairness			
Internal Party Democracy			
Minority Rights			
Political Clientelism			
Vote-buying			
Party Patronage			
Party Cohesiveness			
Party support for Quality of Democracy			
Influence of Extremist Parties			
Authoritarian Values in Party Elites			
Liberal Values in Party Elites			
Integration of Immigrants			
Political Activism			
Bureaucratic authority			
Political Representativeness			
Trust in Judiciary System			
Respect for Electoral Results			
Open and Unrestricted Internet Access			
Democratic Support from Public Media			
Media Independence			
Media Support of Democratic Values			
Media Pluralism			
Easiness to Start a Media Outlet/Blog			
Social Dialogue			
Gerrymandering and Electoral Interference			
Quality of Human Resources in Government			
Politicisation			
Liberal Values in Civil Society			
Media Censorship			
Civil Liberties			
Influence of Civil Society			
Media Commitment to Democratic Values			

Social Polarisation			
Social Collaboration in Crisis			
Disinformation and Fake News			
Freedom of Speech			
Control of Media			
Political Elite Support of Pluralism			
Regulatory Favouritism			
General Knowledge of Political Process			
Influence of the Diaspora			
Liberal Traditions			
Politicisation in Diplomatic Appointments			
Diplomatic Policy Centralisation			
Democratic Values in Foreign Policy			
International Rules Alignment			
International Organisations Membership			
Influence of Non-democratic Actors			
Prevent Malevolent FDI			
Independent Oversight of Foreign Policy			
Strategic Management of Malign Foreign Interferences			
Quality of Human Resources in Diplomacy			
Liberal Values in Diplomacy			
Liberal Values of Technical Experts in FP			
Foreign Policy Consensus			
Elite Alignment with Non-Democratic Actors			
Media Alignments with Non-Democratic Actors			
Influence of Think Tanks in Foreign Policy			
Neighbouring Anti-democratic Shifts			
Popular Support for Foreign Authoritarian Leaders			
Influence of IOs			
Popular Support for IOs (e.g. EU, NATO, UN)			
Communist Melancholia			
Macroeconomic situation			
Microeconomic situation			
General Welfare			
Property Rights			
Labour Market Vulnerabilities			
Economic Integration			
Economic Transparency			
IOs Commitment to Democracy			
Democratic Values of Business Elites			
Business Regulations (Difficulty)			
FDIs (Limited Availability)			
Popular Understanding of Capitalism			
Entrepreneurial Reliance on Democracy			
Popular Distrust of MNCs and FDI			
Politicisation of Public Procurement			
Economic Expectations			
Economic Inequality			
Financialisation Limitations			
Currency Fluctuations			
Social Security for Under-Employed			
Difficulty in Finding Alternative Sources of Employment			
Stagnating Entrepreneurship			

Sectorial Democratic Resilience Drivers

Looking at sources of democratic resilience, we find their relative strength to be different across the three countries we covered in our analysis. Overall, Romania scores the highest values across all sectors of democratic resilience drivers (i.e., political, media and civil society, external affairs, economic). However, in all three cases, we find that external affairs drivers are perceived to be the strongest. Democratic resilience drivers from external affairs in Romania are significantly larger than the other three categories, while in Moldova they rank much closer. In the case of Moldova, we find much more homogeneity in democratic resilience spread across all four analysed sectors.



In terms of the political sector of democratic resilience drivers, the strongest elements for Romania are the extent to which elections are organised correctly, offer good access to the polls to all people and register votes in a proper way, without gross manipulation. Unlike Romania, for Hungary and Moldova, the component of electoral fairness is rather a vulnerability than a driver of democratic resilience. Similarly, a leading driver of democratic resilience in Romania is the fact that the political behaviours and norms are influenced by liberal democratic international actors, organisations or states. This is not the case for Hungary and Moldova. For both Romania and Moldova, the influence of extremist parties is limited, while in Hungary it is considered by experts to be much higher. The main political vulnerabilities for democratic resilience in Romania are the high prevalence of clientelism and the low level of political activism.

For Hungary, the strongest economic democratic resilience driver is the extent to which we can find internal party democracy, as many of the Hungarian parties have institutionalised internal rules and norms applicable to all members, clear mechanisms to choose their leaders and recurrent internal democratic procedures that are respected regardless of the leadership. Amongst the many political vulnerabilities in Hungary, the largest seems to be the poor regulatory predictability, the low level of bureaucratic autonomy, the low independence of the Constitutional Court and the level

of political clientelism, with the latter being a key common democratic vulnerability in all three countries covered in this analysis.

For Moldova, the independence of the Constitutional Court is the leading political capability for upholding democratic resilience in this country, in contrast to the situation in Hungary. Equally important for Moldova's case, experts signal the low influence of extremist parties. In terms of vulnerabilities, the highest threat to democracy in Moldova is the poor balance of powers in the country, as state powers (executive, legislative, judiciary) are not judged by experts to be able to organically re-establish the balance of powers quickly if one branch commits a power-grab or contextually acquires excessive political power.

On the social dimension, the key capability in terms of media and civil society for all three countries is the open and unrestricted access to the internet. For both Romania and Moldova, it is judged by experts to be relatively easy to start a media outlet or a blog, whereas the same does not apply in Hungary. Similarly, there is higher freedom of speech and media pluralism in Romania and Moldova than in Hungary. For all three countries vulnerabilities are similar, as there is high politicisation in the media, poor media independence and high social polarisation.

In terms of external affairs, no large vulnerability can be identified in the case of Romania, with only an average score on the level of politicisation of diplomatic appointments. The strongest capabilities for Romania in external affairs reside, according to experts, in the low domestic influence of non-democratic actors, the strong alignment with International Organisations, and a large policy consensus amongst national elites. In contrast, Hungary scores several vulnerabilities in the external affairs sector. The largest issue for this country is the fact that Hungarian decision-makers in foreign policy do not prioritise democratic norms and behaviours over purely transactional objectives. In the case of Hungary there are also issues related to the poor alignment with International rules, the poor commitment of foreign policy decision-makers to liberal democratic ideals, and the politicisation of diplomatic appointments. For Moldova, the key capability in external affairs is the fact that liberal international organisations have a strong, significant and constant local presence in this country. Its key democratic vulnerability in external affairs is the large popular support for foreign authoritarian leaders.

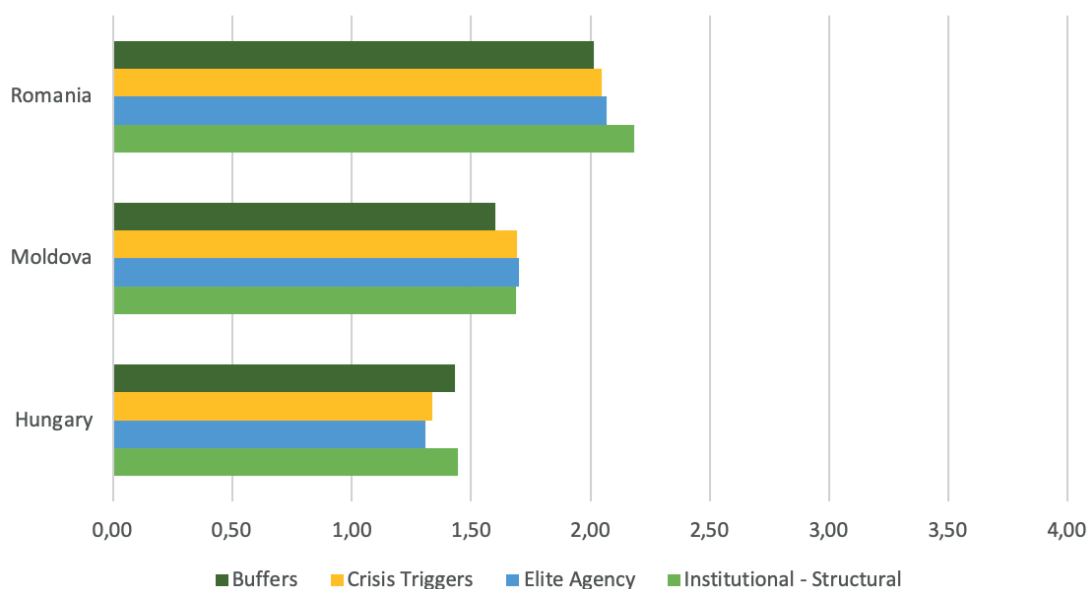
In terms of the economic sector drivers of democratic resilience, the strongest elements for Romania appear to be the degree to which it is economically integrated, the absence of currency fluctuations, the transparency of economic exchanges in the market, and the strong investment of International Organisations (e.g., World Bank, IMF, EBRD) in support of democratic institutions in this country. The largest economic vulnerability for Romania is related to the structural labour market issues (e.g., long-term unemployment, high level of NEETs, low percentage of high-skilled workers, high employment in subsistence farming).

In the case of Hungary, the strongest economic drivers of democratic resilience are the degree of economic integration, and the availability of FDIs, but also the fact that the economic outlook seems to be rather positive for this country. As opposed to Romania, for Hungary currency

fluctuations seem to represent a vulnerability in terms of democratic resilience. Other large economic vulnerabilities in Hungary include a high degree of politicisation of public procurement, weak commitment to democratic values on the part of business elites, and the poor economic outlook for those under-employed, who are sooner unable to cover subsistence costs through social benefits, informal employment, subsistence farming or other auto-consumption means.

For Moldova, the strongest economic driver of democratic resilience is the support from local entrepreneurs and start-ups for democracy, and like in the case of Romania, the strong investment of International Organisations (e.g., World Bank, IMF, EBRD) in support of democratic institutions in this country. Much like Hungary, in the case of Moldova the politicisation of public procurement contracts is also one of the largest economic vulnerabilities, and like Romania, for Moldova labour market vulnerabilities are its largest vulnerability. Unlike the other two countries, for Moldova the negative macroeconomic outlook (e.g., GDP, public deficits, balance of payments, inflation, trade, unemployment, taxation, investments) is a relatively large vulnerability.

Types of Democratic Resilience Drivers



Our methodology aims to disentangle not only the different sectors from which the drivers of democratic resilience emerge, but also the extent to which they are structural or contextual factors, or elements that can trigger a crisis and elements that can attenuate democratic backsliding. As such, we distinguish the four different types of factors across all four sectors: structural-institutional, elite agency, crisis triggers and buffers.

In the case of Romania and Hungary we find structural drivers of democratic resilience to be judged by experts as stronger, while in the case of Moldova we find them to be slightly weaker than elite agency. Crisis triggers are stronger than buffers in Moldova and Romania, but buffers appear to be stronger than crisis triggers in Hungary. Elite agency in support of democracy is weakest in Hungary, and strongest in Romania.

KEY BUFFERS IN ROMANIA	KEY BUFFERS IN HUNGARY	KEY BUFFERS IN MOLDOVA
Popular Support for IOs (e.g. EU, NATO, UN)	Popular Support for IOs (e.g., EU, NATO, UN)	Influence of the Diaspora
Low Communist Melancholia	Low Communist Melancholia	Popular Support for IOs (e.g., EU, NATO, UN)
Low Regulatory Discretionarism		
Entrepreneurial Growth		

The strongest buffers in all three countries come from the external affairs sector, in terms of the strong public support for liberal international organisations (e.g., EU, NATO, UN), but also the relatively weak communist melancholia—albeit this is a lower capability in the case of Moldova. While low levels of discretionary control over public regulations is a strong buffer for Romania (i.e., the government's ability to fundamentally change key legislation overnight to increase its power), it is not so for Hungary or Moldova. A key buffer for Moldova is the capability of its diaspora to

significantly guide the political process in Moldova toward liberal democracy by voting, donating or other democratic means.

Crisis triggers are more similar across all three countries. Large vulnerabilities appear in the media and civil society sector, in terms of social polarisation, as debates over salient political issues lead to polarisation and mutual blaming across social groups. Also, in the political sector, a key common crisis trigger is the low involvement of citizens in the political process leading to potential threats to democratic resilience in these countries. The largest crisis trigger in Hungary is the fact that the government in this country uses its policy-making prerogatives to keep the media under its control, but also the fact that there are social groups whose political rights have been repeatedly limited by the government.

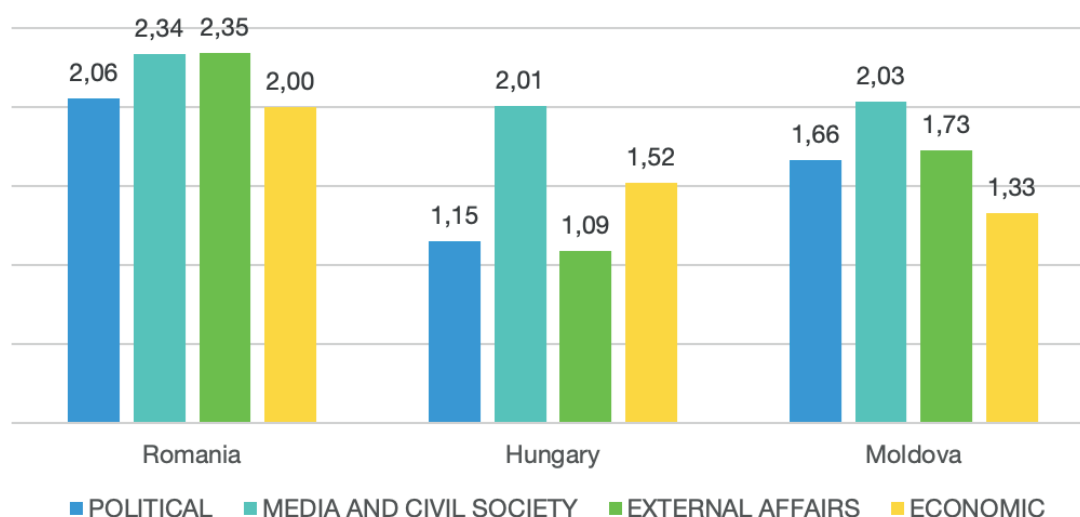
STRONG CRISIS TRIGGERS IN ROMANIA	STRONG CRISIS TRIGGERS IN HUNGARY	STRONG CRISIS TRIGGERS IN MOLDOVA
High Social Polarisation	Control of Media	High Social Polarisation
Low Political Activism	Low Civil Liberties	Low Social Collaboration in Crisis
Low Media Commitment to Democratic Values	High Social Polarisation	High Popular Support for Foreign Authoritarian Leaders
Disinformation and Fake News	Low Political Activism	Low Political Activism
	Low Influence of Civil Society	
	Authoritarian Values in Party Elites	
	Poor Integration of Immigrants	
	Low Political Elite Support of Pluralism	
	High Currency Fluctuations	
	Low Liberal Values in Party Elites	

Elite agency plays a dual role in democratic resilience, as agents' actions can create both capabilities in support of the quality of democracy and rule of law, as well as vulnerabilities. In general terms in Romania, elite agency plays a conducive role for democratic resilience in the sector of external affairs, and a destabilising role in the political sector. The supporting role of elites for democracy in Romania comes from foreign policy consensus, the fact that foreign policy technical experts are familiar with and committed to the values of liberal democratic international organisations and actors (e.g., NATO, EU, US), the low extent to which domestic elites or national media are aligned with non-democratic actors, and the overall commitment of foreign policy decision-makers to liberal democratic ideals. The largest vulnerabilities on the part of Romanian elite actions come from the political sector, in terms of the interlinked phenomena of clientelism, politicisation, party patronage and overall poor quality of human resources in government.

In the case of Hungary, the major support for democracy comes from the support for liberal values in society, and the FDI abundance in this country. Much like in the case of Romania, the largest threat to democracy in terms of elite agency in Hungary comes from the interlinked phenomena of clientelism, politicisation, but also gerrymandering and favouritism in public procurement. In contrast to Romania, Hungary has a vulnerability with regard to the commitment of its diplomatic elites to liberal values. Moldova receives the highest democratic support from elite agency in IOs and private sector, while its greatest threats are also clientelism and party patronage.

In terms of institutional or structural democratic resilience drivers, we can see that their sectorial strength differs from country to country. While in Romania, institutional or structural democratic resilience drivers have a similar distribution around average values, in the case of Moldova, the institutional and structural drivers stemming from the media and civil society sector are much stronger than those in the economic sector. In contrast, for Hungary, it is economic institutional or structural democratic resilience drivers, as well as media and civil society that have the highest value, with a much poorer score for political and external affairs sectors. While we do not have historical data for our indicators, it could be that either some institutional components have eroded over time, as might be the case of Hungary, or have not managed to consolidated fully since the democratic transition, as might be the case of Moldova.

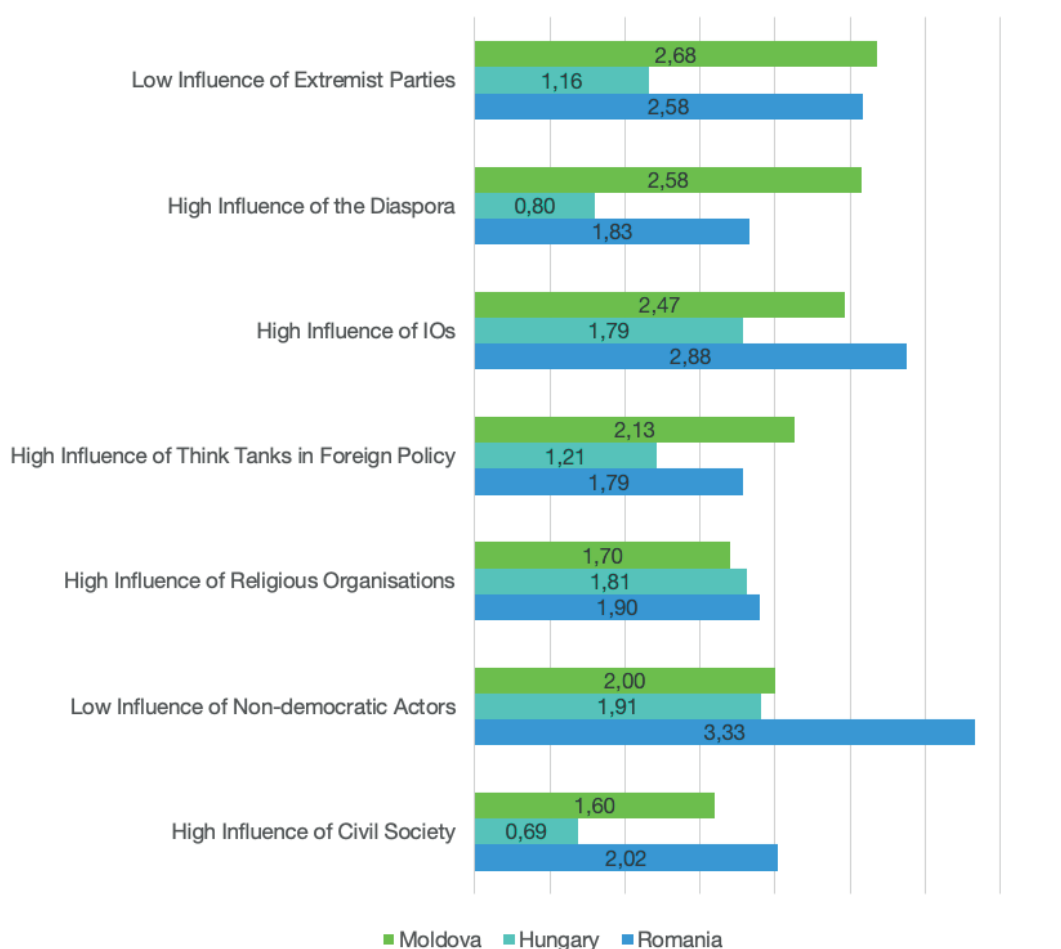
Institutional - Structural Democratic Resilience Drivers



Clusters of Variables

Across different sectors and different typologies there are certain sets of variables that can be ascribed to a shared category, characterising the different roles that national stakeholders can play in supporting (or not) democratic processes in their countries. Three such categories emerged from our dataset: (1) stakeholder influence across all different sectors, (2) stakeholders' commitment to liberal values across all different sectors, and (3) politicisation across all different sectors.

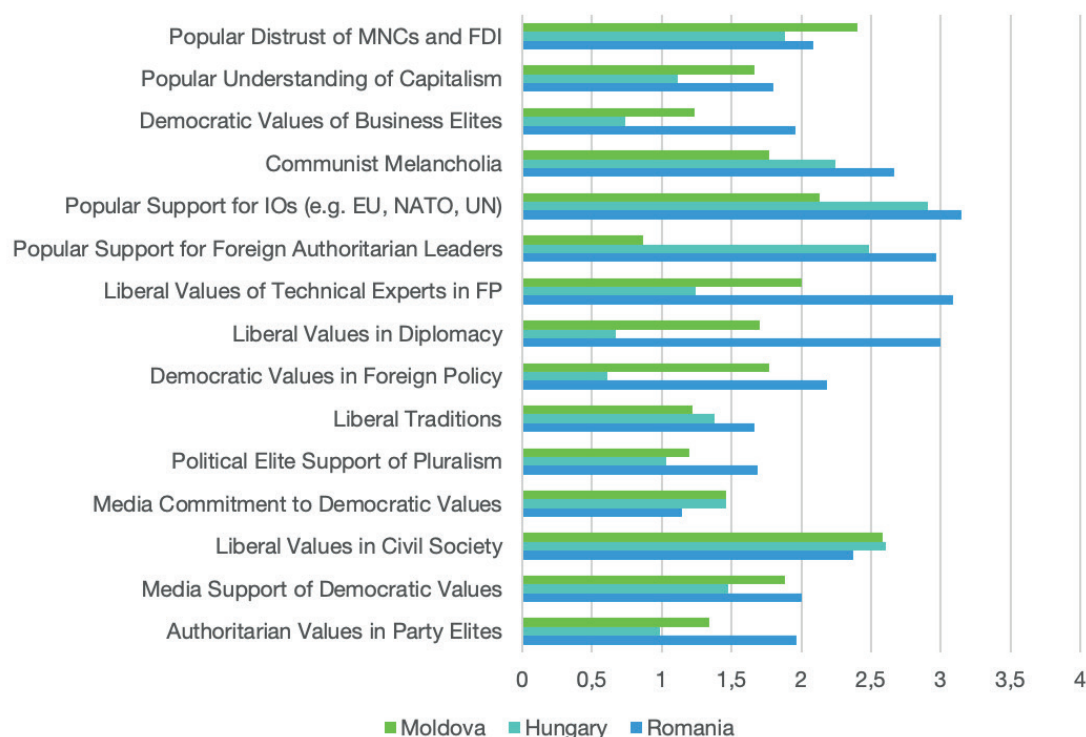
Stakeholder Influence as a Driver of Democratic Resilience



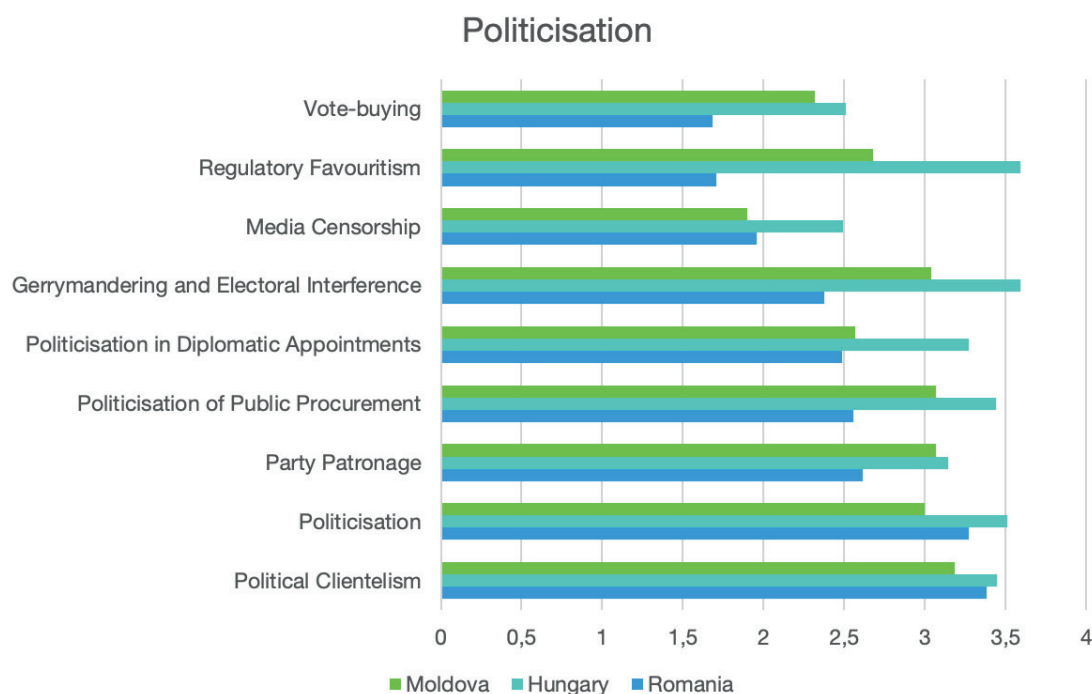
In terms of the influence of different stakeholders in each of the analysed countries, there are influences that can be corrosive for democracy (e.g., extremist parties or non-democratic actors) for which scores reflect not their intensity, but the extent to which they are controlled in each country, and influences which can be conducive to democratic quality and pluralism (e.g., IOs, civil society). We find that the diaspora is the stakeholder whose influence seems to be strongest in upholding the democratic resilience in this country, followed by the influence of International Organisations. Also, there is a strong capability in Moldova in terms of the low influence of extremist parties. For

Romania it is also a case of fending off threats to democracy, as it scores high in controlling the influence of non-democratic actors and that of extremist parties. Romania, like Moldova, benefits from a high influence of IOs in promoting democratic values locally. In contrast, the positive influence on democratic resilience in Hungary is low for both civil society and its diaspora.

Stakeholders' Commitment to Liberal Values



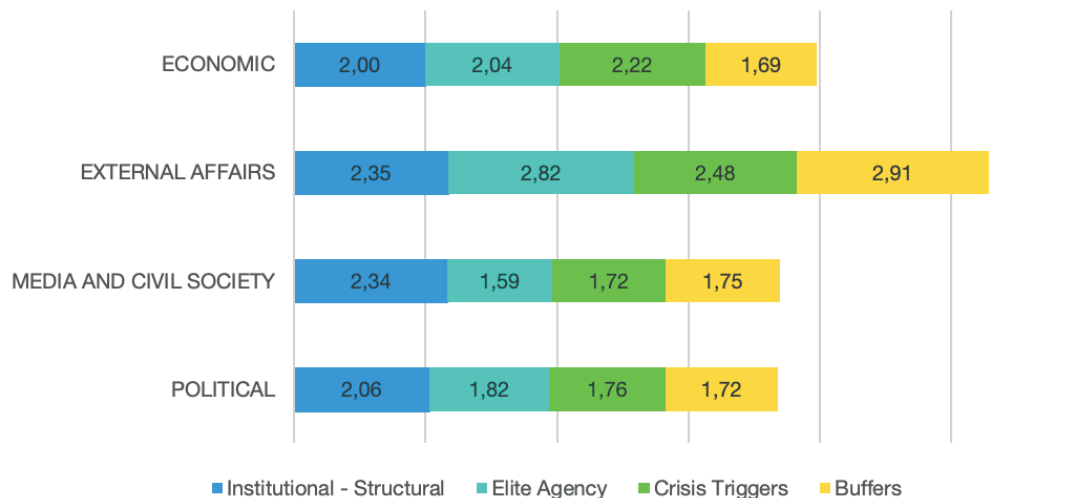
In terms of the stakeholders' commitment to liberal values, our indicators cover both public values (as judged by expert respondents) and elite values. We find an overall higher commitment to liberal values in the case of Romania across different categories of stakeholders, but values in all three countries remain moderately strong. The largest and common dimension is that of the commitment of society in general to liberal values. For Romania it is the commitment to liberal values amongst foreign policy decision-makers that presents the strongest capability in this cluster, while for Hungary and Moldova it is popular support for IOs and liberal values that is their strongest capability in terms of values.



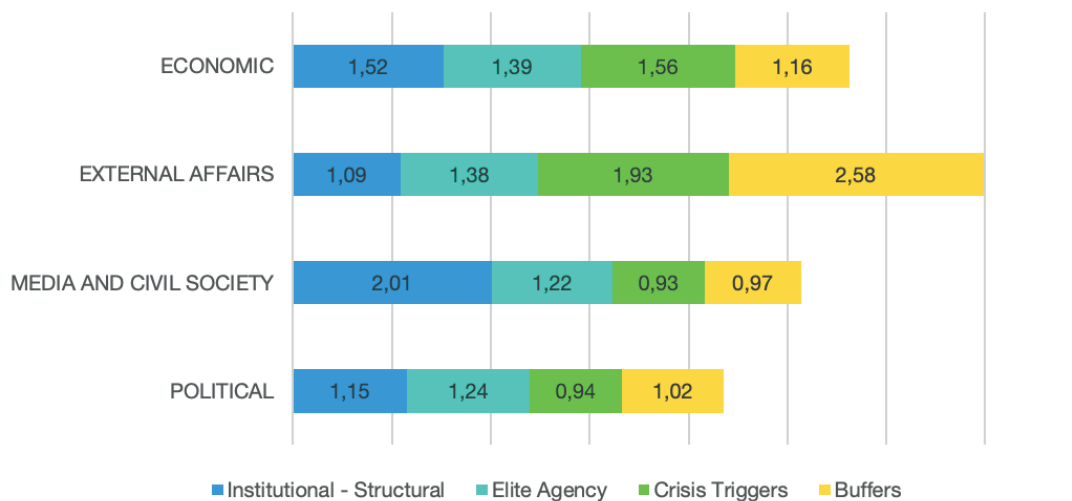
The different layers of politicisation have been flagged by experts in all our case studies as major threats to democratic resilience. While the manifestations of politicisation differ from one country to another, the interlinked phenomena showcase a clear pattern of vulnerability with regard to the agency of domestic elites. The values in this graph have been inversed to showcase not the level to which such factors are controlled domestically, but their intensity, and we can see that for many of the types of politicisation their intensity is close to the maximal value. The largest dimension of the problem seems to be encountered in Hungary, where all forms of politicisation score very high—from regulatory favouritism (i.e. ease to fundamentally change legislation), to gerrymandering and electoral interference, or politicisation of the media. All these interventions by political elites across different sectors of activity have one common goal: to establish as much control as possible, and therefore ensure continuity in power. As such, it is more than corruption, but a fundamental altering of democratic processes that takes place through the different mechanisms of politicisation. In Romania too, many of these practices are present and represent major vulnerabilities for democratic resilience, but there are limitations to others. For example, media censorship or gerrymandering are much better controlled here than in Hungary. Finally, for Moldova, once again all forms of politicisation score high, but gerrymandering, politicisation of public procurements and political clientelism seem to represent the primary threats.

Consolidated Sectors of Democratic Resilience Drivers per Country

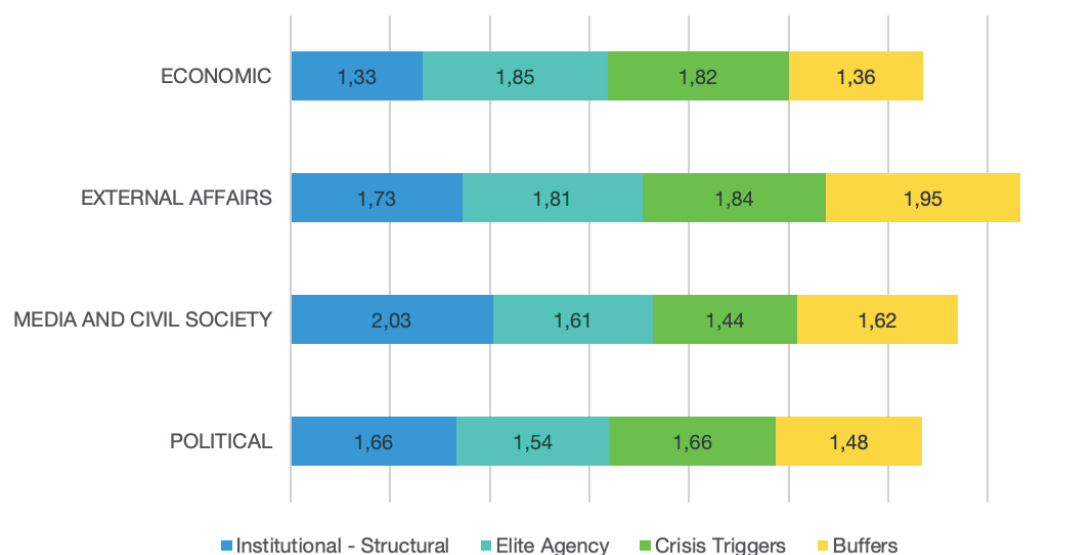
Consolidated Sectors of Democratic Resilience Drivers
(Romania)



Consolidated Sectors of Democratic Resilience Drivers
(Hungary)

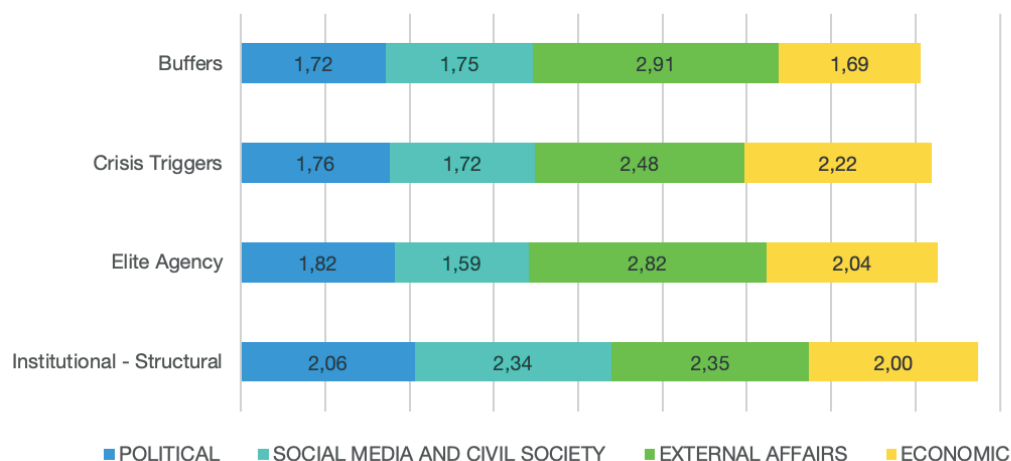


Consolidated Sectors of Democratic Resilience Drivers (Moldova)

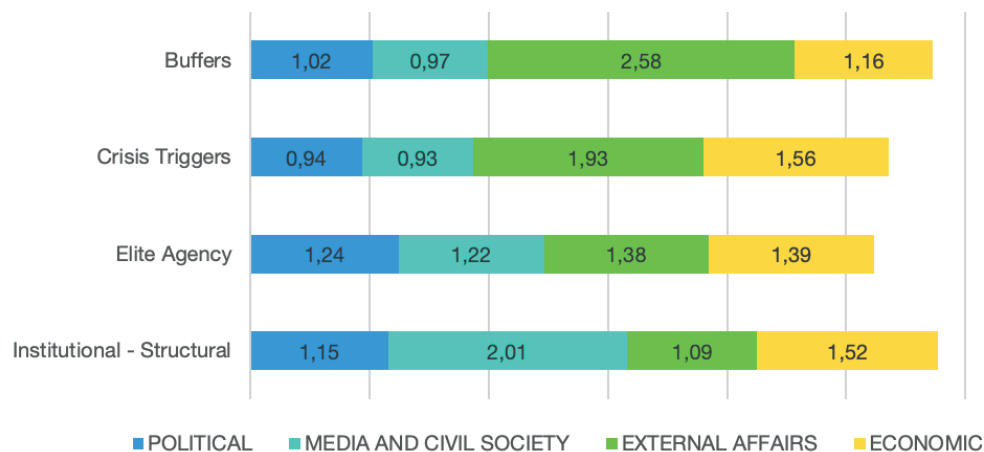


Consolidated Types of Democratic Resilience Drivers per Country

Consolidated Types of Democratic Resilience Drivers
(Romania)



Consolidated Types of Democratic Resilience Drivers
(Hungary)



Consolidated Types of Democratic Resilience Drivers (Moldova)



Annex II

The following table lists the number of respondents who took the expert survey in each country. The survey defined democratic resilience as a situation where, in a particular country, attacks on democratic norms and institutions do not occur or, when they do, they are contained, resisted or deflected. Such resistance can come from the strength of norms and institutions, or it can come from their weakness.

	Politics and Governance	Media and Civil Society	External Affairs	Economics	Total Respondents*
Romania	60	53	30	36	128
Hungary	57	62	43	35	149
Republic of Moldova	44	50	30	31	121

*some experts have answered for multiple domains

To evaluate the capacity to resist, regardless of its causes, the questionnaires asked a set of questions about the experts' perspective on recent events and situations in their country. The questions evaluated both factual developments and their expert opinion about those developments. In answering, we asked respondents to consider mainly developments in the last 12 months, unless otherwise stated in the question itself, to create a portrait of their country's current dynamic.

It is the belief of the research team that experts are, in the case of this study, more knowledgeable concerning a country's specific vulnerabilities in each specialised domain than nationally representative samples. We aimed to probe informed opinions, knowledge and awareness, not just public perception - this is the reason for having chosen an expert survey rather than a general opinion poll as the study's research method.

Each answer was given a numerical value on a 5-point scale, indicating whether the respondent agreed more with the sentence on the left or the sentence on the right, where the extremes indicated the highest resilience (for a score of 1) and the lowest resilience (for a score of 5).

Authors



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(Coordinator)

Oana Popescu-Zamfir is director and founder of GlobalFocus Center, an independent foreign policy and strategic analysis think-tank, and former State Secretary for EU Affairs. She is also an international consultant and media commentator, as well as writer and lecturer. She coordinates international research, public and expert strategy events and is editor-in-chief of the GlobalFocus regional affairs quarterly 'Eastern Focus'. In her earlier career, she served as foreign policy adviser to the President of the Romanian Senate (current NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana) and programmes director of the Aspen Institute Romania, after being a senior foreign affairs journalist. Her expertise covers mainly geopolitics and security in the EU/NATO neighbourhood, transatlantic relations, global political risk and strategic analysis, hybrid threats, EU affairs, democratisation and post-conflict stabilisation, shifting models of governance. Her recent work has centred around internal and external threats to democracy, EU reform, but also shifts in global order and the impact of technology on society and politics. Oana was a Fulbright scholar at Yale University, with executive studies at Harvard Kennedy School of Government and St Andrew's University.



Dani Sandu
(Research Lead)

Dani Sandu is a social scientist with a rich background in public policy working for CEE national and local governments, the World Bank Group and the European Commission. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the European University Institute, in Florence and is a visiting exchange student at New York University. His area of research is on the social and economic effects

of authoritarian legacies. Additionally, he conducts research in democratisation and development. Currently, he is focused on the development of machine learning and automated text analysis algorithms that identify, operationalise and measure political indoctrination, particularly in educational textbooks. His current work builds on more than 10 years of experience in civil society and recent advances in machine learning and economics.

Research team



Andrei Tiut is a senior researcher with experience both in online research – where he advised in transitioning offline methodologies to online – and more traditional opinion polling. He has worked as a political consultant both in Romania and in the Republic of Moldova. He has advocated for electoral reform with the Politics without Barriers Coalition and for a more inclusive society during the 2018 Romanian constitutional referendum.



Sorin Cucera is a columnist and political analyst. He graduated from the Philosophy Department of the University of Bucharest, specialising in moral and political philosophy. He is Junior Research Fellow of the Centro per l'Europa Central-Orientale e Balcanica, University of Bologna, Italy and a founding member of the Romanian Society of Political Sciences. He is also associate researcher at GlobalFocus Centre.



Veronica Anghel focuses her research on the challenges to democratic regime building and party politics in post-communist Europe. Her current research project considers the clashes between formal and informal institutions as critical junctures that lead to different outcomes of democratisation. Veronica holds a Max Weber Fellowship at the European University Institute and is an Adjunct Lecturer at Johns Hopkins University – School of Advanced International Studies, where she teaches 'Risk in International Politics and Economy'. Previously, she was awarded Fellowships at Stanford University (Fulbright), the Institute for Human Sciences Vienna, the Institute for Central Europe Vienna, the University of Bordeaux and the Institute for Government in Vienna. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Bucharest in co-direction with the University of Bordeaux for her thesis 'The Formation of Coalition Governments in Romania: Patterns Behind the Drift'.



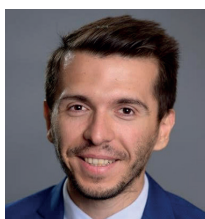
Costin Ciobanu is a political scientist and consultant, currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Comparative Politics at McGill University. Costin has served as Communications and Policy Advisor to the President of the Romanian Senate and to the President of the Romanian Social-Democratic Party. Moreover, he enhanced his expertise by working in the "Institute for Public Policy" think-tank and in the Chancellery of the Romanian Prime Minister, but also as Senior Consultant at Grayling Romania. He holds a M.Pro. in Political and Social Communication from University Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne, a B.A in Philosophy from the University of Bucharest, and a M.A. in Political Communication from the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (Bucharest).



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Alexandru Macoveiciuc is a freelance political consultant with more than a decade of experience. He graduated the National School of Political Science and Public Administration with a Bachelor's degree in International Relations. He was also an adviser to the President of the Senate during 2009-2012 and spokesperson for the Minister of Economy during 2018-2019. After that he became advisor to the Minister of Energy, a function in which he currently serves. With vast experience in both the legislative and executive branch, he also holds in-depth knowledge of communications, both political and strategic, campaign management and political media activities and features in mainstream television programmes.



Marius Ghincea is a Ph.D. Researcher at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, pursuing a Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences. Simultaneously, he is a Senior Teaching Assistant at the Johns Hopkins University, Bologna. His research agenda focuses on identity and foreign policy, FPA, transatlantic relations, the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, and global political orders. He also provides policy-oriented consultancy to various private and public actors.



Roxana Voicu-Dorobanțu is currently an Associate Professor at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies in Bucharest. She is involved in other business projects as well, mostly in an advisory position. Roxana holds a Ph.D. in International Business and Economics and has studied international business and finance and risk management in United Kingdom, Poland, Kazakhstan, as well as in Romania. While she was involved in various corporate social responsibility programmes, she is also interested in finding means and methods for increasing efficiency in multicultural teams. She is currently the Executive Director of the Centre of Excellence in Foreign Trade.



Alina Inayeh joined the German Marshall Fund in 2007 as director of the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, a project dedicated to strengthening cooperation and fostering development in the Black Sea region. She is an active practitioner in the field of international development and democratisation, having run the Freedom House office in Ukraine in 2004 and the NDI office in Russia between 2000-03, with a focus on civic education and political processes. She has trained NGOs throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union on issues related to NGO development and democratisation.



Rufin Zamfir coordinates the Asymmetric Threats programme of the GlobalFocus Center, a position from which he coordinated the development of the Propaganda Permeability Index - a unique, original instrument allowing measurement and comparison of vulnerabilities to malign influence across different countries. He also coordinates GlobalFocus Center's research activity on the Balkans. He holds a Masters degree in Communication at the National School of Political and Administrative Studies in Romania and studied Terrorism and Political Violence at St. Andrews' University, Scotland. He was a Visegrad Fund Fellow in Bratislava and is currently part of the DFRLab Digital Sherlocks.

Project management and support team



István Hegedűs is the chairman of the Hungarian Europe Society, a Budapest-based NGO. HES has organised numerous conferences and workshops on current international affairs, focusing especially on European Union issues. Hegedűs has also worked as a freelance scholar and lecturer in several higher education institutions – teaching courses on Hungarian and European politics. He holds a Ph.D. in sociology at the Corvinus University of Budapest

Erik Uszkiewicz is a lawyer, researcher and one of the vice-chairpersons of the Hungarian Europe Society. He is currently a Ph.D.-candidate at ELTE University, his research topic focuses on prejudice and discrimination in the jurisdictional practice. He is also a member of the SPECTRA Research Group. He is involved both in domestic and international projects, which are related to political communication, disinformation and fake news, hate crimes, rule of law and the democratic culture in Europe.

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We would like to extend special thanks to those who, through their input in the early stages of the project, have brought a valuable contribution to the concept of the Index and to the team's outlook on democratic resilience:

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Sorin Ioniță – public administration expert, director of Expert Forum, Bucharest

Silvia Fierăscu – lecturer, researcher at Big Data Science Laboratory, West University, Timișoara

Gabriel Bădescu – professor of political sciences, director of the Center for the Study of Democracy, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj

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Elena Calistru – civic activist, director of Funky Citizens, Bucharest

George Jiglău – political scientist, lecturer, president of the Center for the Study of Democracy, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj

Cristian Chiscop – programme director, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bucharest

Nicu Popescu – head of Wider Europe programme, European Council on Foreign Relations, Paris

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