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"Corruption kills!" A frame analysis of Romania's anti-corruption
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“Corruption kills!”: A frame analysis of Romania’s anti-
corruption social movements

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Abstract

How can the emergence of anti-corruption movements in contemporary European democracies be explained? This thesis proposes an answer to this question through a frame analysis of Romania's three protest waves between 2012 and 2017. Ultimately, this study indicates that Romania's social movement organizations strategically constructed anti-corruption frames that mobilized an otherwise civically apathetic population. The research identified two master frames that organized the subsequent frames of the protest waves: the government as an enemy of the people and the power of the united people as a means of resistance. Frames evolved from portraying corruption as mere elite arrogance to framing it as a lethal threat to Romanians' lives and an affront to their dignity. Thus, this thesis shows that the emergence of anti-corruption mobilization should be best understood as a result of the emotional resonance of collective action frames that (1) appeal to people's sense of security, and that (2) portray citizens as the last moral bastion against systemic corruption. This study contributes to a new paradigm at the intersection of corruption studies and social movement literature, namely that of "anti-corruption from below" as envisioned by della Porta (2017). Furthermore, it highlights the strategic and discursive power of social movement organizations in contexts of entrenched systemic corruption while offering practical insights for future social movements and their respective organizations.

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1. Introduction

On the 5th of February 2017, more than 250,000 Romanians in Bucharest lifted their phone flashlights towards the sky in the shared hope of illuminating a better path forward for Romania, devoid of corruption. Given that the emergence of anti-corruption movements is debated within social movements literature, it is puzzling that Romanians felt aggrieved by corruption to such an extent that they mobilized against their government. This thesis aims to engage the disputed conception of anti-corruption social movements through a frame analysis of Romania's puzzling anti-corruption mobilization instances. How did these outraged Romanians come to agree that it was time to take good governance into their own hands, as the institutions that should safeguard them failed in their obligation to do so?

As mentioned, there exists an academic debate about whether corruption incentivizes or inhibits mobilization. On the one hand, one might guess that frustration towards a regime perceived as corrupt and, thus, unjust, would spill over into collective expression in the streets. This assumption is corroborated by the widespread employment of anti-corruption narratives in protests globally over the past decade (Chayes, 2018). For instance, Školník (2021) discovered that in seven post-communist countries characterized by elevated corruption levels, voters who saw politicians as corrupt were more inclined to endorse mobilization. On the other hand, some studies claim that rampant corruption leads to widespread disappointment and apathy in people, who believe themselves to be too insignificant to go against systemic corruption and the democratic institutions that were supposed to safeguard them (Bauhr & Grimes, 2014). Citizens might themselves engage in petty corruption to better their livelihoods, considering the status quo to be immovable (Persson et al., 2013).

This academic divide suggests that, ultimately, mobilization against corruption comes down to people's perceptions of corruption and of themselves vis-à-vis the corruption. Both Lo Piccolo (2023) and Lang (2021) stress that anti-corruption protests are not a given; rather, they require that the issue of corruption be framed in such a way that appeals to people's morals and emotions. This thesis follows Goffman's (1974, p. 21) definition of frames as "cognitive schemata of interpretation used by individuals to identify, understand, and label events and situations, thus attributing sense, organizing experiences, and orienting their action." It is unclear how

contemporary social movements generate anti-corruption frames that mobilize hundreds of thousands of citizens nationally. Lang (2021) notes that anti-corruption frames are puzzling because they can attract many supporters and foster some consensus among those who share the goal of 'fighting corruption,' despite the fact that anti-corruption has been traditionally seen as a matter of good democratic governance.

It is the ambition of this thesis to engage in the academic debate provided above by investigating the following research question: *How can the emergence of anti-corruption movements in contemporary European democracies be explained?* Thus, this research aims to offer empirical evidence that the creation of anti-corruption protests depends upon the strategic construction of frames—hence, the research question will be answered by engaging in a frame analysis of Romania’s three waves of protest within a time frame of five years. By doing so, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of Romania’s contemporary culture of contention, and, more broadly, it aims to contribute to the above debate by highlighting the power of the people against corrupt systems of governance when given the right articulation of their grievances. More specifically, this research will show that successful anti-corruption frames portray corruption as a lethal threat and influence people to see themselves as the only solution to combating corruption when united. This thesis will hence bring a discursive perspective to popular anti-corruption struggles in the hopes of providing social movement organizations (SMOs) with a basis of frame construction for future reference.

2. Literature Review

This section will present academic discussions along two dimensions that constitute assumptions central to investigating the emergence of anti-corruption social movements. Firstly, that a social movement perspective on the fight against corruption is essential and that it necessitates a discursive approach; secondly, that social movements do not happen in a vacuum, but rather they exist within a spatial and temporal context in which they can borrow frames from previous mobilization instances.

2.1. A “contentious” approach to corruption studies

Over the past decade, the fight against corruption has changed in ways that conventional corruption studies cannot explain. Corruption studies have typically understood anti-corruption as a function of dedicated democratic institutions, but contemporary social movement literature

highlights anti-corruption as a perceived responsibility by civilians. Della Porta (2017, p. 663) calls these efforts “anti-corruption from below.” Her paradigm sharply rejects the traditional anti-corruption politics that used societal responsibility as a last resort. Traditional corruption studies saw accountability through whistleblowers or other social movements as inefficient since it took time and effort, and exposed activists to legal threats. So, according to the old approach, systemic corruption makes social responsibility harder. This is because people see corrupt institutions as too entrenched within the system, thus protests against them are limited.

Della Porta’s (2017) “anti-corruption from below” paradigm brings a fresh perspective from social movement literature. This new model proposes that activists aggrieved by perceived corruption do not wait for an “objective” political opening or for the presence of mobilizing resources. Rather, activists engage in creating political opportunities and their respective framing for themselves. Hence, mobilization is usually based on injustice frames that produce moral shocks by attributing the responsibility of injustice to concrete targets. In the case of anti-corruption from below, social movements employ frames that equate corruption to the immorality of the system and denounce greedy politicians in a stark juxtaposition to the morality of the protestors, the dispossessed. This discursive approach to corruption stands out when contrasted with the traditional view of anti-corruption studies.

The World Bank’s (2020) definition of corruption—“the abuse of public office for private gain”—has shaped the traditional anti-corruption agenda, as it has suggested that corruption is an issue of specialized institutions. However, this concept has been criticized for its narrow reach and neoliberal leaning. McVitte and Sambaraju (2019) suggest examining how humans create corruption rather than defining it statically. They believe definitions legitimize political projects. Corruption can be discursively constructed to ascribe morality and legitimacy to certain actors while delegitimizing others and justifying a stance against them in the name of anti-corruption. As applied to social movements, Lo Piccolo (2023, p. 251) notes that anti-corruption is a dynamic area dominated by various players with their own “logics, goals, strategies, and, most importantly, their discourses”—frames. These frames demand action and connect corruption to justice, morality, and national identity.

This discursive approach to corruption can be helpful in addressing the academic debate of whether corruption incentivizes or inhibits mobilization. It is a breakaway from the traditional approach to studying corruption and a step forward in understanding the power of shaping

perceptions. As McAdam and Tarrow (2018, p. 21) emphasize, “mediating between opportunity and action are people and the subjective meanings they attach to their situation.” As social movement theory suggests, the strength of collective mobilization is only as great as its ability to articulate grievances, which can be pursued by SMOs putting out emotionally charged messages strategically (Tarrow, 2011; Lang, 2021). Supplementing this discursive approach is the integration of the historical and sociopolitical context in which anti-corruption social movements emerge (della Porta, 2017). SMOs need to understand the cultural context to adapt their frames to people’s understanding.

2.2. Waves of contention

For a long time, collective action instances have been misunderstood and researched as independent events, isolated from spatial and historical context. However, this research assumes that collective action can be best understood through its connectedness with other mobilization instances and through its embeddedness within a complex system of interactions between different claim-makers. In this regard, it will be useful to explore collective action through the academic lens of cycles of contention, as proposed by Tarrow (1998), and waves of contention, as revised by Koopmans (2007). Tarrow (1998, p. 142) defines the cycle of contention as “a phase of heightened conflict across the social system,” characterized by rapid diffusion of mobilization, tactical innovations, creation of new frames of collective action, and increased interaction between challengers and authorities. Koopmans (2007, p. 19) reaffirms that “the most fundamental fact about collective action is its connectedness, both historically and spatially,” emphasizing that contention is shaped by interactions among movements, elites, and counter-movements.

Despite these shared observations, the two concepts of “cycles of contention” and “waves of contention” should not be equated. Koopmans (2007) questions the underlying assumption of Tarrow’s choice of words. Whereas the term “cycles” suggests a recurring sequence of phenomena, for Koopmans, collective action instances do not follow predictable patterns of rising and falling. In his view, the term “waves” is better suited to capture the dynamic actor interactions within each contention instance that uniquely transform the mobilization. Hence, Koopmans (2007) argues for system-wide interpretative mechanisms of collective action, stressing the relevance of an ecological perspective to social movements that integrates interactions between all relevant actors throughout time and space. Tarrow (1998), on the other hand, is preoccupied with

internal and structural mechanisms of contention that separate a movement from the political elites against which it might mobilize, such as “early risers” acting upon “objective” political openings.

Regardless, the two different approaches stress the relevance of protest diffusion to contention. For Tarrow (1998), the diffusion of collective action from “early risers” to separate groups is facilitated by the “demonstration effect of a challenge that succeeds.” This success will encourage interactions between previously unrelated groups, which will later reshape symbols of protest and frames of meaning. Koopmans (2007) complements this claim with a more nuanced account of social movements as clusters of cultural items, i.e., frames or tactical repertoires, subject to the same diffusion mechanism as any other innovation. Additionally, he introduces a concept of “attribution of similarity,” which suggests that different groups can choose whether to adopt certain innovations depending on contextual constraints (p. 26).

Ultimately, while Tarrow (1998) offers a systematic framework for analyzing the mobilization, escalation, and demobilization of protests, Koopmans (2007) advocates for scholars to acknowledge temporal and spatial contingency, as well as inter-actor dynamics. Hence, this research will follow Koopmans’ (2007) conceptualization of “waves of protest,” which better accommodates the temporally and spatially interlinked nature of the successive protest episodes in post-2010 Romania. This approach also integrates the interaction between SMOs of different protest waves and their choices in adopting and adapting different anti-corruption frames, according to the logic of “attribution of similarity” (p. 26).

3. Theoretical framework

The literature review touched upon several concepts discussed within social movement theory. To begin with, this study does not comply with the rigid, institutional definition of corruption. Instead, it will approach corruption as a discursively constructed and contextually contingent concept, in line with McVittie and Sambaraju (2019). Similarly, anti-corruption will be approached as a discursive field contested by multiple actors with unique logics and strategies (Lo Piccolo, 2023). These perspectives are central to this thesis, as it seeks to explore the development of anti-corruption frames, which are a mirror to the discursive production of corruption. Thus, the underlying assumption when approaching anti-corruption mobilization is cognitive liberation: people need to attribute negative meaning to the actions of the state and perceive them as unjust to feel empowered to speak out against them (McAdam, 1982).

Furthermore, social movement organizations (SMOs) will be central to this study, as defined by McCarthy and Zald (1977, p. 1218): “a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement [...] and attempts to implement those goals.” Tarrow (2011) views SMOs as intermediaries between activists and the arena of contention, sharing information, developing mobilizing narratives, and sustaining collective identity. These strategic actors are essential to frame creation and diffusion; hence, their choices on framing corruption and anti-corruption are important for understanding frame development. SMOs function in an ecological system of interconnections, best described by Koopmans (2007) as protest waves: periods of struggle among groups that transform given the spatial-temporal and interactive context of contention. This concept is also fundamental for this thesis, as it acknowledges that instances of collective action are shaped by earlier mobilizations through a diffusion of frames facilitated by SMOs.

This section will now engage with the main theories upon which the subsequent frame analysis will be built. First, going off the assumption that framing is an inherently strategic act, three core framing tasks that SMOs need to fulfill will be discussed. Then, processes related to the construction and diffusion of protest frames will be elaborated upon.

3.1. The strategic and discursive construction of frames

At the heart of this thesis lies the idea of framing understood as both a process of interpretation and as a strategic tool of mobilization. Framing refers to the process by which collective action is made possible through the successful construction of meanings that render existing systemic conditions morally intolerable and inculcate possible perpetrators of injustice. Thus, the framing process does not merely reflect existing grievances—rather, it actively constructs their meanings and communicates them.

Snow and his fellow authors (1986) refer to Goffman’s (1974, p. 21) definition of frames as “schemata of interpretation” that allow individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” events, thus organizing further experiences and guiding action. Snow’s later works build on this definition to emphasize the strategic and interactive nature of frames and meaning-making in social movements. Snow and co-authors (2018) propose collective action frames as a way for movement leaders and members to start debates and sustain contention. It becomes clear that social movements use framing to achieve political goals like rallying support, establishing a new

discourse, or confronting adversarial narratives. Thus, framing must be understood as a strategy of collective action.

It is important to note, however, that the success of collective action frames in mobilization depends on the extent to which they conform to the three core framing tasks: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing (Snow et al., 2018). Together, these three core tasks form the discursive scaffolding that allows SMOs to turn expressions of grievances into actionable steps of contention. Collective action frames that effectively integrate diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational elements are more likely to resonate with the people, hence their centrality to studying successful anti-corruption frames.

Diagnostic frames involve the identification of an event or some aspect of social life or governance as problematic and in need of reform while simultaneously attributing blame or responsibility for this (Snow et al., 2018). Within this research, diagnostic framing will be operationalized as explicit naming of problems, as well as explicit attribution of blame to specific individuals, institutions, or political parties.

Prognostic framing involves the conception of a solution to the problems identified through diagnostic frames (Snow et al., 2018). These solutions often include an articulation of collective action strategies, such as protests, reforms, or resignations, as well as a denunciation of solutions proposed by the opponent. Prognostic frames will be operationalized as solution-oriented language within SMOs' communications, such as concrete demands expected of the opponent, reform agendas, or suggested collective action tactics.

Finally, motivational frames necessitate a call to arms or a rationale for action that goes beyond the content of diagnostic and prognostic frames (Snow et al., 2018). Motivational frames represent the agency of frames in constructing a vocabulary of motive that prods to mobilization. Motivational frames intrinsically appeal to emotions by enhancing the urgency of taking immediate action against a problem, the efficacy of this, and the moral priority and obligation of mobilizing. Motivational frames will be operationalized as moral and emotional appeals that urge participation in contention.

3.2. Frame alignment processes

One of the key assumptions of this research is that framing is not an isolated, one-time act but rather an ongoing process that draws on preexisting debates, dominant cultural narratives, and frames from prior episodes of mobilization. Nevertheless, it has been observed that over time,

social movements tend to anchor themselves in certain interpretive schemata known as master frames: broad and adaptable discursive frameworks that movements can expand upon, modify, and extend according to their respective context (Snow et al., 1986; Snow et al., 2018). These master frames are sufficiently flexible and inclusive to accommodate diverse actors and grievances (Snow et al., 2018). When integrating the perspective of waves of contention, early movements are often seen as the “progenitors” of these master frames, which are then repurposed or reconstructed by later movements according to contextual demands—a process known as “attribution of similarity” (Koopmans, 2007, p. 26).

To supplement this practice of adaptation and co-production inherent to framing, Snow and his co-authors (1986, p. 464) suggest integrating the frame alignment process. This refers to the linkage of SMO activities and goals with individual interests and values. There are four types of frame alignment processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Frame bridging refers to the connection of two ideologically similar but structurally incongruent frames. This usually manifests itself as an SMO tapping into previously untapped sentiment pools. Frame amplification refers to the clarification and invigoration of a particular frame, whether by augmenting a value or a belief that has already existed in the target audience of the frame. So, rather than introducing a new idea, it strengthens existing commitments. Frame extension involves broadening a movement’s interpretive framework to include issues that were not pivotal to the movement’s original formulation but that may resonate with other potential adherents. Finally, frame transformation occurs when existing frames are no longer suitable for mobilization, and new meanings must be constructed to accommodate new problems and solutions.

Empirically, anti-corruption frames are expected to fulfill all three core framing tasks: diagnostic by identifying a problem within society and attributing the blame to corrupt practices; prognostic by suggesting solutions that envision civil society’s agency; motivational by speaking to people’s morals and emotions, which are opposed to a corrupt system of governance. An emphasis will be placed on their analysis, as they are believed to actually contribute to the eventual success of anti-corruption frames. Furthermore, the frame alignment processes are expected to aid the construction and distribution of anti-corruption frames, given the changing nature of the protest waves’ contexts. SMOs are expected to be integral to these processes, acting as both curators of past discourses on anti-corruption and creators of new frames. Hence, the following hypothesis is

advanced: *Anti-corruption social movements emerge when social movement organizations frame corruption in moral and emotional terms.*

4. Methodology

This section will build upon the above-presented theoretical framework and will argue for frame analysis as the suitable method of research. Then, it will present the case study of Romania's three protest waves and argue for its suitability for an in-depth within-case frame analysis. Finally, it will present the collected sources and the measures taken to prevent bias.

4.1. Frame analysis

This thesis has so far argued that a suitable avenue of explaining why and how social movements manage to overcome burdens to mobilizing against corruption is by analyzing the way that SMOs portray corruption and the anti-corruption struggle. The qualitative research method of frame analysis serves the purpose of a causal analysis, which means it is best suited for research on social movements that aims to explain empirical instances of collective mobilization despite theoretical expectations (Lindekilde, 2014). Given that this thesis aims to research the emergence of anti-corruption movements despite their academically contested nature, frame analysis presents itself as a suitable method of study.

Furthermore, frame analysis fits the assumption that SMOs are strategic players (Lindekilde, 2014). SMOs cannot be portrayed as passive elements of mobilization, as they rather take an active role in interpreting grievances and defining expectations of mobilization. Thus, the focus of frame analysis falls on how SMOs use ideas and culture to interpret certain empirical phenomena and assign meanings to them for activists to understand and use. To ensure mobilization, SMOs need to be strategic and deliberate in their construction and employment of frames as interpretative outlines that allow activists to perceive events.

In practice, frame analysis translates into identifying and interpreting the ways in which SMOs define problems (diagnostic framing), suggest solutions (prognostic framing), and mobilize support (motivational framing). This research will hence analyze textual materials, such as manifestos or social media posts, produced and circulated by SMOs. These materials are coded using a deductive coding frame, which will help in labeling the different themes, patterns, and meanings in frames (Lindekilde, 2014). The coding frame is based upon Snow and Benford's (1986) conceptualization of the three core framing tasks, as displayed in Figure 1.

Framing Task	Definition	Operationalization/Indicators
Diagnostic Frame	Identifies the problem and attributes blame	Mentions of corruption as systemic, blame directed at elites, political parties, and institutions
Prognostic Frame	Suggests solutions, strategies, or courses of action	Policy demands, calls for resignations, anti-corruption reforms, appeals to international bodies
Motivational Frame	Offers a rationale or emotional appeal to mobilize participation	Moral appeals (“justice,” “for our children”), emotional triggers (“enough is enough,” “we must act”)

Figure 1

The coding frame used in this research will be supplemented by an analysis of the four frame alignment processes—frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation—as identified by Snow and Benford (1986). These frame alignment processes show how SMOs adapt frames to resonate with diverse audiences in a changing socio-political context. Tracking these processes is essential to understanding how SMOs build continuity across different protest waves and maintain public engagement, as theorized by Koopmans (2007) in successive protest waves. Overall, the analysis of the frame alignment processes paired with the systematic coding of the frames along the dimensions of the three core framing tasks will contribute to a nuanced understanding of why and how social movements overcome the obstacle of mobilizing against corruption.

4.2. The case of Romania

Romania offers a strong, empirically rich case for analyzing how SMOs have managed to mobilize citizens against entrenched corruption, making the country a suitable candidate for a within-case frame analysis. Ever since its revolution in 1989, the country had foregone instances of mass mobilization for almost 25 years as people rejoiced in their first free and fair elections. However, the initial enthusiasm had waned, as evidenced by decreasing election turnout, while perceptions of systemic corruption increased along with lowering institutional trust caused by long-standing clientelist practices, despite a plethora of anti-corruption policies and agencies

(Olteanu & Beyerle, 2017; Alistar, Lonean, & Soare, 2017). Indeed, Romania's corruption is not only widespread, but it also reflects a deeply embedded network of mutual favors and political protection, making formal institutional anti-corruption mechanisms appear ineffective or captured (Alistar, Lonean, & Soare, 2017). Yet, despite a nationwide perception of systemic corruption, which would lead some scholars to disregard the possibility of mobilization, the Romanian people have engaged in three waves of large-scale protests starting in 2012.

Between 2012 and 2017, Romania experienced three major protest waves: the 2012-2013 protest wave, the 2015 Collective protest wave, and the anti-OUG13 #rezist movement of 2017. These episodes of mobilization, while distinct in political trigger, shared a common moral narrative that framed corruption as elite arrogance and betrayal of Romanians at first and as a national emergency and a lethal instrument towards the end (Olteanu & Beyerle, 2017). Observing these protest waves allows this research to trace the evolution of anti-corruption master frames and their subsequent adaptations. The recurrence of anti-corruption narratives suggests that framing, rather than changing political opportunity structures, was the central driver of mobilization.

Crucially, Romanian SMOs have been active agents in the process of framing, by bridging mobilization against corruption with values such as justice and dignity (Olteanu & Beyerle, 2017). Thus, these Romanian SMOs comply with one of the theoretical assumptions of this thesis—that SMOs function as strategic signifying agents, as suggested by Lindekilde (2014). Their ability to carry out diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing, while also engaging in frame alignment processes, further proves that the case of Romania is viable for frame analysis.

Inherently, case studies assure rich internal validity due to an in-depth analysis of different processes and mechanisms at play within the cultural and political context of the case (Halperin & Heath, 2020). By only focusing on the case of Romania across multiple protest waves, this research will trace how frames emerge and adapt over time, thus providing a richer understanding of the emergence of anti-corruption movements. Nevertheless, to ensure that this research is valuable, the case of Romania has also been selected for its potential external validity. The country serves as an emblematic case within Eastern Europe, where democratic aspirations coexist in tension with oligarchic structures and systemic corruption. As Alistar, Lonean, and Soare (2017) argue, Romanian corruption reflects a deeply institutionalized system of mutual favors, political clientelism, and elite impunity—characteristics that are not unique to Romania but are echoed across other post-communist countries as well (Školník, 2021). Public frustration in Romania

emerged from decades of failed reform promises and the perceived inability of judicial and political anti-corruption institutions to hold elites accountable. These conditions—low institutional trust, perceived systemic corruption, and limited political openings—mirror those in countries like Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ukraine.

4.3. The research

This thesis will thus engage with a qualitative frame analysis of Romania's three protest waves. To carry out this research, a plethora of primary sources circulated by Romanian SMOs during the 2012-2017 protest waves have been collected. These sources include manifestos, social media posts, and slogans. Manifestos and social media posts verbalize frames, while slogans capture the essence of a frame. Ultimately, by corroborating these sources, the frames of each protest wave can be constructed.

Furthermore, to reduce the risk of introducing bias to this research, all frames will first be coded according to the deductive coding frame presented in section 3.1., ensuring that their interpretation is anchored in established theory and thus reducing any interpretative bias. To ensure transparency and replicability, the coding decisions and observed frame alignment patterns will be thoroughly documented in the appendix, and the researcher will aim to keep close to the established theoretical foundation.

5. Analysis

After the collection and coding of sources in accordance with the methodology previously laid out, this section will engage in a nuanced discussion of the identified frames organized by core framing tasks. The frame alignment processes observed throughout each protest wave will also be mentioned. The completed coding frames can be found within the appendix, each corresponding to one protest wave. To facilitate the discussion, a socio-political context will be provided for each protest wave.

5.1. Romania's 2012-2013 protest wave

The Romanian people were displeased. Four years of harsh austerity measures imposed by the Romanian government had fueled a general sense of dissatisfaction with the ruling elite (Olteanu & Beyerle, 2017). The final drop for Romanians came in 2012 when the Romanian government decided to privatize a part of the emergency medical care. This was done to lower the

budget deficits and, thus, shift costs to the citizens. The Deputy Health Minister Raed Arafat, who had established Romania's contemporary emergency system, publicly criticized this move and, thus, was forced to resign by President Traian Băsescu. President Băsescu's demand was the trigger for two years of protests.

The first frame to emerge within these protests fulfilled the diagnostic core framing task by labeling private companies as a danger to the well-being of Romanian citizens. For instance, protestors in the city of Cluj did not agree "with the fact that all these machines should go in the hands of private companies who would then take the skin off our backs" (Adevărul, 2012a). This frame, however, underwent the process of frame extension as activists in other cities called for protests against the ruling elite, which they deemed complicit in the thievery of the private companies. The population's dissatisfaction and disgust with the political elite were evident. Hence, a diagnostic frame of popular government resentment was born. This frame went through continuous processes of frame amplification throughout the protests, as it had proven itself quite effective in sustaining mobilization.

Thus, even though the first frame to emerge within this protest wave was one of disapproval against privatization of the emergency medical service, this frame was quickly transformed into a new one that would shame the government and assign blame for years of arrogance and general disregard vis-à-vis the population. A petition for protest launched by the SMO *Alma-Ro* was the first to properly articulate the underlying grievance of the protestors against their government's derogatory treatment: "The experience of the last years has shown us the deep disdain of the current regime for the civic society, manifested through the lack of social and civic dialogue" (Alma-Ro, 2012). This petition was the first to address the perceived corruption and general inefficiency of the government, listing fourteen concrete instances in which the Romanian government had betrayed the trust of its citizens. Overall, the frame leveraged in this petition fulfilled the diagnostic framing task in that it called out the government and President Băsescu for anti-democratic practices and abuses of power.

Furthermore, the SMO *Alma-Ro* strategically engaged in frame bridging and extension that would serve to sustain this protest wave. The popular disdain for the privatization of medical services was linked to the outrage sparked by President Băsescu's support for the Roșia Montană project. This project entailed the selling of the eponymous gold mine, which was considered a national heritage site, to the private Canadian firm Gabriel Resources Ltd., which wanted to engage

in cyanide mining. Cyanide mining was not only toxic for the environment but also dangerous to the infrastructure of the villages in proximity to the mine (Ilie & Sighet, 2013). Hence, the above-mentioned petition managed to further amplify the diagnostic frame of government resentment by highlighting elite arrogance and selfishness that came at the detriment of people's livelihoods and safety.

What followed was a long year of protests against the Roșia Montană project. At the head of nationwide protests were the SMOs *Save Roșia Montană* and *Uniți Salvăm* (translation: "United we save"), who engaged in the process of amplifying the frame of government betrayal and disregard of its citizens. In a shared manifesto, these two SMOs accused the Romanian state of only serving the interests of corrupt politicians by framing the Roșia Montană project as "the latest major case of corruption among the authorities and the collaboration of cross-party oligarchies that keep Romania captive" (Pop, 2013d). So, this manifesto amplified the existing framing of a selfish government by reiterating how power-hungry it had become and explicitly diagnosing the governance with corruption.

Additionally, the manifesto also fulfilled a motivational framing task by portraying protests against the government as a justified and needed struggle of liberation from the domination of the corrupt system (Pop, 2013d). Indeed, the motivational frame that was born within this protest wave spoke to the Romanians' sense of dignity: "We, who do not accept to be humbled. We, who have had enough of the shamelessness" (Both, 2012a). SMOs portrayed protests as an expression of the affront to dignity that the government caused to its citizens in its selfish practices and partnerships with private entities. Thus, Romanians would have a first chance at standing up against their government and demanding accountability for their actions, accompanied by reasonable consideration of their livelihoods and environmental safety. A slogan that best captured this emerging frame was "We do not want to be a nation of slaves" (Pop, 2013c). This indicates the creation of a dignity and self-respect frame that would motivate Romanians to protest mistreatment from their government.

Finally, the protests culminated in a prognostic frame of political reform that served to amplify the motivational frame of self-respect and dignity. In this protest wave's SMOs' views, Romanians "have come out on the streets for a deep reform of the ruling political class and for a governance in the interest of each of us" (Pop, 2013d). This indicates that SMOs strategically framed the 2012-2013 government as disregarding the needs of the citizens and hence called for

the change of the ruling class. This change could come in the form of resignations, as suggested by slogans such as “Down with the thieves! Down with Băsescu! Resign!” (Plopeanu, 2012). However, in another manifesto, SMOs decided on a less uprooting approach that called for the government to take decisive action in the case of Roșia Montană and vote with the intention to faithfully protect the citizens from environmental damage (Rosia Montana, 2013). Both analyzed manifestos demonstrate prognostic frames that called for proper representation of the Romanian people, be it through political reform and resignations or a decisive and protective vote.

5.2. Romania’s 2015 “Colectiv” protest wave

After the previous protest wave had died down, Romania saw a relatively calm period of almost two years without major protest episodes—that is, until the night of the 30th of October 2015, when the Bucharestian nightclub Colectiv went up in flames. The organizers of a rock concert had set ablaze multiple fireworks within the confines of the nightclub, leading to a massive fire. This tragedy totaled 64 deaths; however, not all of them were caused by the fire. Some of the burn victims, upon being hospitalized, contracted life-threatening bacterial infections that ultimately led to their deaths (Olteanu & Beyerle, 2017). The owners of the nightclub were arrested and charged with violating the building code; however, this response from the state was not enough for the Romanian citizens, as evidenced by the emergence of protests. Outraged at the possibility of such a fire even happening and at the poor sanitary conditions within national public hospitals, Romanians took to the streets. The major SMOs who distributed the frames of this protest wave were *România Curată* (translation: Clean Romania) and *Corupția ucide* (translation: Corruption kills).

România Curată set the tone of this protest wave with a manifesto that was quick to fulfill the diagnostic core framing task by attributing the responsibility of this tragedy to the inherent corruption of the system: “A tragedy has occurred because of indolence, irresponsibility, and corruption. It is neither the first nor the last time that neglect and abuse of power claim victims” (*România Curată*, 2015). This frame is reminiscent of the government betrayal frame of the previous protest wave, which painted the Romanian governance as selfish, arrogant, and uninterested in the people it governed. So, one observes the materialization of Koopman’s (2007) idea of SMOs borrowing and adapting frames from previous protest waves. In the context of this protest wave, the previous frame of government betrayal underwent the process of transformation, altering what elite selfishness meant. Under the new framework set in motion by *România Curată*,

elite arrogance was now a symptom of a corruption that was inseparable from the lives and safety of Romanian citizens; corruption meant death. Thus, *România Curată* constructed a frame of deadly systemic corruption.

Furthermore, *România Curată's* (2015) manifesto bridged the systemic corruption frame with one of governmental ineffectiveness, as it established a list of demands from the current governance, with an emphasis on accountability and transparency in the investigation process of the fire: “We demand accountability from those who have neglected their legal, institutional, and moral responsibilities! [...] We want a fast, correct, and transparent investigation of the tragedy.” (România Curată, 2015). Hence, the frame of governmental inefficiency served to complete the prognostic core framing task through proposing transparent solutions that served the population and their rights. Complementing this prognostic frame is a call for resignations of politicians associated with the fire and poor conditions in hospitals. Overall, this list of demands resonated with perceived insufficiencies within the current governance and contributed to the frame of an incompetent and corrupt Romanian government that profited off the silence of the people.

Throughout the entire protest wave, the frame of systemic corruption was amplified as protestors continued to attribute blame to the government for stealing from its citizens ever since the fall of communism: “For the past 25 years they have stolen from us and from our parents who work very hard to provide for us” (Bonchiș, 2015a). Furthermore, the system was seen not only as enabling thievery of the ruling class but also as turning the politicians into criminals who were more preoccupied with masking the evidence of their corruption than with dealing with the problem at hand (Corupția ucide, 2015). This is best captured in the following statement: “At the center lies the same corrupt and criminal system that has held power for the past 25 years” (Florescu, 2015). Additionally, the portrayal of the governmental corruption was bridged to the frame of a news media environment that profited off tragedy: “The news channels turned this into a circus, chasing ratings at the expense of an unimaginable tragedy, with the journalists of these channels becoming pathetic scumbags!” (Florescu, 2015). The linkage was built on the implicit assumption that neither the politicians nor the journalists cared for the actual well-being of the average Romanian. Ergo, this served to further amplify the idea that the Romanian people were on their own and needed to come together to fight for their dignity, or, as it was framed, for a future “for Romanians, not for politicians” (Adevărul, 2015b).

This nascent frame of a united fight for dignity was picked up and further transformed in protests in Cluj by two young activists who frankly stated that “everything is going badly in our country” (Bonchiş, 2015b). For these young activists, the pervasive corruption of the system meant that the country was no longer habitable to the ordinary citizen. The only way out that these activists conceived was to take the fight against corruption into their own hands and to unite as mundane civilians in the streets: “It is our time to make a change, and we will succeed if we stay united until the end” (Bonchiş, 2015a). This powerful motivational frame spoke to a sense of salvation in unity, a frame that had been circulated in the previous protest wave when it came to saving Roşia Montană; however, the stakes were higher now, as the scope of this supposed salvation extended to the entire country.

Hence, when it came to the people’s power and involvement in the politics of their country, a new frame of unity was born. The unity frame succeeded in its motivational core framing task, as people all over the country were shouting slogans representative of the need to wake up as a nation and to stand up together to the corrupt political class: “We no longer want to be lied to and humiliated by those who have political and administrative power. Nothing will ever be the same again. See you in the streets! It’s just the beginning!” (România Curată, 2015); “United, we save the entire Romania” (Florescu & Pop, 2015b). Thus, this analysis observes that the dignity frame of the previous protest wave was strategically chosen and subjected to the process of frame amplification in order to motivate people to show their refusal of the corrupt political class. Further motivation for mobilization called back to the tragedy that triggered this protest wave and to the deaths caused by the perceived inherent bureaucratic corruption that was ever-present in Romania: “Corruption kills! If we do not react, they would have died in vain!” (Ardelean, 2015); “How many more have to die for us to go out to the streets?” (Florescu, 2015). Ergo, Romanian SMOs appealed once again to the emotions and morals of the general population and invoked the threat to their livelihood that was created by a corrupt regime that had already claimed enough victims.

5.3. Romania’s 2017 “#rezist” protest wave

Romania’s final protest wave represented a collective indignation at the way the newly appointed social-democrat government imposed its agenda. The Ministry of Justice had proposed a special kind of law known as an emergency decree that would significantly diminish the institutional anti-corruption struggle (Olteanu & Beyerle, 2017). Emergency decrees became a tool too often used to bypass legislative deliberation, and they would allow the government to

effectively enact laws without consulting any other institution. The emergency decree number 13, known colloquially as OUG13, proposed two measures: broad pardons for criminals serving terms of up to five years, including terms for corruption, and a reform to the penal code that would decriminalize abuse of power and conflict of interest up to a maximum of 44,000 euros. What fueled the controversy of the OUG13, besides its content, was the fact that it was adopted during the night, when most of the population was asleep. Romania woke up on the 18th of January 2017 to a law that would undo years of institutional anti-corruption efforts and ended the day with a new commitment to anti-corruption efforts from below.

The first diagnostic frame of this protest wave was best captured in the following slogan: “During the night, like thieves!” (Timonea, 2017). Romanians all over the country were quick to mobilize under the guidance of the *Uniți schimbăm* SMO that distributed Facebook links with details of the calls to protest in the major cities. Moreover, *Uniți schimbăm* (2017a) was the first to verbalize the outrage of the people: “This protest is a consequence of [...] a simple emergency ordinance signed by a few puppets of parties and organized groups that came to power. [...] The assets of the defendants, largely taken from your pockets, will automatically remain in theirs.” The government was seen as unashamed and indifferent thieves: “The people of the government steal. They have been called out for stealing; they didn’t care; they did not want to change” (*Uniți schimbăm*, 2017b). Ergo, a diagnostic frame that painted the government as thieves emerged in the first days of the protest wave.

This frame is reminiscent of the corrupt government frame in the 2015 protest wave, yet it underwent a transformation to attribute single responsibility for the OUG13 to the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Liviu Dragnea. Romanians saw this OUG13 as mostly benefiting him since he was already subject to a criminal investigation into abuse of power, electoral fraud, and corruption (Luca, 2017). The diagnostic frame that seemed to be on the mind of every Romanian was that “the government is no longer credible, the ministers are manipulated by Dragnea, and the lying and the corruption need to stop” (*Uniți schimbăm*, 2017b). Thus, Dragnea was seen as the mastermind undermining the general anti-corruption struggle in Romania, further amplifying the frame of the corrupt and stealing government.

Nevertheless, this time around, Romanians were more willing to act and to frame themselves as the solution to the corruption problem that seemed to sweep over Romania. Hence, the second frame of this protest wave was both explicitly prognostic and implicitly motivational.

In a manifesto entitled “The New Proclamation of Timișoara”, the SMO *Inițiativa Timișoara* (translation: the Timișoara Initiative) (2017) set out a list of demands from the current and all future governments that would see a bigger involvement of the citizens in politics. The highlight of this prognostic element was the call for an anti-corruption referendum and more transparency and respect for the rule of law. In fact, this manifesto served to amplify the framing of the OUG13 as an assault on the rule of law, given its secretive and anti-democratic nature. To this extent, an attack on the rule of law was transformed to mean an attack on Romanian society: “By adopting legislative acts contrary to the principles of the rule of law, it is clear that this government is hostile to its own people” (Inițiativa Timișoara, 2017b).

The manifesto intrinsically fulfilled the motivational core framing task with its daring title, which referenced the original “Proclamation of Timișoara” – a series of liberal-democratic demands drafted in 1990 by the people active in Romania’s 1989 Revolution. The 1989 Revolution was the consequence of the culmination of grievances under a harsh regime that was perceived to be indifferent to its people. By reminding Romanians of the original proclamation, the manifesto managed to transform two perceptions. First, it portrayed the 2017 government as congruent with the communist and uncaring government of 1989. Second, it reframed what protesting in 2017 meant: it meant an act of courage and civic duty to uphold democratic values and dignity in the face of oppression. Thus, the “New Proclamation of Timișoara” succeeded in its motivational framing task by reactivating a popular civic spirit in a perceived high-stakes scenario, reminding Romanians of their success in overthrowing a repressive regime in the past: “Civic spirit has always existed among us; the painful part is that it took 27 years for people to rise again and protest massively [...]. There was civic spirit; it was put to sleep for a while, but it woke up again. You cannot kill an idea, no matter how hard you try” (Florescu, 2017). Thus, the manifesto managed to create a motivational and prognostic “power of the people” frame, which encouraged Romanians to see themselves as the only credible solution to the corruption problem.

True to the expectations set by Koopmans (2007) in his theory of protest waves, the SMOs of the 2017 protests recirculated the unity frame of the 2012 and 2015 protests and subjected it to the process of frame amplification by highlighting the power of the ordinary people when they stand together to create a strong civil society: “We witnessed the official birth of civil society in Romania. It was a difficult birth—let's not forget the protests of 2012 and #Colectiv. [...] What matters is what we do with it now and how well we nurture it. Let's stop waiting for ‘the leader’

to come save and unite us and instead be the leader we've been waiting for” (Corupția ucide, 2017b). Since the OUG13 was framed as an adversary to the rule of law that would protect the population, it was implicitly seen as an affront to the dignity that Romanians felt entitled to. Indeed, the idea of protecting one’s dignity seemed to strongly motivate people in uniting and accepting that it is their job to fight corruption, as the institutions that pledged to do so were no longer reliable: “Romanians will keep going to their second job. Night after night. A job paid with the strongest currency: dignity. Something you don’t have and will never be able to steal from us” (Corupția ucide, 2017a). Hence, Romanians saw themselves as the last moral bastion against systemic corruption and were willing to go out in the streets to do their duty every night until the OUG13 was repealed.

5.4. Discussion

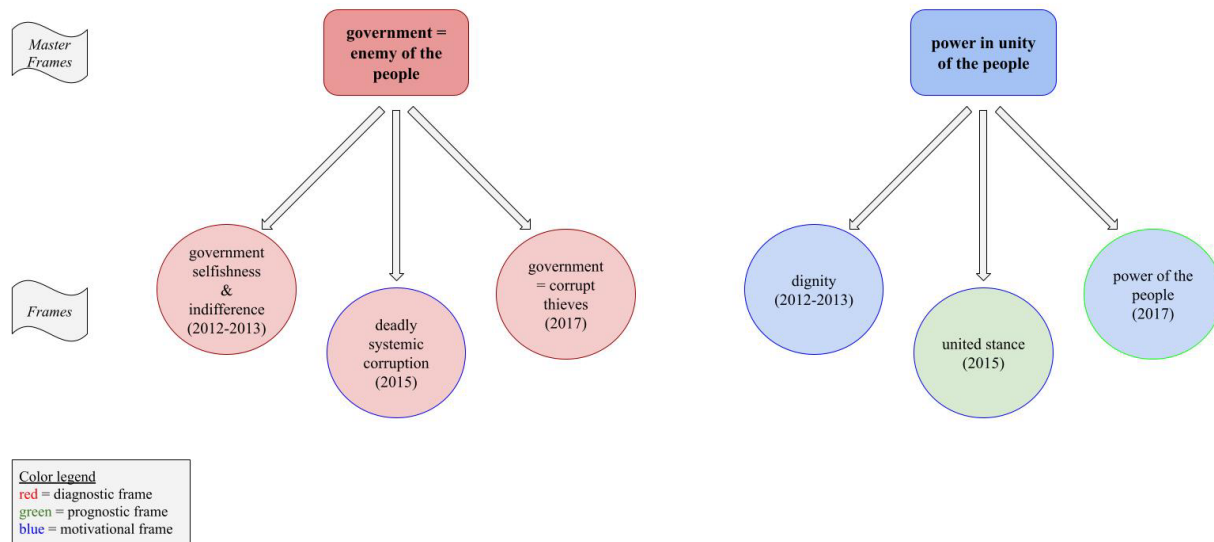


Figure 2

The above analysis aimed to trace the development of the anti-corruption frames within social movements in Romania across successive protest waves, as advised by della Porta (2017). To better integrate the theory of protest waves, this discussion will now recall the concept of master frames as the overarching framework under which social movements operate and under which subsequent frames are organized. SMOs are expected to strategically adapt master frames to the context of their respective protest wave on the basis of an attribution of similarity (Koopmans, 2007). Furthermore, a graphic representation of the master frames and subsequent frames is offered in Figure 2.

As Koopmans (2007) argued, early social movements are the progenitors of master frames. In the case of Romania, the 2012-2013 protest wave was organized around two frames: a diagnostic frame of government selfishness and a motivational frame of dignity. Both these frames appeal to people's emotions as they challenge the feelings of the Romanians vis-à-vis their governance. Romanians demonstrated intolerance towards elite arrogance. The selfish indifference of the ruling class invoked resentment and provoked Romanians' self-respect. Thus, these frames conform to the expectation of the hypothesis, mainly that successful anti-corruption frames should appeal to people's emotions or morals. Furthermore, these two frames aided the early creation of one of the master frames of Romania's three protest waves: the government as an enemy to the people, whose dignity was threatened.

The analyzed data demonstrates that in 2015, SMOs further engaged the master frame of an adversarial government by accusing it of the death of tens of civilians. Corruption was hence framed as a deadly threat to Romanians' lives. To adapt this master frame to the 2015 context, SMOs subjected it to the process of frame transformation, shifting the meaning of corruption from mere arrogance to lethal disregard. This presents an interesting development to the proposed hypothesis. While it is true that the idea of death invokes strong emotions, it is also indicative of a provocative strategy of SMOs to challenge Romanians' safety and confidence in their rulers. Such framing suggests an inherent failure of the governance in safeguarding its population. Romanians were on their own as their institutions were failing. Protesting and presenting a united front was framed by SMOs as the only conceivable course of action for concerned citizens. Thus, by adapting the master frame of an adversarial government, SMOs simultaneously birthed a second master frame: the power of the people.

The power of the people framework was further adapted by SMOs in 2017 and distributed as the first motivational and prognostic frame of the protest wave. The analyzed data indicated that SMOs of this protest wave took inspiration from the 2012-2013 protests and recalled into focus the dignity of the Romanians who could no longer tolerate a corrupt government that was not only arrogant and selfish but also deathly dangerous and easily manipulated. Under such framing, it is easy to observe the need for a new and different mechanism of corruption control—hence, the need for a united Romanian population against corruption.

These observations suggest the need for a revision of the working hypothesis. The hypothesized emotional and moral appeal of successful anti-corruption frames did not account for

their empirically demonstrated complexity. SMOs, in the case of Romania, proved a deep understanding of the Romanian people, who valued not only their dignity but also their safety and lives. Ergo, to motivate people into mobilizing and fighting corruption, the responsible institutions were framed as arrogant, selfish, and incompetent to the extent of causing death and stealing from the people. Furthermore, SMOs framed collective action as the only feasible solution for challenging Romania's systemic corruption. Hence, the answer to the puzzle of anti-corruption movements is more nuanced than originally expected: anti-corruption social movements emerge when SMOs strategically frame corruption in emotional terms that challenge people's lives and sense of safety. At the same time, SMOs should frame the united power of the people as the only feasible solution against corruption, foregoing the need for specialized institutions.

6. Conclusion

This thesis' ambition was to settle the academic debate on the creation and nature of anti-corruption social movements, given the impediments created by a corrupt system. In this regard, it proposed an interpretative approach to the frames circulated within popular mobilizations under corrupt regimes. The research considered della Porta's (2017) suggestion of studying social movements within their respective socio-political context and contentious cultural history, thus incorporating Koopman's (2007) protest waves. Furthermore, the thesis drew on framing theories developed by Benford and Snow (1986; 2018). Hence, it engaged in a frame analysis of Romania's three protest waves to test the hypothesis that anti-corruption social movements emerge when social movement organizations strategically frame corruption in moral and emotional terms. The analysis suggested that successful anti-corruption frames aim for more than an emotional appeal—they seek to confront people with their own mortality and the fact that corruption poses a risk to their lives. Ergo, anti-corruption is framed as a fight of the people united against lethal arrogance.

Theoretically, this finding reinforces the need for a discursive approach to corruption and social movement studies. Analyzing the triggers of social movements is not enough to understand what sustains them and what encourages thousands to participate in collective action. Acknowledging the agency of SMOs in constructing the uniting narrative of a protest wave should be a considerable step in future studies of anti-corruption movements, as they have proven capable of shaping beliefs and orienting action through their frames. Practically, this research can prove

useful to SMOs who seek to unite people against a cause. The analyzed data demonstrates the effective strategy of frames that engage people's security, self-preservation, and dignity.

A concrete yet actionable limitation of this research is that it focused solely on frame construction from the perspective of SMOs. Further research could supplement this by looking at the receptions of frames beyond the numbers of mobilization through interviews or surveys with activists. Similarly, this research was limited by the sources—as it focused on SMOs, the research mostly drew on sources pertaining to their communications, be it social media posts or slogans. In the future, researchers should keep a lookout for people's individual motivations for joining anti-corruption social movements or for media portrayals of the protests.

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9. Appendix

9.1. Coding frame for the 2012-2013 protest wave

Framing Task	Definition	Identified examples
<p>Diagnostic Frame</p>	<p>Identifies the problem and attributes blame</p>	<p>“I do not agree with the fact that all these machines should go in the hands of private companies who would then take the skin off our backs.”</p> <p>“We have let ourselves be stepped over by a trash and his clique of money-crazy dogs.”</p> <p>“We have gathered against [...] the current government, which prefers to destroy people who are good at what they do and replace them with amateurs.”</p> <p>“The experience of the last years has shown us the deep disdain of the current regime for the civic society, manifested through the lack of social and civic dialogue and the suspension of public consultation on laws of maximum importance for society.”</p> <p>“We express our repulsion and concern for the actions of the political leaders of the opposition, who have been complicit to the phenomena.”</p> <p>“The Romanian parliament, at the behest of the government, is preparing to vote in record time</p>

	<p>for a devastating project for Romania.”</p> <p>“Roşia Montană Gold Corporation = Corrupt Government” (slogan)</p> <p>“The Romanian state is not the ally of its citizens, but of the corporation and of the obscure interests of corrupt politicians. Local authorities, members of the parliament and government, the president, all of them have done everything not to prevent, but to accelerate all of our poisoning with cyanide offered by the Canadian company. [...] Roşia Montană also represents the latest major case of corruption among the authorities and the collaboration of cross-party oligarchies that keep Romania captive. Political parties are now nothing more than a front for these oligarchies. There is no longer any kind of political ideology or coherent governing program; everything is done in the name of profit, the thirst for power, and nothing more!”</p> <p>“The highly damaging development model chosen by the Romanian state and the suspicious past connections of the holder of the cyanide mining project in Certej also raise numerous suspicions of corruption and illegalities.”</p> <p>“The amendments to the amnesty law and the penal code give a free hand to the cronies who</p>
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		<p>are leeching off us, and they send a pretty clear message to us, the sucker taxpayers: ‘get lost or put up with our scams.’ This is what the rulers do instead of leading the country with dignity, as they swore to do: [...] if initially the new criminal regulation aimed to decriminalize insult and defamation, now they want to ensure that press freedom and freedom of expression remain restricted, so that we can be held criminally liable when we shout in their faces that they are common thieves.”</p> <p>“This decision, made without public consultation, throws away ten years of societal efforts to decriminalize insult and defamation. It removes Romania from the ranks of democracies.”</p>
<p>Prognostic Frame</p>	<p>Suggests solutions, strategies, or courses of action</p>	<p>“Down with the thieves! Down with Bănescu! Resign!” (slogan)</p> <p>“Romania, wake up!” (slogan)</p> <p>“We will continue to protest against corruption and inefficiency in general, including within the sanitary system. [...] against the Roșia Montană project and against the involvement of President Bănescu in promoting private interests. [...] against the arrogance and contempt of the ruling</p>

		<p>class.”</p> <p>“The people gathered in Victory Square say that [...] their primary demand to the current governance is its immediate resignation and the organization of snap elections.”</p> <p>“We cannot drink our money. Stop fracking!” (slogan)</p> <p>“We want a vote without cyanide!” (slogan)</p> <p>“It is time for a simple and open answer from Romania’s government! This answer cannot be ambiguous, it must either be YES or NO. [...] Our message for the political parties is singular: the time for real responsibility has arrived! We are watching you.”</p> <p>“We will see each other on the 9th of December, at the polls.”</p> <p>“Learn to work, not to sleep!” (slogan)</p> <p>“We have come out on the streets for a deep reform of the ruling political class and for a governance in the interest of each of us.”</p> <p>“Stop the law of selling Romania!” (slogan)</p>
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	<p>“Down, down, down with the lying parliament! Down with the traitor government!” (slogan)</p> <p>“The Romanian state would benefit much more in the case of Certej if, instead of hidden subsidies, it accessed funds for the ecological restoration of the area, thereby creating jobs and ensuring the possibility of a sustainable development model for the community.”</p> <p>“Street protests will continue until the parliament, through the senate and the chamber of deputies, votes to reject the proposed law; the government urgently annuls the environmental agreement through a government decision; Roşia Montană is included on Romania’s tentative list for UNESCO; cyanide is banned by law from mining activities in Romania; and the four initiators of this draft law — the Minister of Major Projects (Dan Şova), the Minister of the Environment (Rovana Plumb), the Minister of Culture (Daniel Barbu), and the head of ANRM (Gheorghe Duţu) — are dismissed.”</p> <p>“The undersigned organizations protest against the anti-democratic practices adopted and exercised by the current parliamentary majority and publicly call on the President of Romania not to promulgate the law through which, clandestinely, the offenses of insult and</p>
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		defamation have been reintroduced into the Penal Code.”
Motivational Frame	Offers a rationale or emotional appeal to mobilize participation	<p>“SMURD for us, us for SMURD.” (slogan)</p> <p>“We are PEOPLE for the PEOPLE! It is time to save ourselves and be one big TEAM.”</p> <p>“We, who do not accept to be humbled. We, who have had enough of the shamelessness.”</p> <p>“As a citizen of this [...] country, you cannot just sit idly by and watch others destroy something that other people worked over 20 years for.”</p> <p>“We are close to victory. This evil government will collapse. Bănescu will fall.”</p> <p>“Life has value! Money is just paper.” (slogan)</p> <p>“We do not want to be a nation of slaves!” (slogan)</p> <p>“We can no longer let the world be destroyed in the name of capitalism!”</p> <p>“United, we save Roșia Montană!” (slogan)</p> <p>“Come to the streets, we will not leave!” (slogan)</p>

		<p>“SOLIDARITY!” (slogan)</p> <p>“Our message for the citizens is: come together with us, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sex, or social condition! Act for your liberation from the domination of this rotten and corrupt system, a system in which you, the mass, are sacrificed on the altar of money.”</p> <p>“If they ban democracy, we take it back because democracy means demos (the people) + kratos (power). GO OUT IN THE STREET!”</p>
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9.2. Coding frame for the 2015 protest wave

Framing task	Definition	Identified frames
Diagnostic Frame	Identifies the problem and attributes blame	<p>“A tragedy has occurred because of indolence, irresponsibility, and corruption. It is neither the first nor the last time that neglect and abuse of power claim victims.”</p> <p>“For the past 25 years they have stolen from us and from our parents who work very hard to provide for us.”</p> <p>“It has been 3 days without the resignation of anyone from the criminal state system who is to be blamed the most for what has happened.”</p> <p>“The news channels turned this into a circus, chasing ratings at the expense of an</p>

		<p>unimaginable tragedy, with the journalists of these channels becoming pathetic scumbags!”</p> <p>“Because a nation that is pathologically imbecilic in its vast majority, because the national church, because some political leaders found those to blame — the victims and their parents — all of it being 'a divine punishment' for the mortal sin of being a rocker.”</p> <p>“At the center lies the same corrupt and criminal system that has held power for the past 25 years. In this case — a corrupt political party (UNPR, a wing of PSD), a corrupt party leader and Deputy Prime Minister (Minister of Internal Affairs), appointed general by the corrupt mafia within the Ministry of National Defense (MAPN), a corrupt UNPR mayor, and a private actor equally criminal, who gives bribes in order to enrich himself at the expense of the so-called 'fools'.”</p> <p>“All parties are equally dirty.”</p> <p>“We cannot wait for a coherent answer from the authorities because right now all of them are preoccupied with covering their own tracks.”</p>
Prognostic Frame	Suggests solutions, strategies, or courses of action	“We demand accountability from those who have neglected their legal, institutional, and moral responsibilities! We will go out on the

	<p>streets, and we will not give up until we have results!”</p> <p>“We want a fast, correct, and transparent investigation of the tragedy. We want the results of the investigation to be communicated to the citizens.”</p> <p>“We want resignations NOW! We demand the resignation of the mayor of Sector 4, Cristian Popescu, and of Deputy Prime Minister Gabriel Oprea! We demand the resignation of the Minister of Health, Nicolae Băncicioiu! We demand the resignation of the head of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations.”</p> <p>“We want hospitals to stop being shut down and for new ones to be built!”</p> <p>“We want modern equipment for firefighters and for all those who work DIRECTLY to save lives!”</p> <p>“We want the introduction of Community Education into the mandatory school curriculum, grades I–XII, which should include first aid training, emergency preparedness drills (earthquakes, fires, floods), traffic safety education, and fire prevention.”</p> <p>“We won’t leave until you leave!”</p>
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	<p>“Our goal is to avoid other events such as Colectiv [...]. Together we will try to eliminate corruption for a better Romania!”</p> <p>“This cursed system needs to be changed from its roots – democracy produces real changes in the streets, not from behind keyboards or in front of TVs.”</p> <p>“People are demanding that the new prime minister not belong to any political party, that the population be able to more easily dismiss a politician, the reduction of the number of parliamentarians to 300, the banning of political party switching and post-election alliances, the lifting of immunity in all cases requested by prosecutors, the confiscation of illicit wealth, and the tightening of penalties in cases of corruption. [...] Tougher penalties for those who give or accept bribes, an increase in the minimum wage, and 'decent pensions for all Romanians,' the cessation of funding for religious institutions, and the taxation of their income remain among the ongoing demands.”</p> <p>“Criminal parliament, off to court! We want early elections, not immunity.”</p> <p>“We want hospitals, not cathedrals!”</p> <p>“The only solution is another revolution!”</p>
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		<p>“The monarchy can save Romania. Communists out, king in!”</p>
<p>Motivational Frame</p>	<p>Offers a rationale or emotional appeal to mobilize participation</p>	<p>“Silence kills. See you in the streets!”</p> <p>“Patience has reached a limit. The sadness and revolt do not allow us to remain passive. [...] Our society has a chance if we do not forget solidarity and compassion and practice them all the time.”</p> <p>“We no longer want to be lied to and humiliated by those who have political and administrative power. Nothing will ever be the same again. See you in the streets! It’s just the beginning!”</p> <p>“It is our time to make a change and we will succeed if we stay united until the end!”</p> <p>“CORRUPTION KILLS! IF WE DO NOT REACT, THEY WOULD HAVE DIED IN VAIN.”</p> <p>“Silence kills. Come to the streets!”</p> <p>“It’s time for us, young people, to go out to the streets in order to change something. It is time to wake up!”</p> <p>“How many more have to die for us to go out to the streets?”</p>

	<p>“The flame of the few involved ones is dying fast without the support of a considerable number of people.”</p> <p>“We want a future for Romanians, not for politicians!”</p> <p>“We do not want to be a nation of slaves.”</p> <p>“United, we save the entire Romania.”</p> <p>“Let us not be delusional. If we want change, we have to be a part of it. In short, there will be more moments in the future where the most efficient would be to go out in the street. For us, for our future.”</p> <p>“Corruption dies in the face of those who act without expecting anything in return. [...] We are the generation that wants change and takes action to make it happen – through the power of example. We do not sit passively, waiting only for public authorities to do something [...]. We are not naïve enough to believe that change will come without us doing something about it.”</p>
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9.3. Coding frame for the 2017 protest wave

Framing Task	Definition	Identified frame
Diagnostic Frame	Identifies the problem and attributes blame	<p>“This protest is a consequence of the repeated declarations and signals regarding the possible pardon of certain acts of corruption or changes to laws without public consultation or consideration of the views of other institutions. The government tried to adopt on Wednesday an Emergency Ordinance with significant changes to criminal legislation. [...] Progress is not guaranteed, it can be wiped out with a simple emergency ordinance signed by a few puppets of parties and organized groups that came to power. All the work of prosecutors, judges, independent NGOs can be thrown in the trash.</p> <p>The assets of the defendants, largely taken from your pockets, will automatically remain in theirs.”</p> <p>“By adopting legislative acts contrary to the principles of the RULE OF LAW, it is clear that this government is hostile to its own people.”</p> <p>“The people of the Government steal. They have been called out for stealing, they didn’t care, they did not want to change [...]. The government is no longer credible, the ministers are manipulated by Liviu Dragnea, the lying and the corruption needs to stop.”</p>

		<p>“PSD (Translator's Note: Social-Democratic Party), the red plague!”</p> <p>“The fish rots from the head, from Dragnea.”</p> <p>“All of this is because of you, scumbags. Drunk with power, thirsty for theft, you’ve forced your filthy tails back into our lives and turned us against one another. You are a bunch of lowlifes willing to blow up a country for your own interests. Scumbags.”</p>
<p>Prognostic Frame</p>	<p>Suggests solutions, strategies, or courses of action</p>	<p>“The proclamation demands that, from now on, no government, regardless of its political affiliation, should ever repeat something like Ordinance 13. It calls for the organization of an anti-corruption referendum. The constitutional review of laws and emergency ordinances should be allowed through direct and unmediated citizen initiatives. Additional powers should be granted to the Constitutional Court to suspend the application of normative acts suspected of violating the Constitution. Public offices must be depoliticized and filled only through competitive examinations. There must be a clear separation of powers by establishing incompatibility between executive and legislative roles. Parliamentary approval should no longer be required for the criminal investigation of dignitaries. Lastly, individuals with criminal convictions must be barred from holding public office.”</p>

		<p>“The people of Sibiu demand the resignation of the Executive and the continuation of the fight against corruption.”</p> <p>“We demand two things: for mister Dragnea to give up the emergency decree forever, and for the ones who have proposed it to leave.”</p> <p>“Resign! We cannot keep watch over you every night.”</p> <p>“We don't need a leader; we need people who work together to build a rule-of-law state that functions properly, regardless of who is in power. We need ideas, projects, and people with initiative and good intentions.”</p> <p>“We want the country, of which we are citizens, to include among its core values the following principles: I. Decision-making transparency II. Participatory democracy III. Responsibility and transparency in the management of public funds IV. Integrity and loyalty in the exercise of public office or duty”</p>
Motivational Frame	Offers a rationale or emotional appeal to mobilize participation	“Civic spirit has always existed among us; the painful part is that it took 27 years for people to rise again and protest massively [...]. There was

	<p>civic spirit; it was put to sleep for a while, but it woke up again. You cannot kill an idea, no matter how hard you try.”</p> <p>“It is unacceptable for legislation to be changed so that hundreds of politicians with legal troubles end up with clean records. Romanians are, rightfully, outraged.”</p> <p>“A future for our children, with corrupt politicians in prison. A future for our grandchildren, in a country without thieves.”</p> <p>“A society who bows and accepts corruption is a defeated society.”</p> <p>“We resist, we do not give in! #rezist”</p> <p>“We witnessed the official birth of civil society in Romania. It was a difficult birth—let's not forget the protests of 2012 and #Colectiv. And the most important thing is this: civil society is like a newborn. What matters is what we do with it now and how well we nurture it. Let's stop waiting for ‘the leader’ to come save and unite us, and instead be the leader we've been waiting for.”</p> <p>“But it’s no problem—I trust that Romanians will keep going to their second job. Night after night. A job paid with the strongest currency: dignity. Something you don’t have and will</p>
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	<p>never be able to steal from us, no matter how much of a thief you are. We see you, scumbags!”</p> <p>“Every day we stay silent and close our eyes to the restriction of our rights, individual freedoms, democracy, the independence of the judiciary, and the rule of law takes us further away from the democratic world we entered with so many sacrifices. We must not accept a return to Romania's dark past.”</p>
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