After a Violent Revolution: Romanian Democratisation in the Early 1990s

Roxana Radu

The 2011 uprisings in the Middle East have frequently been compared to the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. The prospects of free elections in countries such as Egypt, and Libya gave rise to concerns over the extent to which the regime change can be equated with the pursuit of a democratisation, in particular in the absence of a strong socio-economic integration programme at the regional level. Drawing on a social constructivist perspective, I present the Romanian experience in pursuing and complying with membership criteria for intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and the approaches adopted by political decision-makers in the first five years of post-communist transformation. The lessons from this case study are two-fold: firstly, the willingness to manage inter-ethnic disputes remained primarily subsumed to political interests as long as no strong compels were imposed; secondly, the prospect of full membership in multilateral institutions served the purpose of domestic legitimacy even when there was only partial compliance with international norms, which delayed the implementation of a thorough reform process. Nonetheless, as different regional forums increased their leverage by employing threats of sanctions, the role of IGOs increasingly constrained domestic elites. In light of this, the democratisation efforts started after the Arab Spring could build on the experiences of regional cooperation initiatives as those initiated in the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords: *Romania, democratisation, multilateral institutions, Arab Spring, revolution*

Introduction

Roxana Radu

The 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and the 2011 uprisings in the Middle East have recently been put side by side. Such assessments have, largely, focused on the similarities in the mobilisation process, the type of authoritarian rule and the range of human rights abuses and liberty limitations experienced by the populations of these countries prior to the social unrest. The scheduling of the first free elections in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have stirred a series of concerns regarding the degree to which the change in power can be equated with the pursuit of democratisation. From a political socialisation perspective, international actors are able to shape the norm adoption and the adherence to democratic values with a long-term impact on the transformation pursuit; among the most influential mechanisms at work in that process are the 'carrots' (incentives) and 'sticks' (sanctions), which are part of the conditionality process.

The 2011 turmoil in the Middle East—known as the 'Arab Spring'—led to a regime change in Tunisia, the first country in the region to witness mass unrest in December 2010 / January 2011. Egypt and Libya continue to face violence following the forced removal of their authoritarian leaders, Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi, respectively. The havoc in Syria—under Bashar al-Assad—has led so far to more than 75,000 deaths and the violence continues as the Syrian leader is unwilling to step down.[1] The intervention of international institutions in these countries was, up to now, primarily aimed at providing humanitarian help and political support to opposition groups in the areas where mobilisation was taking place or in those where protest crackdowns occurred. Discussions about financial assistance have also been in the spotlight following the turnover of power in the region. In the near future however, the involvement of international institutions is likely to go beyond humanitarian aid and economic recovery initiatives. Undoubtedly, new directions of action will regard the social and political development of the country and in particular the efforts to promote democratisation. In light of this, an account of the role of IGOs in the post-Revolution period in Romania is eloquent for the interaction between the international community and the early stage transition countries.

After facing the most violent revolution of 1989 in Eastern Europe, Romania continued to be confronted, in the 1990s, with a series of brutal acts carried out by the miners from the Jiu Valley (these events were

subsequently called 'mineriads'), which aimed at silencing the opposition forces that were dissatisfied with the seizure of the National Salvation Front (NSF). This body—emerging from the temporary National Salvation Front Council—did not exist as an organisation prior to December 1989. Moreover, its leaders did nothing to mobilise the masses or give voice to social dissatisfactions prior to the start of the protests; while the temporary body originally included political dissidents, they soon withdrew their support as the National Salvation Front decided to take part in the May 1990 elections.

In this context, the Romanian early transition stage represents an interesting case for the involvement of regional multilateral institutions. The novelty of this study resides in assessing the impact that the international norms and constraints had on the enhancement of democratic advancements in the first years of transition in Romania in key moments, by analysing the courses of action undertaken under international compulsion and the logic behind their application. For this, I investigate critical policy lines adopted at the domestic level once IGOs have expressly demanded or conditioned their implementation. The analysis includes the interactions with the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later on renamed the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the European Community (EC), which changed its name to the European Union (EU) in 1993.

The topic is analysed from a social constructivist perspective. Accordingly, institutions are perceived as 'generating agents that reinforce or enact, as a result of normative socialisation into a common civilization, a particular set of principles, norms, and rules.'[2] With its deep roots in sociology, this understanding defines socialisation as a process of inducing actors into the norms and rules of a given community, whose purpose is the sustained compliance following the internalisation of the specified provisions.[3] Consistent with this theory, undertaking domestic changes under the influence of the international standards follows either the logic of consequentiality (cost-benefit analysis) or the logic of appropriateness (intrinsic reasons deemed appropriate under a given context), bridging the incentive-based behavioural adaptation and the actors' preferences redefinition. On strictly political grounds, the Romanian case appears to provide the necessary conditions for studying how the logic of consequences was replaced by the logic of appropriateness, in keeping with what is socially acceptable in a given setting.

This article is divided as follows. The next section addresses the theoretical background, emphasising the position of international institutions in driving the democratic transformation for Romania. The second section focuses on international pressures, with three subsections each dedicated to an in-depth analysis of the interactions with an international actor exerting significant influence on the process: CSCE/OSCE, Council of Europe and EC/EU. The final section concludes and puts into perspective the involvement of IGOs in the democratisation of Romania in the early 1990s, and its relevance in the light of the transformation process in the Arab Spring context.

The Role of IGOs in the Early 1990s in Romania

In the early 1990s, the courses of action that would transform transitional governments into democratising agents were a response to both internal and international pressures. Regardless of how tardy the transition countries managed to complete the reforms they committed to and in spite of the extent to which they were able to abide by the previously-acknowledged democratic rules in the first post-communist decade, the 1990s change generated a degree of foreign support rarely manifested throughout history. Moreover, the socialisation process has been mutually reinforced by the objectives of both the international institutions and the newly democratising countries, with a match of interests that reshaped the so-called "world order" replacing the Cold War bi-polar arrangement. Attempting to increase their reliability domestically and externally, the transitional governments were eager to join international organisations in order to increase their civil society support, economic benefits and international reputation. By the same token, the risk of any deviation from the embarked path was considerably reduced within the control of international supervising institutions, thus making the costs of any such attempt significantly higher. In addition to market-related advantages that supplemented the expansion of the sphere of interest and the global reputation, by means of accepting new members, transnational organisations strengthened their power, while coalitions defending certain causes found more supporters.

The Romanian revolution of 1989 was the only violent one of that year in Eastern Europe. The dictatorship of Nicolae Ceausescu ended on 25 December 1989, after at least 1290 people were killed in the public protests leading up to his departure from Bucharest and subse-

quent execution.[4] 1989 was the year when simultaneous changes and instances of departure from authoritarianism occurred across Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, 1989 witnessed the violent suppression of the student demonstration in Tiananmen Square (China) in June, but also the formation of the first non-communist Polish government in September. The 1989 events in Europe disrupted the artificially-created order of the communist regimes in the Central and Eastern part of the continent to their eventual breakdown. From that point on, the path embarked on by the former communist countries came to be frequently labelled as "the democratisation process," thus implying that the system of government they were heading towards was, in effect, liberal democracy.

Romania's poor ratings in 1989 (regarding the lack of prior democratic experience, the low involvement of civil society, the low economic development, as well as the timing and mode of transition) led Huntington to conclude that Romania and Sudan were the two countries in the world with the worst chances for democratic consolidation.[5] Huntington's prediction did not materialize, and this may be attributed, to a certain extent, to the role played by IGOs in the region. Yet, many authors have seen this transition as an incomplete one, stressing primarily the inability to cope with or the unwillingness to deal effectively with key transition-related problems, such as corruption or the application of transitional justice mechanisms.[6] Beside the impact of the CSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU, NATO conditionality has also determined a large part of the cooperative advancements in the Romanian context. While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) provided a significant part of the funds used for reforms during transition, their mechanisms of direct or indirect constraint can be distinguished from democracy-oriented initiatives developed at the regional level. The *modus operandi* of these two institutions, as well as of NATO, has a less straightforward connection with the drive towards democratisation and adherence to liberal values, and can be assigned to a particular interest being pursued (economic or military). For this reason, they have not been included in the present analysis. Needless to say, the engagement of civil society actors (such as grant-providing foundations) or transnational networks provided strong support for democratisation. However, the current investigation remains limited to intergovernmental organisations.

From a sociological point of view, the perception of a chain of events that leads to a strenuous internal tension is formed during a subjective

process of internalisation, which is context-dependent. The national political players, the civil society as an assembly, as well as the international actors shape, alter and change their attitudes and the proposed policies depending on the dynamics of their insight into local circumstances. As social constructivism maintains, the adoption of a specific interaction path can only be explained by a deep exploration of the relations that regulate the intercession. The domestic institutionalisation of the international norms can be realised in four stages[7]: to begin with, the values promoted by the external grouping are internalised by the national elites; subsequently, these beliefs are further integrated into the local bureaucratic procedures and then incorporated into domestic law. By these mechanisms, the international rules are finally appealed to in order to justify a wide range of interests, from national claims to interest-based individual ones. Analysing the variation of domestic compliance with international rules in different states, Cortell and Davis emphasise the importance of two conditions for assessing how the national actors' internalisation of exterior norms influences state behaviour.[8] The first and foremost condition is 'the domestic salience of the norm,' defined as 'a durable set of attitudes toward norm's legitimacy in the national arena.'[9] Salient norms increase the feeling of obligation and the cost of deviation in the absence of an appropriate justification. The second variable is 'the domestic structural context within which the policy debates transpires.'[10]

At the outset, the mechanisms for socialisation used by the international structures in Central and Eastern Europe disregarded the differences between transitional countries and concentrated on convergence. Treating the states of the former communist bloc in a similar way was, to a certain extent, a sign of the incomplete preparation of these actors to confront the outcomes of the totalitarian legacy other than in a collective manner. Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties of the international organisations to unanimously decide on a long-term policy to follow, their first goal was convergence, defined as the 'gradual movement in system conformity based on an institutionalized grouping of established democratic states that has the power and mechanisms to attract regimes undergoing change and to help secure their democratic outcomes.'[11] The main cause for this focus was partly owed to the reticence of the older members of these institutions, which tended to especially emphasise regional disparities when compared to their own socio-economic status. The CSCE/OSCE, the EC/EU and the Council of Europe have been the most powerful groupings in

the region; they left their imprint on the democratisation process of the CEE transitional countries to the point of considering international leverage as fundamental in the transformation.

International Pressures and Domestic Reactions

Good neighbourly relations and sub-regional cooperation were among the frequently used prestige-driven strategies employed by the Romanian government while pursuing the goal of becoming a stable leader in the Balkan region. Being a founding member of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation or signing a friendship and cooperation treaty with Bulgaria in 1992, for instance, have been initiatives based on a two-fold reasoning: initially, they were attempts to create a proper milieu for peacefulness and economic development by overcoming historical disputes; in the second place, they were intended to formally guarantee the commitment of Romania towards profound democratic transformation. On the other hand, such projects unveiled the gradual influence of the external actors in the area; these were reflections of the implementation of the IGOs' socialisation mechanisms on a smaller scale.

In the international relations arena, the Romanian elites pursued regional cooperation simultaneously with European integration. National leaders often argued that the need for reform was a necessary condition for accession to international organisations and primarily to the EU. Therefore, whenever reforms were successful, they claimed their merit in achieving them, following a 'social rewards' calculation. In the same way, when the reforms proved to be unsuccessful or imposed a succession of hardships, there was a blame-shift towards the external conditionality and the requirements for integration. Anyhow, the prospect of membership in IGOs represented the strongest incentive for undertaking burdensome reforms, as detailed below.

CSCE/OSCE Requirements in the First Transition Years

The CSCE was established in July 1973 as a political dialogue forum and became the OSCE on 1 January 1995. Through its conflict prevention activities, and its efforts towards democratisation and human rights protection, the CSCE became actively involved in the transition in Central and Eastern Europe by aiming at shaping a stable socio-political environment, primarily for ethnic minorities. The frequent criticism ad-

dressed to the organisation was that it lacked both the 'sticks' and the 'carrots' to efficiently implement its decisions; yet, since 1975, a degree of influence over the behaviour of Eastern leaders may be evidenced.[12]

The organisation is structured along three dimensions—politico-military, economic and environmental and human—and the input for each is given through summits attended by heads of state or government. In the aftermath of 1989, the CSCE process came to be perceived as a powerful mechanism for monitoring the compliance of Central and Eastern European states with the European norms of democracy, human rights and minority protection, as signatories of the Helsinki Final Act.[13] As McMahon puts it, 'although no one country or any single organization was willing or able to take responsibility for preventing and managing ethnic conflicts, a certain consensus had emerged on the leading role of the OSCE in this area.'[14]

In Romania, which harboured the largest Hungarian minority in the region, the violent clashes in 1990 with the Magyars in Targu Mures triggered the attention of the CSCE to the need to urge the Romanian government to create a legal framework for the protection of minorities. Additionally, it was recommended that a set of monitoring mechanisms and the 'civil society watch' be strengthened in order to supervise the implementation of norms. With the 1992 creation of the High Commissioner of National Minorities (HCNM)—a position held initially by Max van der Stoel—the CSCE introduced a major restructuring. Yet, given the lack of legal enforcement provisions, the HCNM relied extensively on 'proactive quiet diplomacy, and when necessary was prepared to "name and shame" those countries which did not comply with the agreed standards.'[15] Consequently, the Romanian government hardly integrated the recommendations of der Stoel, in spite of giving more attention to the ethnic problems so as not to hinder the prospects of European integration. From a domestic standpoint, the message the HCNM delivered was incongruent and incoherent: on the one hand, it accommodated the idea that 'if ethnic conflicts are not violent, the international community will not pay attention.'[16] On the other hand, blame was publicly assigned to the deficient cooperation between the Hungarian minority representatives and the Romanian government, thus ignoring the implementation of universal standards regarding minority rights.

By 1993, after President Iliescu declared accession to Euro-Atlantic institutions the top priority, the Council of National Minorities was established, as an acknowledgement of the fact that the peaceful set-

tlement of inter-ethnic disputes was a pre-requisite for further regional integration. The role of this Council was to enhance the dialogue with the national minorities in order to provide recommendations to the President.

According to one report prepared for the Free Media Seminar Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1993, in Romania, 'several minority language newspapers charge that hostile local postal and distribution authorities have periodically damaged their circulation by delivering their newspapers significantly later than their Romanian language competitors' and in some cases destroying their shipments.'[17] By the end of Iliescu's term, cooperation with neighbouring Hungary had not been formalised, but the necessary conditions for this endeavour had been created. The constant attention given to minority issues and the monitoring process endorsed by the CSCE/OSCE placed ethnic conflict prevention on the domestic agenda. One year later, in 1996, a Romanian-Hungarian bilateral agreement was signed by the then elected President Emil Constantinescu, with the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania being part of the governmental coalition.

The Council of Europe and its Domestic Impact

The Council of Europe was the first Pan-European political institution to be founded in the aftermath of the World War II. From its creation in 1949, the Council of Europe has been concerned with the legal aspects of democratic government, while from 1989 onwards, it focused on three directions: first, raising awareness, providing information and fostering political dialogue; second, providing assistance and enabling cooperation; third, actively promoting integration. Starting in 1989, its observers advocated that the Council membership for post-communist countries can be regarded 'as a way of positively "locking" a country into an intergovernmental democratic network, with its binding international conventions and treaties, so as to protect it more effectively from its own antidemocratic enemies within.'[18] However, as the CSCE, the Council of Europe possesses weak enforcing mechanisms: in special circumstances, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, consulting the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), can suspend member states for infringements of its statutes; yet, by 1995, this sanction was never employed.

Soon after the Iron Curtain's dissolution, at the 1990 Lisbon Spe-

cial Ministerial Meeting dealing with the recent challenges of the 'new world order,' Romania was the only state from CEE to be absent, due to the internal tensions generated by the continuous violence in the country. As remembered by Adrian Severin, a former Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs from December 1996 to December 1997, 'Romania was one of the first states to apply to join the Council, after the changes occurred at the end of the 1980s. I believe that Romania's advancement could have been faster had it not been for the miners' coming to Bucharest [...] Our way to the Council of Europe was blocked all of a sudden after the miners' arrival to Bucharest on 13-15 June 1990.'[19] Due to the domestic circumstances, Romania was also the last country from the former communist bloc to acquire the Special Guest status in the Parliamentary Assembly, as late as February 1991.

By 1990, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the so-called 'Venice Commission') was created. This committee, which was mandated to help Romania to draft a new Constitution by offering legal expertise, faced an unprecedented situation: at the time of meeting with the Romanian representatives, the latter presented the Commission the draft of the first post-communist Constitution and only required the help of the Commission for gaining international recognition; this *fait accompli* was able to generate domestic legitimacy in a period of significant social unrest. Moreover, the actions of the government combined with the nationalist discourses of the Romanian politicians of the first post-communist years and with the miners' repeated visits to Bucharest induced—primarily in the international debates—the idea of transitional vulnerability, which delayed the country's accession to the Council of Europe until 1993. To the Romanian application for full membership, the Opinion 176 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe responded:

> In accordance with commitments made by the Romanian Parliament and authorities, as well as the remarks and proposals contained in the reports of the committees concerned with the application for membership, the Assembly calls the attention of the Romanian authorities to the necessity of instituting separation of powers, guaranteeing the real independence of the media, and ensuring the conditions for the free functioning of local administrative bodies. The Assembly recommends that the Romanian authorities sign the European Charter on Local Government as soon as possible.[20]

The document also provided a series of recommendations regarding

the minority rights status, including the imperative implementation of the legislation on national minorities and education, the restitution of confiscated Church property, especially for allowing the operation of church schools teaching children belonging to minority groups in their mother tongue. Moreover, it urged the Romanian authorities to combat racist, ethnic and religious discrimination and recommended the signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in due time.

The suggestions of the Parliamentary Assembly had been, to a large extent, integrated into national policies by the end of Iliescu's term, but this was primarily done in an unsatisfactory way. Romania signed the European Charter "Autonomous Exercise of Local Power" in October 1994, granting, however, only limited autonomy. A judiciary reform was undertaken in the autumn of 1995 introducing the immovability of judges and, during the same year, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was signed. Among the most flagrant acts of non-compliance with the Opinion 176 requirements was still the minority rights legislation. In 1995, the Romanian Parliament passed a new law on education restricting the educational rights national minorities previously enjoyed. According to article 123 of that piece of legislation, at the secondary level of education, Romanian was the language of instruction for subjects such as the history or the geography of Romania; additionally, article 124 stipulated that university entrance examinations had to be taken in Romanian, except for the subjects for which university instruction in the mother tongue is provided, such as teacher training and arts. As it was infringing on the international commitments already made, the application of this law was postponed in order to avoid a deterioration of Romanian-Hungarian relations. According to one Romanian witness to the carrying out of the reforms inspired by Opinion 176, 'the accession was not the result of a typical streamlining of the human rights situation and of the construction of the rule of law in accordance with the standards of the Council of Europe, but rather the outcome of a laborious process of political negotiation.'[21] Therefore, the adoption of external values and compliance with the international norms came at a lingering pace.

The Council of Europe's value convergence marked one of the most difficult instances of the logic of consequentiality in post-communist Romanian history. The cost-benefit analysis acted reversely in this case: by offering the much needed legitimacy in the domestic realm in a period of risk, the international institution found the proper ground

for monitoring the direction to be followed by the important chain of transformations affecting Romania's position at the regional level. In spite of the deficiencies that accompanied the process, the 'international sticks' carried forward the democratic progress.

The Influence of the European Community/European Union

Referring back to the 1951 European Coal and Steel Community, the 1957 Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community, with a single set of institutions collectively known as the *European Community* (EC). Undergoing a series of transformations in its mission, the EC had, by 1986, already gradually integrated six new member-states, apart from the six founding countries. By 1989, it had acquired a political position liable to rank it as one of the most powerful groupings in the region. With the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force in November 1993, the EC became the first among the three pillars that would constitute the 'European Union,' developing as a political and economic entity.

From 1990 onwards, when the possibility of becoming an indispensable regional actor arose, the Eastern enlargement opportunity took prevalence over other objectives, predominantly economic ones. According to Grabbe and Hughes, the 'Eastern enlargement of the EU is partly inspired by a sense of historical opportunity; it is not motivated just by the logic of political, economic and security interests on both sides, but has an emotional and moral dimension in re-uniting Europe and making up for the painful divisions of Yalta.'[22]

Assessing the domestic impact of such a complex explanation for transnational involvement always poses an impediment to defining the features exerting pressure and leading to specific effects, due to the overlap of interdependent sequences of motivations. The European Community's reasoning with a view to enlargement after 1989 included several new aspects, compared to the previous waves of integration: the first proposal to support and later on to foster accession negotiations to a number of transitional countries, was seen as democratically vulnerable and economically fragile; additionally, they formed a distinct group, they did not compose a uniform bloc, therefore they needed to be approached differently. Faced with these circumstances, the European Community developed the "conditionality" mechanism, which could be simply equated with imposing a series of conditions in

order to continue negotiations in the pursuit of acquiring full membership. Furthermore, the good-neighbour policy acquired an unprecedented role: 'in no case [in past EU enlargements] was substantive sub-regional cooperation among the candidate countries put forward as a condition for entry. The idea of sub-regional cooperation as a stepping stone, or even a condition for integration into the EU first arose with the CEE candidate states'[23].

Romania was the first country from the Soviet bloc to have signed a limited trade agreement with the EC as early as 1980. Seven years later, negotiations were held to expand the provisions of the agreement to agriculture and cooperation, but they were unsuccessful. In July 1989, the Paris Summit of the Arch included a provision mentioning that any East European country embarking on the democratisation path and market oriented reform would receive Western aid, under the supervision of the EC. However, by December 1989, the trade agreement with Romania was cancelled as a result of the deterioration of human rights protection in its territory. The European Community-Romanian diplomatic relations were re-established in March 1990, followed, two months later, by a discussion on the possible conclusion of the trade and cooperation agreement; yet its final signing was delayed due to the start of the Mineriad.

While the EC involvement in the transition processes in Central and Eastern Europe, from 1989 onwards, was conceived, in its first stage, in terms of economic aid and trade support, caution was expressed concerning the instability in the region. The agenda that would provide financial assistance to the newly-democratising countries also included the PHARE programme, apart from the trade and cooperation agreements signed on an individual basis and meant to facilitate the import from the EC by gradually eliminating restrictions. Nonetheless, Romania was excluded from the PHARE schemes for repeated violations of human rights until January 1991.

Some analyses of the EC/EU's domestic impact have concluded that, in the post-1989 period, 'the general perspective of the ruling elite regarding Romania's development was distorted. It was not democratisation, but EU integration that mattered most. The only long-term objective was EU accession, and short-term objectives were objectives set under EU conditionality, nothing more. Under such circumstances reinstating the rule of law in Romania was never seen as a goal per se, but rather as a means of achieving accession.'[24] In particular, after the interruption of negotiations, the image of the country needed to be

restored and improved. The 1990 repression of the protesters in the University Square by 'government-backed miners who ran amok in Bucharest'[25]—as it was viewed from Brussels—raised serious questions regarding the capacity of Romania to reform and move beyond totalitarian practices. At the same time, the European Community reacted towards the persistence of former communist political and economic elites in power and the reluctance of politicians in office to decide on the institutional change in an effective way. The poor national economic performance at the beginning of the 1990s stemmed, in part, from the delay in the signing of the cooperation agreement, whose long-standing effect would be visible in the loss of credibility for foreign investments, with a wide range of consequences for the future development of Romania.

Starting with 1991, the Associations Agreements (also known as Europe Agreements) represented a second stage in the EC strategy towards the Central and Eastern European countries; beside trade liberalisation, the free movement of services, capital and labour was negotiated. Moreover, at the 1990 EC Foreign Ministers Meeting, held in February, five eligibility principles for acquiring the status of associated country were set up: establishment of the rule of law, respect for human rights, introduction of multi-party democracy, holding of free, fair and competitive elections and finally, development of market-oriented economies. In 1993, the EC-Romania Association Agreement was signed, with the date for entering into force set for 1 February 1995. In spite of the fact that the position of 'partner country' offered no promise of future membership in the EC, it managed to boost the prestige of the national elites and prospects for democratisation.

On the other hand, pressures coming from the transitional countries for a specific commitment and membership binding objective determined the European Commission to issue, on 18 May 1993, the statement entitled "Towards a Closer Association with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe" in view of the future meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen. One section of this document emphasised the importance of adopting concrete measures.[26] The shift in the EU's approach towards transitional countries, from the partnership status agreement to promoting a real commitment for full membership, was done in order to strengthen the engagement in the region, since the EU 'could not protect itself against the spill-over effects of political instability or conflict at its borders.'[27]

At the Copenhagen European Council from June 1993, the political

criteria for accession to the EU were set for the first time. However, being among the strictest conditions ever imposed, they have fed the perception of the EU's 'double standards,'[28] compared to the previous waves of integration. These criteria can be summarised as: democratic institutions and the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of minorities, and a functioning market economy. Nonetheless, given that the EU was, under no circumstances, legally bound to offer membership to the countries complying with these criteria, the decisions of the Copenhagen Summit rather constituted an important part of a powerful incentive structure. The value of the document was expressly political, but it included a degree of ambiguity that only hindered the transitional transformations in the Eastern European countries. For instance, the requirement of having stable democratic institutions and of ensuring minority rights protection stressed the importance of democratic consolidation solely, rather than transition, without providing guidance on how the democratic institutions should act.[29] As a result, the internalisation of these norms was only done formally, because in countries where former communists remained in power, such as Romania, the elites had no personal experience of a functional democracy, while the institutions still struggled with the ever-delayed reform, lack of professionalism and inefficiency. The public administration deficient management obstructed, as well, the *acquis communautaire* implementation requirement. Moreover, due to the reluctance of the parties in power to enforce accountability for civil servants, the harmonisation of legislation slowed down the pace of integration. All the same, the market economy still suffered from the gradualism policy adopted by the government in the transition from a centralised system to capitalism.

Faced with these realities, Romanian decision-makers acknowledged the fact that 'EU accession process largely represents the management of domestic transformation and not a sophisticated diplomatic exercise with Brussels.'[30] A thorough commitment to becoming a member-state implied a sustained effort in order to meet all the criteria necessary for signing the accession treaty. In December 1994, at the Essen European Council, a pre-accession strategy initiative was launched for the first time, with the aim of providing a clear image of the steps to be taken for EU integration. One year later, in 1995, the Madrid European Council introduced a new pre-condition for accession: the capacity of the candidate states to adjust their administrative and judicial structures, one of the laggard sectors for Romanian reforms. In the same

year, in April, Romania signed the Stability Pact for Europe, committing to minority rights protection, a document made reference to in the European Parliament's threat to 'disqualify Romania from joining the EU'[31] stirred by the discriminatory educational law passed by the national legislature.

The warning had immediate results by postponing the application of the law. The reasoning behind this endeavour was clear at the domestic level. Understanding the importance of the moment, all fourteen Romanian political parties signed the so-called 'Snagov Declaration,' showing their support for the accession process. On the international scene, this threat brought into play a multitude of factors: the actual power of the EU to reject one country's effort towards accession, with all the economic implications derived, was the principal one; on political grounds, such an explicit sanction threat reflected the international influence and reputation that the EU had acquired as a regional player. In 1995, the Romanian government sent its application for membership to the EU, being the third country from the post-communist bloc to submit it after Hungary and Poland. In the domestic arena, the actors' rhetoric was informally structured around the "European integration" ever since the fall of communism and formally acknowledged from 1993 onwards. The influence of the European Community, and later on, that of the EU has considerably shaped the democratisation process in Romania.

Conclusions

This account aimed to reveal the extent to which the external engagement shaped the development of Romania in the early 1990s, through the prism of the 'sticks' and 'carrots' employed by the CSCE/OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the EC/EU. Using a social constructivist approach, I argued that the Romanian democratic trajectory was strongly influenced by the role of multilateral institutions operating in the region after the overthrow of communism. Never before have so many international actors been involved actively in one region for overcoming transitional difficulties as in the early 1990s in CEE and never before had the European integration prospect been offered in such a short time span to countries struggling with social, political and economic hardships.

The intertwined influence and monitoring role of all these major regional actors determined the shift from logic of consequentiality to-

wards the logic of appropriateness driving the domestic political actors. By inducing the direction and the nature of this turning point, the international institutions ensured that the Central and Eastern European transitions would result in democratisation. However, the shift from the logic of consequences to the logic of appropriateness has not been smooth. As unveiled by the historical examples provided, domestic political interests continued to play an important role up to 1993, when the mechanisms of conditionality became stronger. As the priority of international involvement in the region was originally defined in terms of value convergence, the transformation of transitional governments in democratising agents proved to be a strenuous process in which the influence of external actors was neither constant, nor uniform.

At the same time, the regional organisations active in CEE pursued overlapping strategies, in particular with regards to the protection of ethnic minorities and legislative reforms. Consequently, the image of the international community at that point in time was not one of a homogenous actor; in effect, most initiatives at the regional level acted independent of each other, seeking complementary outcomes only in a limited number of cases. Moreover, the leverage of international compulsion was different in terms of the types of responses required. Thus, to the CSCE/OSCE constant attention and monitoring towards managing ethnic tensions, Romanian elites exerted a slow adaptation and delayed the implementation of recommended reforms. Transitional vulnerability and the deterioration of human rights conditions in the country additionally postponed Romania's membership in the Council of Europe until 1993. Building on its initial approach towards the CEE transitional governments, the EU set in place strict accession criteria promoting democratic values. As such, the prospect of membership 'had a positive impact in preventing further outbreaks of ethnic and nationalist violence.'[32]

Moreover, in the case of Romania, the dynamics surrounding the prospect of 'partnership' proved to be very different from the prospect of full membership in multilateral institutions. This transitional experience in the aftermath of a violent revolution emphasised the difficulty of enshrining respect for human rights in the context of simultaneous socio-economic transformations. In that sense, there are many similarities with the current trajectory of Arab Spring countries, where initially peaceful protests turning into armed violence and the negotiations for regime change did not necessarily bring about a move

towards democratisation. As sectarian, ethnic and economic tensions continue to make victims in countries swept by change after the Arab Spring revolutions, the role of IGOs needs to be reconsidered. Regional grouping, such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, can build new strategies informed by the experiences of the external involvement towards democratisation in CEE.

Roxana Radu is affiliated to the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva (Switzerland) and may be reached at: *roxana.radu@graduateinstitute.ch*

Notes

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