



# Is corruption an enemy of civil society? The case of Central and Eastern Europe

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## Abstract

In examining post-communist countries, it becomes apparent that civil society is durable in certain countries and fragile in others. One then asks: What factors contribute to this condition? Many of the theorists in the post-communist literature argue that socioeconomic factors and the communist legacy have weakened post-communist civil society. The article explores the following question: Has corruption replaced the legacy of communism as a factor undermining trust in others and government? The theory proposed in this article implies a break from previous studies on the weakness of post-communist civil society, arguing that corruption has been a major factor in undermining civil society in the region. The article presents a rigorous examination of the association between corruption and post-communist civil society by focusing on the impact of political corruption on trust and, hence, post-communist civil society.

## Keywords

corruption, post-communist civil society, interpersonal trust, trust in government

## 1. Introduction

Much of the literature on civil society in Central and Eastern Europe acknowledges the relative weakening of civil society in the region, especially when compared with the heyday of civil society in 1989–91 (Badescu et al., 2004; Howard, 2002; Smolar, 1996). What factors could have contributed to the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe? Several early scholars credited the weakening of communist civil society to the nature of the communist system and its socialization effects on individuals in their formative years. In the case of the communist system, many individuals during the communist era were socialized into distrusting institutions (Badescu et al., 2004; Howard, 2002; Mishler and Rose, 1997, 2001). Interestingly, Howard (2002) contends that citizens in this region have a peculiar apathy toward joining civic associations which is partially rooted in the communist legacy of distrust of organizations. This environment of distrust

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stems from the communist era, when participation in state-controlled organizations was mandatory and lacked the true essence of what civil society is supposed to represent. Wheaton and Kavan (1992) suggest that the legacies of communism have led individuals to withdraw from the private sphere and, instead, to turn to 'inner emigration.' Owing to their negative experiences of organizations during the communist era, citizens have continued to distrust any sort of organization. Badescu et al. (2004) maintain that distrust is generally the main factor preventing individuals from participating in civic associations in Romania. For example, Romanians distrust each other as well as political authorities, and this stems from their decades-long negative experiences under communist rule. Much of the literature has suggested that the legacy of communism has also undermined the development of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. However, this theoretical argument is no longer plausible because it has been years since the first democratic transition took place. A new, post-communist generation, which does not have the same legacy and experience of communism as its predecessors, is now active in civil society. Thus, it is expected that this new, post-communist generation will behave differently toward civil society, since it lacks a formative experience with the legacy of communism and its effects on civil society. However, with a glance at the European Values Survey group membership questionnaire, it becomes apparent that the post-communist generation can also be apathetic toward civil society. What contributes to such behavior if the legacy of communism no longer applies?

Mishler and Rose (1997) question the effect of the communist legacy on civil society, and instead suggest that the declining macroeconomic conditions of the region, such as the declining living standard, have been the primary factors contributing to distrust in civic organizations and political institutions. Badescu et al. (2004: 324) additionally claim that a lack of resources and skills has contributed to the weakening of civil society since 1991; the authors argue that 'the more wealth a country has, the higher its share of group members.' In terms of skill, Badescu et al. (2004: 325) note that when controlling for wealth, the level of education plays a critical role in determining group members. From that viewpoint, the authors concluded that the 'new participatory elite,' which comprises highly educated individuals, is more active in civic associations than their counterparts in Romania and Moldova. Smolar (1996: 26) raised another interesting argument for the weakening of civil society by arguing that civil society's 'activists moved en masse into government and business, leaving a plethora of associations, human rights groups, independent publishing concerns, and informal educational institutions without enough people to keep them going.' Thus, following the revolution, civil society failed to institutionalize, and this condition can partially explain the low levels of civic activity in the post-transition period.

In addition to the legacies of communism and economic decline, Howard (2002) claims that the persistence of close networks of friendship has had the significant effect of social disengagement and has thereby prevented true civic association from thriving in the region. Howard (2002) notes that in Central and Eastern Europe the public sphere is highly politicized, and such an environment acts as a roadblock to civic participation: essentially, the lack of trust in political institutions as a result of communism has pushed citizens to engage more in close networks of friendship, as opposed to large organized groups. On a similar note, Badescu et al. (2004) claim that the communist regime discouraged and fiercely controlled any form of collective action in the region, thereby conditioning individuals to turn to family and close friendships for association, rather than to civil society. Building on the concept of distrust, the authors also suggest that individuals refrain from taking part in civil society because of their lack of trust in others. In Romania, for example, the authors argue that the lack of trust in others, especially in minority counterparts, has contributed to

a lack of engagement in civic activities. The present study will aim to build on the existing literature on civil society by focusing on the following questions. What role does corruption play in civil society in Central and Eastern Europe? Has a culture of corruption replaced the legacy of communism as a factor weakening civil society in the region? Does corruption reduce trust in others and in government, in turn pushing individuals away from civil societies? Is there a generational difference? Are post-communist generations less inclined to take part in civil society?

## 2. Theoretical argument

The existing literature on civil society attributes the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe to a lack of trust in government, due to the legacy of communism as well as to socioeconomic failures. However, this theory overlooks the fact that a lively culture of corruption in the region is a possible culprit in weakening civil society. For the purpose of this article, corruption will be conceptualized as the 'misuse of public office for private gain' (Sandholtz and Koetzle, 2000: 32). This conceptualization of corruption is a widely accepted definition in the literature, thus the article will follow this understanding of corruption. Corruption can be found in any political and economic system; however, the degree of corruption varies from one country to another.

According to the literature, civil society rests on the idea of common values and shared goals, whereby all associations depend on horizontal trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 1993). Following this logic, a large amount of trust among individuals will have a multiplier effect on associational activities, and also lead to greater reciprocity, which will allow for cooperation for mutual gain. The idea of trust is categorized into two types: generalized and particularized. Generalized trust is that found generally among strangers, where it intersects cleavages of ethnicity, family, class, and religion. On the other hand, particularized trust is that found amid intimate groups and does not intersect cleavages in society. With the former type, civil society can easily be established; more importantly, civil society is inclusive, whereas the latter type of trust is exclusive in nature as ethnic, family, class, and religious identities are used as a basis for trust. Since trust is an integral part of civil society, the article posits that the interaction between corruption and trust will alter the relationship between trust and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. The article will examine two forms of trust: trust in others and trust in national government.

With respect to trust in others, the study suggests that the amount of trust individuals have in others will determine their willingness to participate in civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. When trust in others is low, for example, the study predicts that individuals will be reluctant to take part in civil society; in contrast, when trust in others is high, individuals will be more open toward civil society. This proposition follows in line with the claims made in the literature about interpersonal trust and civil society. Howard (2002) points out that individuals in Central and Eastern Europe do not take part in civil society, because of their lack of trust in others; rather, individuals prefer to engage with family members and close friends. The main premise of the study is that corruption has a meaningful causal effect on the level of trust in others, especially with respect to societies with cross cleavages and where particularized trust is present. Thus, the study will test the interaction between the perception of corruption and the level of interpersonal trust and its impact on civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

The article will also argue that the level of trust in political institutions is contingent on the perception of corruption, which affects attitudes toward civil society. Much of the literature has argued that the region is predisposed to distrust political and social institutions because of the long

history of communism and its end product. This line of argument would have been plausible immediately following the collapse of communism; however, the legacy of communism fails to account for the weakening of civil society in the years since the first transition. Civil societies in Central and Eastern Europe are now being led by new generations who are either too young to remember the legacy of communism or were born after the collapse of communism. In essence, the legacy of communism, which produced distrust in institutions, cannot be applied as the causal factor leading to the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. If the legacy of communism fails to account for the weakening of civil society, then what other factor can explain this situation? The answer to this question is simple and yet complex at the same time: corruption has replaced communism as a causal factor affecting trust in society and, in turn, impacting civil society. The recent literature on the individual level of corruption has emphasized that the lack of interpersonal and political trust is considerable, due to the perception of corruption in society (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Chang and Chu, 2006; Diamond, 2000; Rothstein and Eek, 2009; Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). To be more specific, La Porta et al. (1997) suggest that societies with low levels of trust tend to have higher levels of corruption; correspondingly, Morris and Klesner (2010) find that low levels of trust in society tend to cultivate corruption. Others have reversed the causal mechanisms by arguing that corruption erodes the level of interpersonal and political trust in society (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Chang and Chu, 2006). Thus, the causal arrow between corruption and trust can move in both directions; however, for the purpose of this article the causal arrow will be as follows: *Trust in others/Political trust* → *Corruption* → *Civil society*.

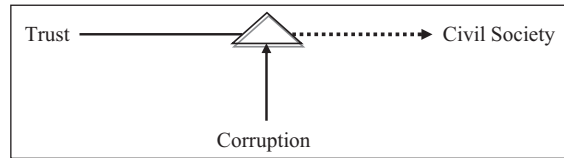
The way in which the perception of corruption intermingles with trust can be clearly seen; therefore, when considering civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, it becomes apparent that trust is a critical factor in the equation. The study will follow the already established causal link between corruption and trust in the literature, and in addition to that relationship, the study will include civil society. This study will develop and empirically test a corruption–trust–civil-society theory in Central and Eastern Europe. The corruption–trust–civil-society theory developed in the study consists of two interrelated causal mechanisms adopted from recent work on corruption and trust. First, political corruption will generate mistrust, pessimism, and cynicism toward political institutions and any other entities related to a corrupt government. Second, this situation will lead the public to have a negative perception of government and institutions, leading citizens to be less inclined to participate in politics and civic organizations. In other words, corruption will have a deeply depressing effect on civil society through its impact on interpersonal and political trust. The public will therefore conclude that corruption is a way of life in the region and that engagement in civic life to alter the status quo is futile. The article will examine the relationship between corruption and political trust, and the implications this relationship has for civil society.

Subsequently, the argument that the legacy of communism also undermines the development of civil society is found to be no longer relevant to understanding civil society in the region. Thus, the article proposes that the legacy of communism, in terms of its effect on trust, has been replaced with corruption (see Figure 1). Thus, the article intends to test how this new legacy of corruption interacts with trust and alters the behavior of the post-communist generation with respect to civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

The study will test the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1:* An increase in the public perception of corruption is expected to decrease participation in civil society.

*Hypothesis 2:* Individuals with a high level of trust in others are more likely to engage in civil society.



**Figure 1.** Basic Assumption of the Argument.

Note: Within this model corruption modifies the relationship between trust and civil society.

*Hypothesis 3:* An increase in confidence in the national government is expected to increase participation in civil society.<sup>1</sup>

*Hypothesis 4:* An increasing perception of corruption interacting with interpersonal trust is expected to weaken the relationship between trust and civil society.

*Hypothesis 5:* An increasing perception of corruption interacting with confidence in government is expected to weaken the relationship between confidence and civil society.

*Hypothesis 6:* The post-communist generation should be more engaged in civil society than the communist generation since the former did not experience the socialization effects of communism.

### 3. Methodology

The analysis uses multilevel data to verify the empirical proposition about corruption, trust, and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the study utilizes a cross-sectional analysis of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe in 2008. The dependent variable of interest is civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, which will be drawn from the European Values Study (EVS).<sup>2</sup> The EVS contains several questions that examine whether individuals are members of various organizations.<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of the study, civil society will be categorized into five categories: socially oriented groups, activism groups, economically oriented groups, politically oriented groups, and other types of groups.<sup>4</sup> The study breaks from the existing literature on civil society by undertaking a micro-level analysis of civil society.

The first independent variable is political and interpersonal trust, in Central and Eastern Europe, which is drawn from the EVS. With respect to political trust, it addresses the extent to which individuals have confidence in national government,<sup>5</sup> while interpersonal trust addresses the amount of trust individuals have for others in society.<sup>6</sup> The second independent variable is the perception of corruption. The study utilizes Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which defines corruption as 'the misuse of public power for private benefit, for example bribing of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement, or embezzlement of public funds' (Lambsdorff, 2008: 4).<sup>7</sup> To understand how the perception of corruption influences civil society, the study undertakes two estimates of the relationship between the perception of corruption and civil society. First, the perception of corruption is tested against civil society alone, and second, the perception of corruption is tested as an interaction term between the perception of corruption and the trust and confidence variables.

To measure the degree of generational difference, the study will include a generation dummy variable, in which the post-communist generation is between 17 and 25 years old.<sup>8</sup> The study assumes that political socialization, particularly communist socialization of distrust in institutions, was more robust in 1922–85, and eventually was weakened in 1985 through the domestic reform policies (perestroika and glasnost) initiated by Gorbachev. Conversely, the countries of the former Yugoslav Republic were not part of the Warsaw Pact, and so Gorbachev's reforms had no

implications for their respective regimes. Thus, individuals between the ages of 17 and 25 have been the least influenced by communist socialization, particularly those individuals born in the 1980s.

In order to assess the performance of the independent variables of interest, the study includes a set of control variables designed to account for alternative explanations of civil society performance in post-communist Europe. That is, in order to understand the relationship between corruption, civil society, and trust, the study needs to identify and control for the well-established causal factors associated with civil society. The necessary control variables for this study are as follows: gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, political rights, civil liberties, gender, employment status, education, Polity score, legal environment, financial viability, organizational capacity, and satisfaction with democracy.<sup>9</sup>

### *3.1. Model specification*

The study contains a multilevel dataset, which includes latent variables and continuous, dichotomous, ordered and unordered responses. Since the dataset is multilevel, the study will employ a Generalized Linear Latent and Mixed Models (GLLAMM) structure. The GLLAMM is an add-on to the STATA statistical program, which fits generalized linear latent and mixed models.<sup>10</sup> Within the GLLAMM, the study included a moderation effect in order to capture both the interaction between the perception of corruption, trust in others, and confidence in the government as well as its effects on civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. The study follows Baron and Kenny (1986) in interpreting the moderator effect for a continuous moderator and a categorical causal variable. In order to follow Baron and Kenny's interpretation of the moderator effect, the CPI was centered on its mean.

## **4. Empirical results and discussion**

In this section, the article presents and analyzes the data. The presentation of the empirical findings proceeds in four stages. First, the article provides statistical results that confirm the direct causal mechanism between the perception of corruption, trust in others, confidence in government, and civil society, thus confirming hypotheses 1–4. Second, the article provides statistical results that confirm the moderation effect between the perception of corruption, trust in others, confidence in government, and civil society, thus confirming hypotheses 4 and 5. Third, the article will examine the post-communist generation and its level of participation, and in doing so confirm hypothesis 6. Finally, since it departs from the existing explanations of the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, the study devised and tested several rival explanations in order to distinguish clearly the underlying causal mechanisms between the perception of corruption and civil society.<sup>11</sup> The results indicate that different paths exist for various civil society groups; these particular findings shed additional light on civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

### *4.1. Direct causal mechanism*

The first hypothesis predicts that an increase in the public perception of corruption is expected to weaken civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. Table 1 displays the estimates for the direct causal mechanism between the perception of corruption and socially oriented civil society groups. The effect of corruption measured by the CPI appears to be only statistically (and

**Table 1.** GLLAMM Estimates of Civil Society Membership: Social groups.

	Direct models					
	Welfare	Religious	Cultural	Youth	Women	Community
CPI	-.697 (.145)***	-.134 (.245)	-.663 (.221)***	-.342 (.220)	-.495 (.167)***	-.538 (.350)
Trust in others	.104 (.097)	.293 (.070)***	.292 (.068)***	.349 (.093)***	.005 (.117)	.004 (.136)
Confidence in government	.930 (.041)***	.751 (.039)***	.799 (.041)***	.948 (.042)***	.999 (.041)***	1.05 (.045)***
GDP per capita (lagged)	-5.06 (.0000)	.0009 (.00006)	.00006 (.00006)	.00007 (.00006)	.00006 (.00005)	-0.0002 (.00009)*
Civil liberties	-.056 (.348)	.293 (.490)	.973 (.441)**	.234 (.463)	.458 (.395)	-1.92 (.785)**
Political rights	.879 (.233)***	.318 (.340)	.456 (.301)	.863 (.313)***	.813 (.259)***	2.01 (.536)***
Polity score	.012 (.007)*	.015 (.009)*	.030 (.008)***	.023 (.008)***	.007 (.007)	.006 (.014)
Legal environment	.574 (.143)***	.205 (.197)	.069 (.174)	.113 (.184)	.333 (.165)**	.521 (.266)**
Financial viability	-.701 (.183)***	.319 (.383)	-.632 (.250)***	-.335 (.253)	-.569 (.203)***	-.005 (.368)
Organizational capacity	.470 (.242)**	-.972 (.341)***	.598 (.289)**	-.037 (.301)	.032 (.268)	-.067 (.427)
Democratic satisfaction	.136 (.058)**	.117 (.042)***	.186 (.043)***	.132 (.057)**	.137 (.067)**	.096 (.073)
Employed	-.365 (.086)***	-.262 (.063)***	.178 (.065)***	.158 (.088)*	-.180 (.042)***	.214 (.114)*
Education	.151 (.035)***	.003 (.027)	.441 (.027)***	.327 (.037)***	.131 (.042)***	.178 (.046)***
Generation difference	-.776 (.149)***	-.369 (.093)***	.803 (.075)***	1.34 (.092)***	-.660 (.167)***	-.616 (.186)***
System-level variance	.038 (.025)	.113 (.047)	.085 (.043)	.074 (.042)	.037 (.029)	.161 (.087)
Number of Observations	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331

Notes: \*  $\rho < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $\rho < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $\rho < 0.01$  (one-tailed test).

negatively) significant with respect to membership of welfare, cultural, and women's groups, thereby indicating that a one-unit increase in the perception of corruption decreases group membership. This conclusion supports hypothesis 1 with respect to the socially oriented groups.<sup>12</sup>

The next step is the testing of the direct causal mechanism between trust in others and civil society as well as confidence in government and civil society. In this section, work by Howard (2002), Badescu et al. (2004), and Mishler and Rose (1997) on trust and civil society will serve as a foundation for analysis of the linkage between trust in others, confidence in government, and civil society. Hypothesis 2 predicts that a high degree of trust in others is likely to strengthen civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. The results of the estimates in Table 1 show that among

the socially oriented groups tested it was religious, cultural, women's, and youth groups that achieved statistical significance. The statistical findings indicate that a unit increase in the trust-in-others variable increases membership of religious, cultural, women's, and youth groups. Accordingly, trust in others leads to high membership of these four socially oriented groups, *ceteris paribus* for all other variables; this outcome was consistent with Howard (2002). Thus, hypothesis 2 with respect to religious, cultural, and youth groups was supported by the statistical results of the study. Hypothesis 3 predicts that confidence in government, which is a proxy for trust in government, will strengthen civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. As the results show, all socially oriented civil society groups achieved positive statistical significance, indicating that a one-unit increase in confidence in government increases the membership of socially oriented groups. In comparing the estimates for trust in others and confidence in government, it is clear that the magnitude of this effect is greater in the latter estimates, meaning that confidence in government plays a more critical role in determining group membership than trust in others. In the earlier literature, Mishler and Rose (1997) suggest that the communist legacy, which breeds distrust, is the underlying factor for a passive attitude toward civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. However, this line of argument can no longer be applied to the current situation, as much of the legacy of communism is mere history for many living in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. What, then, could explain the weakening of civil society that many assert is occurring in the region? The study proposed an alternative hypothesis for this weakening of civil society by contending that a culture of corruption is replacing the legacy of communism as a means of creating distrust, and ultimately causing apathy toward civil society. This interaction between corruption, trust in others, confidence in government, and civil society is dealt with elsewhere in this article.<sup>13</sup>

Table 2 displays the estimates for the direct causal mechanism between the perception of corruption and economically oriented civil society groups in Central and Eastern Europe. The table displays both direct causal mechanism models and moderation models. However, only discussion of the direct effect will be undertaken at the present time, and the moderation effect will be dealt with elsewhere in the article. The estimates in Table 2 imply that trade union and professional organization membership achieved statistical significance. In particular, the estimate yields that a unit increase in the perception of corruption decreases trade union membership. Thus, if the perception of corruption were to decline over time, then membership of these groups would increase, *ceteris paribus* for all other variables. Hypothesis 1 with respect to membership of trade unions and professional organizations was supported by the statistical findings of the study.

Table 2 indicates that confidence in government performed better than trust in others; more importantly, confidence in government achieved statistical significance in both trade union membership and professional organization membership, whereas trust in others only did so with respect to membership of professional organizations. It is entirely possible that an increase in confidence in government raises trade union and professional organization membership, which is in fact what hypothesis 3 predicted. Interestingly, the findings for economically oriented groups mirrored the findings for socially oriented groups, which boosts support for the overall theoretical arguments made in this article. Additionally, the magnitude of the effect for confidence in government was again more robust than for trust in others. Thus, it can be presumed from these results that when individuals in Central and Eastern Europe have confidence in their government, this makes them more interested in civil society groups. So far, the results suggest that the perception of corruption has a negative relationship with civil society groups that are considered to be for private good; that



**Table 2.** GLLAMM Estimates of Civil Society Membership: Economic groups.

	Direct models		Moderation models	
	Trade unions	Professional organizations	Trade unions	Professional organizations
CPI	-.216 (.103)**	-.756 (.099)***	-.392 (.133)***	-.633 (.147)***
Trust in others	.016 (.076)	.259 (.092)***	.042 (.077)	.223 (.097)**
CPI*Trust			.118 (.064)*	-.079 (.074)
Confidence in government	.824 (.042)***	.951 (.043)	.684 (.050)***	.818 (.050)***
CPI*Confidence			.280 (.043)***	.255 (.042)***
GDP per capita (lagged)	.00006 (.00002)**	-.00005 (.00003)	.00005 (.0003)**	-.00004 (.00003)
Civil liberties	.564 (.191)***	-.038 (.232)	.542 (.189)***	-.013 (.231)
Political rights	-.179 (.130)	.731 (.150)***	-.204 (.130)	.667 (.150)***
Polity score	.017 (.004)***	.015 (.005)***	.017 (.004)***	.017 (.005)***
Legal environment	.013 (.081)	.216 (.093)***	.019 (.081)	.190 (.094)**
Financial viability	-.045 (.119)	-.441 (.134)***	-.044 (.118)	-.434 (.133)***
Organizational capacity	.345 (.141)***	.728 (.159)***	.352 (.140)***	.718 (.160)***
Democratic satisfaction	.048 (.046)	.070 (.057)	.048 (.046)	.074 (.058)
Employed	1.61 (.088)***	.763 (.097)***	1.64 (.090)***	.784 (.098)***
Education	.193 (.028)***	.506 (.035)***	.199 (.028)***	.510 (.035)***
Generation difference	-.959 (.136)***	-.422 (.144)***	-.989 (.138)***	-.437 (.147)***
System-level variance	.016 (.014)	1.61 (9.70)	.015 (.014)	2.63 (.00002)
Number of Observations	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331

Notes: \*  $\rho < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $\rho < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $\rho < 0.01$  (one-tailed test).

is, the group may have rivals and the benefits exclude nonmembers. Thus, corruption tends to weaken civil society where the financial interests and well-being of its members are the group's upmost goal. This sheds light on the study of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, especially when many claim that civil society has weakened significantly in the post-transition era. Thus, the study calls for a disaggregated examination of civil society.

**Table 3.** GLLAMM Estimates of Civil Society Membership: Activism groups.

	Direct models		Moderation models	
	Development/human rights	Environment	Development/human rights	Environment
CPI	-.444 (.359)	-.657 (.166)***	.351 (.441)	-.885 (.206)***
Trust in others	-.088 (.223)	.251 (.102)***	-.147 (.228)	.292 (.103)***
CPI*Trust			-.547 (.173)***	.160 (.082)**
Confidence in government	1.34 (.049)***	1.05 (.042)***	1.33 (.052)***	.997 (.044)***
CPI*Confidence			.054 (.043)	.120 (.037)***
GDP per capita (lagged)	-.00003 (.00009)	-5.48 (.00005)	6.92 (.00009)	-5.05 (.00005)
Civil liberties	-.311 (.756)	-.048 (.402)	-.196 (.722)	-.047 (.414)
Political rights	.670 (.513)	.989 (.269)***	.597 (.490)	.979 (.279)***
Polity score	.004 (.014)	.015 (.008)**	.007 (.013)	.016 (.008)**
Legal environment	.867 (.302)***	.345 (.156)**	.800 (.288)***	.341 (.162)**
Financial viability	-.773 (.406)*	-.540 (.194)***	-.739 (.377)**	-.538 (.200)***
Organizational capacity	.790 (.501)	.412 (.259)	.694 (.476)	.414 (.268)
Democratic satisfaction	.048 (.122)	.175 (.062)***	.052 (.123)	.176 (.062)***
Employed	.080 (.190)	.195 (.039)***	.102 (.191)	.199 (.095)**
Education	.133 (.078)**	.171 (.039)***	.107 (.078)	.178 (.039)***
Generation difference	.060 (.247)	.360 (.118)	.108 (.247)	.358 (.118)***
System-level variance	.099 (.082)	.049 (.032)	.071 (.070)	.055 (.034)
Number of Observations	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331

Notes: \*  $\rho < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $\rho < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $\rho < 0.01$  (one-tailed test).

Table 3 presents the results for activism groups. The interaction between activism groups and the perception of corruption was inconsistent: the estimates in Table 3 imply that only environmental groups achieved statistical significance, whereas development and human rights groups failed to do so. Again, as with the socially and economically oriented civil society groups above, corruption achieved positive statistical significance. A negative sign in Table 3

indicates that the explanatory and predictor variables travel in the opposite direction, meaning that as the perception of corruption increases, this will likely reduce individual membership of environmental groups. This outcome gives new insight to the existing debate in the literature about the weakening of civil society. Since the late 1990s, and especially following the leadership role taken by the European Union in negotiating the Climate Change Convention, European countries have taken a significant stride forward to become international leaders in environmental politics. Thus, many European countries, including ones in Central and Eastern Europe, have taken an active role in environmental issues, and this move has spilled over into the public sphere (such as environmental groups). Examining corruption alongside environmental group membership shows that individuals are less inclined to take part in these groups when the government is perceived to be corrupt. Even though the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between corruption, trust, and civil society in order to gain a better understanding of the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, this particular finding opens avenues for future research. This call for new research could take multiple forms, but mainly this finding shows that contextual factors play a significant role in civil society participation, in Central and Eastern Europe.

Regarding trust in others and confidence in government, the results were mixed for environmental groups and for development and human rights groups. Table 3 indicates that development and human rights groups as well as environmental groups achieved positive statistical significance, meaning that an increase in confidence in government increases group membership. Hypothesis 2, with respect to environmental group membership, was supported by the statistical findings, and hypothesis 3 was supported by the statistical results of the study with respect to development and human rights groups as well as environmental groups. In terms of environmental groups, this outcome is analogous to that established between corruption and environmental groups, in that governments play an important role in whether individuals will participate in environmental groups.

The results for the direct causal mechanism between the perception of corruption and other types of civil society groups are much weaker, such that only political groups achieved statistical significance (see Table 4). This particular finding shows that membership of political groups declined as the perception of corruption increased. In sum, hypothesis 1 with respect to political groups was supported by the findings of the study. Only confidence in government achieved statistical significance, such that greater confidence increases the likelihood of membership of volunteer health organizations, political groups, and other groups. Again, as in the previous models, hypothesis 3 was supported by the statistical results, whereas the results failed to support hypothesis 2. In summary, the direct causal mechanism models illustrate interesting patterns: that trust in others played a minimal role in group membership, while at the same time, confidence in government, which was a proxy for trust in government, played a very critical role in group membership. The other pattern indicated by the results of the study is that the perception of corruption played a different role when measured against various types of civil society groups. In the remainder of this article, an examination of the moderation effect, the post-communist-generation effect, and rival explanations will be undertaken.

#### *4.2. Moderation effect*

To identify the interaction effect of the perception of corruption and the predictor variables (trust in others and confidence in government) on civil society, the following section will discuss the results for the moderator tests as interpreted by Baron and Kenny (1986). The study theorizes that the perception of corruption will influence the strength of the relationship between the predictor

**Table 4.** GLLAMM Estimates of Civil Society Membership: Other groups.

	Direct models			Moderation models		
	Volunteer health organization	Other	Political groups	Volunteer health organization	Other	Political groups
CPI	-.091 (.269)	-.209 (.153)	-.617 (.271)**	-.037 (.298)	-.283 (.191)	-.624 (.291)**
Trust in others	.035 (.123)	-.044 (.096)	-.047 (.088)	-.002 (.133)	-.027 (.101)	-.048 (.091)
CPI*Trust				-.065 (.101)	.058 (.082)	-.0004 (.075)
Confidence in government	1.07 (.042)***	.828 (.041)***	.741 (.040)***	1.04 (.043)***	.705 (.049)***	.713 (.049)***
CPI*Confidence				.135 (.038)***	.253 (.043)***	.051 (.038)
GDP per capita (lagged)	-.0001 (.00007)	.0001 (.00004)***	-.00009 (.00007)	.0001 (.00007)	.0002 (.00005)***	-.00009 (.00007)
Civil liberties	-.099 (.558)	.548 (.327)*	-.324 (.573)	-.082 (.545)	.568 (.335)*	-.324 (.573)
Political rights	.578 (.377)	.502 (.223)**	1.28 (.392)***	.540 (.369)	.460 (.229)**	1.28 (.391)***
Polity score	.013 (.010)	.021 (.006)***	.007 (.010)	.013 (.010)	.021 (.007)***	.006 (.010)
Legal environment	.370 (.209)*	.027 (.137)	.420 (.222)*	.365 (.205)*	-.010 (.142)	.421 (.224)*
Financial viability	.162 (.288)	-.286 (.177)	-.191 (.289)	.159 (.281)	-.279 (.182)	-.193 (.289)
Organizational capacity	-.065 (.348)	-.059 (.223)	-.189 (.301)	-.085 (.342)	-.071 (.229)	.194 (.303)
Democratic satisfaction	.099 (.071)	.144 (.056)***	.191 (.048)***	.099 (.071)	.145 (.056)***	.191 (.048)***
Employed	.120 (.108)	-.068 (.083)	.235 (.075)***	.129 (.107)	-.060 (.083)	.237 (.076)***
Education	.249 (.044)***	.097 (.035)***	.287 (.031)***	.249 (.044)***	.102 (.035)***	.288 (.031)***
Generation difference	-.055 (.149)	-.193 (.121)	-.310 (.110)***	-.055 (.150)	-.205 (.122)	-.311 (.110)***
System-level variance	.094 (.054)	.027 (.019)	.136 (.062)	.088 (.052)	.029 (.020)	.138 (.057)
Number of observations	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331

Notes: \*  $\rho < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $\rho < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $\rho < 0.01$  (one-tailed test).

**Table 5.** GLLAMM Estimates of Civil Society Membership: Social groups.

	Moderation models					
	Welfare	Religious	Cultural	Youth	Women	Community
CPI	-.513 (.177)***	.136 (.258)	-.531 (.235)**	-.205 (.250)	-.101 (.205)	-.538 (.350)
Trust in others	.037 (.106)	.251 (.072)***	.258 (.072)***	.326 (.095)***	-.091 (.125)	.035 (.130)
CPI*Trust	-.131 (.070)*	-.189 (.062)***	-.091 (.058)	-.093 (.079)	-.280 (.095)***	-.128 (.107)
Confidence in government	.840 (.045)***	.693 (.043)***	.748 (.044)***	.876 (.047)***	.935 (.045)***	1.02 (.047)***
CPI*Government	.203 (.038)***	.130 (.036)***	.106 (.035)***	.167 (.039)***	.162 (.038)***	.126 (.040)***
GDP per capita (lagged)	3.48 (.00004)	.00009 (.00006)	.00007 (.00006)	.00008 (.0006)	.00008 (.00004)*	-.0002 (.00009)*
Civil liberties	-.042 (.330)	.311 (.483)	.981 (.436)**	.264 (.464)	.511 (.366)	-1.92 (.785)*
Political rights	.818 (.222)***	.287 (.335)	.438 (.298)	.842 (.315)***	.744 (.240)***	2.01 (.536)***
Polity score	.012 (.007)*	.015 (.009)*	.030 (.008)***	.023 (.009)***	.007 (.006)	.006 (.014)
Legal environment	.546 (.137)***	.188 (.194)	.057 (.172)	.086 (.185)	.286 (.155)*	.521 (.266)**
Financial viability	-.674 (.171)***	.330 (.279)	-.626 (.248)***	-.334 (.253)	-.534 (.185)**	-.005 (.368)
Organizational capacity	.432 (.232)*	-.992 (.339)***	.588 (.287)**	-.050 (.302)	-.025 (.253)	-.067 (.427)
Democratic satisfaction	.136 (.058)**	.118 (.042)***	.185 (.043)***	.130 (.058)**	.140 (.068)**	.096 (.073)
Employed	-.358 (.086)***	-.259 (.063)***	.181 (.065)***	.162 (.089)*	-.169 (.103)***	.214 (.114)*
Education	.147 (.035)***	-.003 (.027)	.439 (.027)***	.328 (.038)***	.123 (.043)***	.178 (.046)***
Generation difference	-.795 (.151)***	-.368 (.093)***	.807 (.075)***	1.35 (.092)***	-.663 (.169)***	-.616 (.186)***
System-level variance	.031 (.024)	.109 (.046)	.083 (.042)	.075 (.043)	.026 (.026)	.161 (.087)
Number of observations	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331	24,331

Notes: \*  $\rho < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $\rho < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $\rho < 0.01$  (one-tailed test).

variables and civil society. Hypothesis 4 predicts that the public perception of corruption interacting with trust in others will weaken civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. Table 5 displays the estimates for the moderation effect for socially oriented civil society groups. The moderation tests for socially oriented civil society groups achieved statistical significance for welfare, religious, and women's groups. Since the coefficient for the moderator variable is negative, this indicates that the

effect of trust on these groups tends to decrease as the perception of corruption increases. To summarize this finding, the conditional effect of the perception of corruption as a moderator effect alters the strength of the causal relationship between trust in others and welfare groups by lessening the magnitude of the effect of trust in others on these groups. Accordingly, as trust in others interacts with an increasing perception of corruption, this leads these groups to decrease at a faster rate; therefore, increased corruption leads individuals to engage less in these types of civil society groups. Hence, the outcomes for welfare, religious, and women's groups support hypothesis 4, which proposed that such interaction would lead to the weakening of civil society. Interestingly, these types of civil society groups follow the logic of generalized trust in that they operate across cleavages of class, race, ethnicity, and clan (where it is much easier to form associations). However because of the altering effect of corruption, the effect of generalized trust failed to ensue.

On the other hand, hypothesis 5 predicts that the public perception of corruption interacting with confidence in government will weaken civil society. With respect to socially oriented civil society groups, the perception-of-corruption moderator achieved positive statistical significance, meaning that the casual relationship between confidence in government and civil society was strengthened when corruption was accounted for in this model. Contrary to the study's initial expectation about the relationship between corruption, confidence in government, and civil society, the opposite occurred here. Surprisingly, this implies that the effect of confidence in government on socially oriented civil society groups increases as the perception of corruption increases in society. This outcome brings a twist as well as a challenge to the prediction made in the study and suggests that further research is needed to examine the role of corruption regarding civil society. Thus, hypothesis 5 did not find support in the statistical results.

In addition, the results for economically orientated groups are very interesting. The results are presented in Table 2. Strikingly, the results present a different picture from the one theorized in the study. With respect to trust in others, only the moderation coefficient for trade unions achieved positive statistical significance. This outcome indicates that the effect of interpersonal trust on union membership is strengthened when perceptions of corruption increase. The magnitude of this effect for professional organizations is trivial though. Unlike the direct causal relationship between corruption and trade union membership, with the moderation approach corruption has the opposite effect on civil society. Interestingly, this outcome regarding the perception of corruption as a moderator was also established with confidence in government. Evidence shows that the positive moderator increases the causal relationship between confidence in government and the economically orientated groups when corruption increases. Although hypotheses 4 and 5 did not find support in the statistical results, this outcome should not be discounted because the study has shown that corruption is both a direct and an intervening variable in determining levels of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

Finally, most of the activism-orientated groups and other types of groups also showed similar patterns in terms of the moderation variable. Interestingly, the interaction between the perception of corruption and trust in others, as measured through the moderation variable, achieved a strong, negative statistical significance with respect to development and human rights groups. These results are presented in Table 3. The effect of the perception of corruption as a moderator alters the strength of the causal relationship between trust and development and human rights groups by lessening the magnitude of the effect of interpersonal trust on group membership. Thus, as trust in others interacts with an increasing perception of corruption, this tends to lead to a decline in the membership of development and human rights groups. This conclusion provides support for hypothesis 4 with respect to development and human rights groups, meaning that the perception of corruption is expected to weaken these types of groups when it interacts with trust in others.

So far, the results suggest that there are three paths in the relationship between the perception of corruption and civil society. One is that the perception of corruption has a negative causal relationship with civil society when measured directly. Another path is that the causal arrow for the perception of corruption tends to vary when measured indirectly against different types of civil societies. The final path is that the moderation variable tends to have a reverse effect when altering the strength of the causal relationship between trust in others and civil society as well as confidence in government and civil society. The positive sign of the moderator indicates a different picture from the one theorized in the study. Surprisingly, this implies that the perception-of-corruption moderator leads individuals in Central and Eastern Europe to join groups when corruption is increasing. This particular finding is analogous to the 1989 setting, when many resistance groups, social movements, and civic organizations emerged onto the scene to combat an authoritarian regime and corrupt political practices. Might certain types of civil society groups be immune to corruption, and rather than being weakened by corruption, instead, be strengthened by it? Do different types of civil society groups have different relationships with the perception of corruption? This brings back an earlier suggestion made in the article: that scholars need to disaggregate their measurements of civil society when examining whether a weakening of civil society is occurring in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### *4.3. Post-communist-generation causal mechanism*

Moving on to the post-communist-generation element of the study, this section examines whether the post-communist generation behaves differently than its communist counterparts with respect to civil society. Much of the literature on post-communist civil society has argued that communist socialization is responsible for creating an environment of distrust in institutions, leading individuals to be reluctant to engage in civil society. The literature's claim about communist socialization fails to explain the fact that it has been 20 years since the first transition and that in the post-transition era a new generation has emerged that does not have the same communist experience and socialization of distrust as its predecessors.

For socially oriented civil society groups, the results are displayed in Table 1. As Table 1 shows, the post-communist generation tends to have greater membership of cultural and youth groups than its counterparts that experienced communist socialization, as the legacy of communism tends to foster distrust in civil society and apathy toward joining civic organizations. Another outcome of this generational difference is that the post-communist generation has tended to have less membership of welfare, religious, community, and women's groups than its communist-generation counterparts. This may be because such groups tend to be concerned with the needs of the older generation more than the younger generation in society. Interestingly, the post-communist generation has tended to have less membership of trade unions and professional organizations than its communist-generation counterparts. There are two factors that may explain this end result. First, in the post-transition era the economy has gone through a massive overhaul of the communist economic system to produce a capitalistic system that calls for greater liberalization, and so trade union membership conflicts with the newly established free market system. Second, many in the post-communist generation were probably too young or were students when the survey was conducted by the EVS, and so did not have need of trade union and professional membership. Finally, the post-communist generation tends to have greater membership of environmental groups than the communist generation. This outcome relates back to a point made earlier in the article, that environment-related issues are now the cornerstone of European politics. This explains why the post-communist generation tends to have a greater interest in these types of groups than its counterparts that

experienced communism. These overall results lend partial support to hypothesis 6, and again the results vary among the different types of organizations present in society. So far, the results suggest that the post-communist generation has greater membership in a few groups than its communist counterparts in society. Though support is weak for hypothesis 6, there is some evidence that the experience of communism has had no effect on the post-communist generation's behavior toward civil society, and yet the level of civic activity in Central and Eastern Europe is low when compared with Western Europe. Thus, as the study has shown that the causal mechanism between the perception of corruption and certain civil society groups is negative (in both the direct and the moderation models), the effect of corruption cannot be ruled out as a factor in influencing the low levels of participation civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. These results suggest that additional research is needed to examine the corruption–civil society nexus in Central and Eastern Europe.

#### **4.4. Rival explanations**

To assess the influence of rival explanations for the corruption thesis, the study included various control variables that tested propositions made in the literature about the weakening of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe. The findings point to the relevance of rival explanations, but do not exclude the idea that a culture of corruption is replacing the legacy of communism in terms of the effect communism has had on distrust. Much of the literature suggests that the institutionalization of capitalism in the post-transition era in combination with low levels of economic development, income, and overall wealth are contributing factors for limited participation in civil society (Howard, 2002; Inglehart, 1997). The economic component of this line of argument was measured through GDP per capita and employment status. With respect to socially oriented civil society groups, GDP per capita failed to achieve statistical significance, whereas employment status did achieve statistical significance. The results are presented in Table 1. In summary, employed individuals tend to be more active in youth groups, cultural groups, and local community action groups than their unemployed counterparts. Conversely, group membership for the employed differed with respect to welfare, religious, and women's groups, in that they were less active in these groups than their unemployed counterparts. Concerning economically oriented civil society groups, GDP per capita and employment status both achieved statistical significance. The results are presented in Table 2. Taken together, these results indicate that employed individuals tend to be more active in trade unions and professional organizations than their unemployed counterparts in society. An examination of the remaining civil society groups also illustrates similar findings. These findings are consistent with the claims made in the literature that low levels of employment push individuals away from participating in civil society.

Another explanation found in the literature about the weakening of civil society is tied to the 1989 democratic revolution and the goal of political freedom. Many have argued that once political freedom was achieved, much of the pre-transition civil society (such as resistance groups, social movements, and civic organizations) failed to institutionalize itself afterward. Evidently, individuals were not concerned with civic participation and were more concerned with personal survival in the transition period. It is important to note that the mobilization spirit did not disappear altogether, but its level declined significantly from that of the earlier days of the transition (Kopecki, 2003). In order to examine whether civil society weakened as a result of achieving the goals of political freedom and consolidating democracy, the study tests four variables: civil liberties, political rights, Polity score, and satisfaction with democracy. Considering all of the coefficients for the four variables, only satisfaction with democracy and to a lesser extent civil liberties and political rights performed well. Interestingly, as civil liberties deteriorated, such that



freedom of expression and belief as well as associational and organizational rights were limited, this situation tended to diminish membership of community groups in Central and Eastern Europe. This finding is inconsistent with the argument made about achieved political freedom and the weakening of civil society, because if this logic holds, then the statistical results should be different – participation should increase, in order to reaffirm the earlier goals of political freedom and the protection of civil liberties. However, with trade unions, cultural, and other groups the findings were consistent with the arguments made in the literature about civil liberties and civil society. With regard to satisfaction with democracy, the results indicate that satisfaction with democracy is associated with increased membership of trade unions, professional organizations, and religious, cultural, youth, environmental, political, and other types of groups in Central and Eastern Europe. These findings confirm the claims made in the literature about political freedom because the satisfaction with democracy strengthened group membership in the statistically significant groups.

There are other potentially important factors that might weaken civil society in the post-transition era and the study takes account of these factors: financial viability, the legal environment, and organizational capacity. The results for these three indicators were mixed with respect to the different types of civil society examined in the study. The results for the financial viability indicator offer an interesting look at the weakening-of-civil-society thesis, according to which poor financial viability leads to a weakening of civil society in terms of membership of professional organizations and of welfare, cultural, women's, environmental, and development and human rights groups. Many of these groups rely heavily on fundraising and government support to function, so when resources are limited this tends to affect the groups negatively. On the other hand, the membership of groups that do not depend on fundraising or government support was unaffected by poor financial viability; this was evident with trade unions, which rely heavily on members for financial support. It is important to note that financial support for the nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector in Europe shifted in the mid-2000s from the USA to the European Union, so that funds available for groups declined. Another factor examined in the study is the legal environment, where a negative legal environment, in terms of law and regulation, contributed to an increase in membership of volunteer health organizations and of welfare, women's, local community action, development and human rights, environmental, and political groups. Finally, the results for organizational capacity, which was the weakest of the three indicators, demonstrated that a proficient organizational capacity tended to exhibit strong membership of trade unions and professional organizations. These findings call for further examination of these indicators and how they influence civil society; this does not mean that the overall corruption thesis presented in this article is irrelevant, but rather that the effects of corruption may also be present in these indicators. Thus, in the big picture, further theoretical elaboration and empirical investigation of the role of corruption in financial viability, the legal environment, and organizational capacity, and ultimately of how this all impacts civil society levels in Central and Eastern Europe, is needed.

## 5. Conclusion

The study presented here is the first to exploit the implications of the effects of corruption on civil society in Central and Eastern Europe, where corruption alters the domain of civil society and trust. It represents a different picture of the weakening of civil society in the post-transition era through the examination of corruption and, more importantly, the rise of a culture of corruption. This study has shown, first, that the perception of corruption itself influences civil society in Central and

Eastern Europe. Second, the study has shown that variances in trust in others and confidence in government, which the literature on civil society has maintained are the cornerstones for a vibrant civil society, can interact with the perception of corruption and ultimately affect civil society. The empirical findings of the analysis suggest that the interaction between the perception of corruption and trust as well as confidence alters the magnitude of the effect trust has on civil society. By undertaking a micro-examination of civil society, the investigation produced results illustrating that the varying types of civil society are affected differently by the explanatory variables, and mainly by the perception of corruption, trust in others, and confidence in government. Thus, the findings point to the relevance of examining civil society in a disaggregated manner in order to get a clear understanding of the issue at hand.

## Appendix

**Table A1.**

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Country list

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Albania  
Bosnia  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Czech Republic  
Estonia  
Hungary  
Latvia  
Lithuania  
Montenegro  
Macedonia  
Poland  
Romania  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia

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## Notes

1. Due to data limitations, the article will use confidence in national government as a measure of trust in government.
2. The study utilizes the 2008 wave of the EVS instead of the 1982–2008 time-series cross-sectional data because of major limitations present in the latter dataset. The nature and format of the longitudinal data were too extreme (such that key variables of interest were missing or not included in the survey) to

permit robust analysis. In contrast, the 2008 EVS wave contained all key variables needed for the study, and so cross-sectional analysis was more reliable.

3. The original survey question for organizational membership reads: 'Do you belong to: welfare organization, religious organization, cultural activities, trade unions, political parties/groups, local community action, development/human rights group, environmental groups, professional associations, youth work, women groups, peace movement, voluntary health organization, and other groups[?]' The possible answers are '1 mentioned, and 2 not mentioned.'
4. Socially oriented groups include welfare groups (social welfare for the elderly, handicapped, and deprived people), religious groups (religious or church organizations), cultural groups (such as those involved in education, the arts, music, and cultural activities), youth groups (such as the Scouts, the Guides, youth clubs, and so on), local community action groups (for instance, action groups on issues such as poverty, employment, housing, and racial equality), and women's groups. Activism groups include peace movements, environmental groups (such as those concerned with conservation, the environment, ecology, and animal rights), and human rights groups (regarding rights both in developing countries and within their own home countries). Economically oriented groups include trade unions and professional organizations. The category of other types of groups would include volunteer health organizations, political groups, and so on.
5. The original survey question for confidence in government reads 'How much confidence [do you have] in government?' This question has the following possible answers: '1 a great deal, 2 quite a lot, 3 not very much, and 4 none at all.' In order to facilitate a better understanding, the variable was flipped; the newly coded responses are as follows: 1 indicates no confidence at all; 2 indicates not very much confidence; 3 indicates quite a lot of confidence; and 4 indicates a great deal of confidence.
6. The original survey question for trust in parliament presents two options: 'people can be trusted/[you] can't be too careful.' The possible answers offered are '1 most people can be trusted, and 2 [you] cannot be too careful.'
7. The original CPI ranges from 10 to 0, where 10 corresponds to the lowest level of corruption and 0 corresponds to the highest level of corruption. In order to facilitate a better understanding of the CPI, the variable was flipped. The original measure of the perception of corruption was counterintuitive, such that an increase in the number indicated a decrease in the perception of corruption in Central and Eastern Europe. The new CPI ranges from -1 to -10, where -1 corresponds to the highest level of corruption and -10 corresponds to the lowest level of corruption.
8. Regarding the generation dummy variable, the post-communist generation (17–25 years old) is coded as 1 and the generation that is not post-communist (25 years old and over) is coded as 0. I would like to thank the reviewer of this article for pointing this out.
9. The control variables are measured in the following ways. *GDP per capita* in 2005 US dollars is measured through the ERS International Macroeconomics dataset and is lagged. Political rights are measured using three subcategories: (1) the electoral process, (2) political pluralism and participation, and (3) the functioning of government. *Political rights* are measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 indicating the highest degree of freedom and 7 the lowest degree of freedom. This control variable is drawn from Freedom House. *Civil liberties* are measured using four subcategories: (1) freedom of expression and belief, (2) associational and organizational rights, (3) the rule of law, and (4) personal autonomy and individual rights. *Civil liberties* are measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 indicating the highest degree of freedom and 7 the lowest degree of freedom. Again, this control variable is drawn from Freedom House. *Gender* is drawn from the EVS. Regarding *employment status*, the original survey question asks 'Are you employed?' The possible answers are '1 yes, and 2 no.' The variable is drawn from the EVS. The *Polity score* is computed by subtracting the Autoc score from the Demo score; the result is a combined score on a scale of +10 to -10, where +10 represents strongly democratic regimes

and -10 represents strongly autocratic regimes. The Polity score is drawn from the dataset measuring regime type found in the Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transition. The *legal environment* is measured using two subcategories: (1) legal, and (2) regulatory. The variable is measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 indicating a positive legal environment for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and 7 indicating a negative legal environment for NGOs. The study draws on US Agency for International Development (USAID) data on NGO activity for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. *Financial viability* is measured using three subcategories: (1) the state of the economy, (2) government procurement and commercial revenues as sources of funding, and (3) fundraising. The variable is measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 indicating good financial viability and 7 indicating poor financial viability. The study draws on USAID data on NGO activity for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. *Organizational capacity* is measured using four subcategories: (1) transparent governance, (2) public accountability, (3) being capably managed, and (4) having essential organizational skills. The variable is measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 indicating good organizational capacity and 7 indicating poor organizational capacity. The study draws on USAID data on NGO activity for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Regarding *satisfaction with democracy*, the original survey question reads 'Are you satisfied with democracy?' The possible answers are '1 very satisfied, 2 rather satisfied, 3 not very satisfied, and 4 not at all satisfied.' The variable is drawn from the EVS.

10. The model includes conditional distribution of the responses for the explanatory variables and random effects such as *ordered logit (via links)* and *binomials (via families)*. Ordered logistic regression was used because the value of each category in the civil society variable had a meaningful sequential order. GLLAMM software allows for multilevel data to be fitted in logit regression analysis. The study employed ordered logit regression analysis because the dependent variable was ordered (where  $y$  takes on a value of 1 to 4). Ordered logit regression was more fitting for the study than Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression – it is difficult to fit a straight line to a scatter of points because an ordered dependent variable ensures large positive and large negative residuals and heteroskedasticity. Thus, with OLS the predicated value would be meaningless because the probability cannot range outside of 0–1. Additionally, ordered logit regression fits a nonlinear relationship better than OLS.
11. The variables were treated as if they were measured at the interval level, even though they are ordinal variables.
12. Several studies have noted that civil society can act as an effective tool in reducing corruption in a given country. This claim, which is plausible, brings up the issue of reverse causality in the model presented in this research. To get an idea of the problem, the research presented here argues that corruption weakens civil society, but civil society can also affect the level of corruption in a country. Putnam, Coleman, and other theorists assert that social capital is a necessary condition of social and democratic stability as well as economic efficiency. Putnam (1993: 177) notes that civil society is a vital component of effective democracy; in that context, a vibrant civil society boosts the stock of such social capital as trust, norms, and shared values within a society. Thus, when civil society is transformed into the political sphere, it leads to the improvement of democracy in a given country. In other words, civil society plays a vital role in the vibrancy of democracy. One implication of this is that an increased stock of social capital enhances democratic regimes, in turn leading to more effective anticorruption legislation. In essence, the type and quality of a political regime can determine whether anticorruption legislation is going to be effective in reducing levels of corruption. Thus, from this theoretical discussion, the causal arrows between corruption and civil society can flow in both directions, which the study acknowledges; however, the main focus of the article remains on what factors have weakened post-communist civil society since the democratic revolution.
13. Much of the literature on trust and corruption suggests that corruption distorts trust in society; thus, in order to examine whether this situation was also present in Central and Eastern Europe, the study

completed two statistical tests to examine the causal mechanism between trust and the perception of corruption. As in the main statistical tests for the study, confidence in government was used as a proxy for trust in government. The statistical results are consistent with the literature suggesting that an increase in corruption will reduce trust, in Central and Eastern Europe.

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## Author biography

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