

**FROM COLLECTIVE ACTION TO CIVIL DISORDER: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
PANDEMIC-RIDDEN CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA⁶⁰**

Abstract:	<i>This paper aims to present how collective action has transformed into civil disorder against the pandemic policy in Czechia and Slovakia in 2020-2022. The research questions are as follows: 1) What factors decided the transformation of collective action into civil disorder? 2) What were the essential features of civil disorder in each state? The study draws on process tracing, qualitative analysis of sources, and qualitative comparative analysis. The research tool is fs/QCA software. The starting point is March 2020 when a state of emergency was declared in both states. The final point is March 2022 when most of the restrictions were canceled, the unofficial end of the pandemic. Cases selected include public gatherings in protest of the pandemic policy organized at that time in the cities of Prague, Brno, Ostrava (Czech Republic), and Bratislava and Košice (Slovakia). The cities have populations above 200 thousand and all of them are agglomerations that attract major socio-political events. Despite the initial success in dealing with the pandemic, the paper explains why collective actions to protect public health changed over time into civil disorder designed to undermine the pandemic policy. Therefore, the article provides evidence of the role antidemocratic played in inciting civil disorder.</i>
Keywords:	Civil disorder; qualitative comparative analysis; corona-related protest in Czechia; corona-related protest in Slovakia; QCA
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Introduction

The 2020-2022 coronavirus crisis in Europe triggered different forms of political contentious that transformed into civil disorders. The distrust of the style and essence of public governance and the way governments dealt with the pandemic led to disagreement with restrictions imposed on rights and freedoms. Some of the protests were organized in response to the worsening of the economic situation and the inefficiency of COVID-19 measures. In 2021, for various reasons, the idea of mass vaccination was undermined, which further fueled anti-vaccination movements. The accumulation of anger and frustration replaced solidarity and the need for cooperation to protect public health across Europe. The situation also marked a shift from following corona-related recommendations and restrictions to acting against the law. The latter took non-violent and violent forms. Violence was mostly used against public officers and law enforcement agents to manifest social demands to change the pandemic policy and even abandon corona-related measures. Scholars are still looking for reasons why the collecting of signatures under the petition against the pandemic policy led to riots⁶¹.

⁶⁰ This research paper is a result of the research project Civil Disorder in the Pandemic-ridden European Union. It was financially supported by the National Science Centre, Poland (Grant Number 2021/43/B/HS5/00290)

⁶¹ Joanna Rak, Karolina Owczarek, *Freedom of Assembly at Stake: The Warsaw Police's Partisanship During Polish Protests in Times of Pandemic*, "Studia Securitatis", Vol. 16, No. 2, 2022; Kamila Rezmer-Płotka, *Policing civil disorder*

The paper presents how collective actions have transformed into civil disorder against the pandemic policy in Czechia and Slovakia in 2020-2022. In both states, after the apparent success in dealing with the spring wave of coronavirus in 2020, when new cases and death index were the lowest in Europe, populist ruling elites decided to discontinue close cooperation with epidemiologists and started ignoring opinions expressed by experts. In Czechia, the populist government has continued the technocratic vision of public governance, namely the running of the state as a company. In Slovakia, new Prime Minister Igor Matovič securitized the pandemic. During the autumn-winter wave of 2020/2021, both leaders changed their attitudes. During his blaming game, Matovič accused his coalition partners and openly criticized citizens. Finally, after a scandal related to the purchase of the Russian vaccine Sputnik V and in the face of a growing number of violent anti-government manifestations, he resigned in March 2021. In turn, Babiš replaced the Head of the Health Department and ignored the will of the parliament. At the peak of his non-liberal governance, he introduced an unconstitutional state of emergency in mid-February 2021. Finally, in September 2021, the anti-Babiš coalition won the parliamentary election, which confirmed the distrust of the previous style of public governance. In both states, despite changes in anti-pandemic policies introduced by new ruling elites, corona-related gatherings were still organized, and some of them transformed into civil disorder. Therefore, the paper attempts to determine factors that transformed collective action into civil disorder in the two states when trust in pandemic strategies in the two countries rapidly dropped and clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement officers surged.

The paper explains why, despite the initial success in dealing with the pandemic, collective action to protect public health changed over time into riots that undermined the pandemic policy. Therefore, the paper provides evidence of the role of antidemocratic forces in inciting civil disorder that acted against the protection of public health. The study also provides an explanation for the partiality of the police when the government's position was threatened.

Theoretical Background

Over the years, scholars have offered different approaches to explain why collective actions transformed into civil disorder. Some scholars claimed that deprivation was a necessary condition and that the trajectory of this phenomenon stems from the interaction between individuals⁶². However, this approach focused on protesters only and ignored the role of law enforcement and state officers. In response to that perspective, researchers developed new theoretical categories and explanations that considered the role of the police. Policing as social control of public protests by the police has been well-grounded in theory and supported state authorities' approach to the control over dissidents. There were also differences in the approach to tactics and attitudes to protesters' legitimacy to participate in the socio-political process⁶³. Experience regarding anti-austerity movements⁶⁴ and the coronavirus⁶⁵ confirmed that it was a valuable approach that substantiated the movement away from the traditional model to a more negotiated style of protest policing. It does not mean that one type was replaced by the other⁶⁶. For example, Joanna Rak examined protests in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic when the police, in response to disruption, used coercive force and repressed participants of demonstrations. She proved that the police-protesters' communication was negligible, the law enforcement failed to negotiate, and numerous arrests used to manage the crowd increased the risk that the

in pandemic-driven Bulgaria, "Політичне Життя", 2022, DOI 10.31558/2519-2949.2022.3.7, pp. 56-61; Paolo Gerbaudo, *The pandemic crowd*, "Journal of International Affairs", Vol. 73, No. 2, 2020, pp. 61-76

⁶² Clark McPhail, *Civil disorder participation: A critical examination of recent research*, "American Sociological Review", Vol. 36, December, 1971, pp. 1058-1073

⁶³ Peng Wang, Paul Joosse, Lok Lee Cho, *The evolution of protest policing in a hybrid regime*, "The British Journal of Criminology", Vol. 60, No. 6, 2020, pp. 1523-1546

⁶⁴ Donatella Della Porta, Abby Peterson, Herbert Reiter, *Policing transnational protest: An introduction*, "The policing of transnational protest", Routledge, London and New York, 2016, pp. 1-12

⁶⁵ Greg Martin, *Protest, policing and law during COVID-19: On the legality of mass gatherings in a health crisis*, "Alternative Law Journal", Vol. 46, No. 4, 2021, pp. 275-281; Kriesi Hanspeter Kriesi, Ioana-Elena Oana, *Protest in unlikely times: dynamics of collective mobilization in Europe during the COVID-19 crisis*, "Journal of European Public Policy", Vol. 30, No. 4, 2023, pp.740-765, DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2022.2140819

⁶⁶ Joanna Rak, *Theorizing Cultures of Political Violence in Times of Austerity: Studying Social Movements in Comparative Perspective*, Routledge, London and New York, 2018

demonstration may transform into civil disorder. Moreover, she provided evidence that during the coronavirus period, protest policing became more hybrid and combined elements of escalated force and negotiated management as two ideal types⁶⁷.

The first model operates under the premise that communication with protesters is minimized, endorsing the use of coercive force or even unlawful policing methods. This approach dismisses negotiations with protesters, resulting in severe repercussions for the reputation of law enforcement officers⁶⁸. It fosters a heightened distrust of law enforcement and escalates tensions, thereby elevating the risk of additional civil unrest. On the contrary, the negotiated management model prioritizes communication between police and protesters to avert resorting to coercive measures⁶⁹. In the escalated force, the police officers assign low precedence to the right to public gatherings, while in the second model, officers uphold the right to peaceful assembly. Some scholars argue that protesters' conduct may influence the police to opt for either escalated force or a more negotiation-oriented model⁷⁰. This study aims to demonstrate that similar dynamics occurred in Czechia and Slovakia, examining the consequences of immobilization tactics as outlined by Patrick Gillham and John Noakes⁷¹.

In literature, various perspectives on disparities in protest policing styles are evident. Donatella della Porta and Herbert Reiter propose a dual typology with nine indicators, each having antinomic values. These indicators include the degree of police force, the number of prohibited behaviors, the selective nature of repressed groups, police adherence to the law, the timing of law enforcement, the confrontational or consensual nature of communication with demonstrators, the adaptability to emerging situations, the formalization of rules, and the degree of preparation⁷². The challenge lies in imprecise definitions and unclear distinctions between extreme values⁷³. Adopted in this paper's approach is based on five features: law enforcement's readiness to protect the right to assembly, tolerance for community disruption, communication with assembly participants, the use of arrests to manage participants, and the use of force in conjunction with or instead of arrests⁷⁴. The paper details the essential features of each factor in both protest policing models.

Addressing the context of protests during the coronavirus period, Joanna Rak and Karolina Owczarek propose a model of police partisanship, where officers align with ruling elites under threat, leading to restrictions on assembly freedom and labeling protesters' behavior as civil disorder⁷⁵. Policing becomes politically biased, enforcing the law unevenly based on protesters' political affiliation. In contrast, neutral policing involves equal law enforcement regardless of political affiliation⁷⁶. This factor contributes to the transformation of collective action into civil disorder in pandemic-affected unconsolidated democracies. Given the loss of legitimacy by governments in Czechia (September 2021) and Slovakia (March 2021), the risk of partiality is acknowledged, requiring an additional factor in McPhail, and Schweingruber McCarthy's approach to better understand civil disorder.

The author posits that partisanship aligns with escalated force, while neutral policing aligns with negotiated management. The study combines McPhail, and Schweingruber McCarthy's protest policing features with Rak and Owczarek's partisanship category to identify factors determining the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder during coronavirus-related protests. This comprehensive examination

⁶⁷ Joanna Rak, *Policing anti-government protests during the coronavirus crisis in Poland: between escalated force and negotiated management*, "Teorija in Praksa", Vol. 58, 2021, pp. 598-692

⁶⁸ Alex S. Vitale, *From negotiated management to command and control: How the New York Police Department polices protests*, "Policing & Society", Vol. 15, No. 3, 2005, pp. 283-304

⁶⁹ Donatella della Porta, Herbert Reiter, *The Policing of Global Protest: The G8 at Genoa and its Aftermath*, "The Policing of Transnational Protest", Ashgate Publishing Limited, Hampshire and Burlington, 2006, p. 13

⁷⁰ Patrick Gillham and John Noakes, "More than a march in a circle": *transgressive protests and the limits of negotiated management*, "Mobilization: An International Quarterly", Vol. 12, No. 4, 2007, pp. 341-357

⁷¹ *Idem*

⁷² Donatella della Porta, Herbert Reiter, *The Policing of Protest in Western Democracies*, "Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies", University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1998, p. 4

⁷³ Joanna Rak, *Op. cit.*, p. 601

⁷⁴ Clark McPhail, David Schweingruber, John D. McCarthy, *Policing Protest in the United States: 1960-1995*, "Policing Protest: The Control of Mass Demonstrations in Western Democracies", University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1998, pp. 51-54

⁷⁵ Joanna Rak, Karolina Owczarek, *Op. cit.*, p. 172

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 174-175

supports a nuanced understanding of civil disorder and protest policing. However, empirical evidence during the coronavirus crisis is predominantly based on individual cases, emphasizing the need for further research to establish a comparative perspective and enhance existing findings.

Materials and Methods

The study assumes that the transformation of corona-related protests into civil disorder was stimulated using the escalated force’s model of protest policing instead of negotiated management. The author seeks to discover which features of protest policing, according to McPhail, Schweingruber McCarthy’s typology, and Rak and Owczarek’s findings, created the necessary conditions for this phenomenon in Czechia and Slovakia during the coronavirus crisis. The research questions are as follows: 1) What factors (necessary conditions, NC) were decisive regarding the transformation of collective action into civil disorder? 2) What were the essential features of civil disorder in each state? The study draws on process tracing, qualitative analysis of sources, and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). The research tool is fs/QCA software⁷⁷.

The research process was organized as follows. Firstly, according to data from ACLED⁷⁸, the author collected information about protests in Czechia and Slovakia that took place in the five largest cities: Prague, Brno, Ostrava (Czechia), and Bratislava and Košice (Slovakia) from March 2020 to March 2022. The cities have populations above 200 thousand and all of them are agglomerations that attract major socio-political events. In each case, corona-related and non-corona-related demonstrations were examined separately. The former were coded according to the six mentioned-above factors of protest policing. Each factor occurred in escalated force or negotiated management variants with different essential features described in Table 1. According to *crisp-set* QCA provisions, the value of each factor may be 0 or 1 depending on the protest policing model. The fact that factors in the escalated force model are marked as 1 and in negotiated management as 0 stems from the assumptions that determined the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder (outcome). Moreover, if collective actions do not transform into civil disorder, we have the absence of the outcome. Moreover, the author added an acronym (NAME) to each factor and put it into fs/QCA software.

Factors (NAME)	Escalated force model (1)	Negotiated management model (0)
Extent and scope of right to peaceful gatherings’ protection (RESPECT)	Recognizing some assemblies as illegitimate and repressing them by law enforcement. Unequal treatment of citizens depends on the will of political elites.	The universal right to peaceful assembly is accepted by law enforcement. Officers protect human rights, life, and property.
Police tolerance for community disruption (TOLERANCE)	Police officers tolerated only familiar and non-disruptive forms of protest.	Officers accept disruption as a by-product of assemblies. Instead of preventing demonstrations, they seek to limit or reduce disruptions.
Communication between the police and demonstrators (COMMUNICATION)	Communication at a minimal level, officers infiltrate and act as provocateurs. The police avoid conferring with assembly organizers and refuse to give up any assembly control to protesters.	The police initiate and maintain communication with protesters in many ways and negotiate every aspect of demonstrations, including time, place, limitations, and organization issues.
Extent and manner of arrests as a method of managing demonstrators (ARREST)	Arrests are widespread, even if no regulations are breached.	Arrebreaks are a last-resort tactic, only against individuals who break the law. Officers repeatedly warn that they break the law, instead of arresting them immediately. Necessary arrests only, properly

⁷⁷ Charles C. Ragin, Sean Davey, *Fuzzy-Set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis 4.0*. California, Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine, 2022

⁷⁸ ACLED, <https://acleddata.com> (4.11.2023)

		documented, and avoiding injuries to assembly participants as priorities.
Force instead of or in combination with arrests (FORCE)	Force is a standard way of dealing with assemblies. Officers used a noticeable force (riot control techniques, tear gas, batons, fire hoses, water cannons, electric cattle prods, riot formations, dogs, and horses, which displace arrests), which increases gradually unless the protestors are in line with instructions and limit their activity.	Officers only use the minimum necessary force to fulfill their duties, especially to protect people and property or detain lawbreakers. Instead, of confrontation, they used cordoning off the assembly area and negotiating with protesters.
Police partisanship (PARTISANSHIP)	Police label participants as violators of law and pandemic restrictions. They ignore similar behavior by participants at gatherings organized by the state. Officers treat protesters as mad and irrational, and a threat to public order.	Police report protests without their evaluation, to avoid identification and political stigmatization of participants.

Table 1. Essential Features of Escalated Force and Negotiated Management Models⁷⁹

Then, the author formulated two hypotheses to identify the necessary conditions of the outcome and other factors. The first hypothesis (H1): configuration of all factors in the escalated force model led to the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder. The second hypothesis (H2): configuration of all factors in the negotiated management model prevented the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder. Each hypothesis is presented by the following notations:

H1: RESPECT*TOLERANCE*COMMUNICATION*ARREST*FORCE*PARTISANSHIP -> CD

H2: ~RESPECT*~TOLERANCE*~COMMUNICATION*~ARREST*~ FORCE* ~ PARTISANSHIP -> ~CD

Data regarding all protests organized in selected cities from March 2020 to March 2021 were collected in ACLED. They were coded into six factors (called conditions) and entered fs/QCA software. At the same time, the author conducted the following procedures: statistic description, indicate necessary conditions, and construct truth table algorithm and subset/superset analytics. Results allow us to list nieces the sary conditions for the analyzed outcome. In the next step, the author conducted a qualitative analysis of sources, such as media content, to find in-depth features that contributed to the transformation into civil disorder and to indicate essential features of the phenomenon.

The corpus of sources includes data from the ACLED and domestic media content published: Tyden, Mlada Fronta Dnes, Novinky, Ceske Noviny, Seznam Zpravy, Radiozurnal, Lidove Noviny, Pluska, SME, Topky, DenikN, Forum 24, Hlavny Dennik, Aktualne (Czech Republic), Aktualne (Slovakia), Noviny.sk, Denik, Cas, Teraz, Dnes24, 24hod, Info, TV Noviny SK, CeskaTelevize, Echo 24, SocSol, Vratme Deti do Skoly, Zivot PO, Tydenik Policie, CNN iPrima, TV Nova, Dnes24, Topky, Pravda, Dennik N, Wirtualny Nowy Przemysl, Dnes24, Topky, Webnoviny, Bratislavske Noviny, Hlavny Dennik, Kosice Dnes, TV Nova. The comparative analysis is based on the purpose-oriented selection of cases. Czechia and Slovakia, post-communist states in Central-Eastern Europe, had a similar trajectory of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. After initial success in both states in the spring of 2020, leaders of the ruling elites decided to change their corona-related strategy from close cooperation with epidemiologists (Czechia) or deputies from other parties (Slovakia) and overestimated their ability to deal with the public health crisis. In Czechia, Prime Minister Babiš continued running the state as if it were a company, while Prime Minister of Slovakia Matovič favored

⁷⁹ McPhail Schweingruber, John D. McCarthy, *Op.cit.*, pp. 51-54; Joanna Rak, Karolina Owczarek, *Op.cit.*, pp. 174-175

the securitization of COVID-19. Nevertheless, both strategies failed, and each of the leaders lost their legitimacy. This undermined the stability of their governments. Additionally, over the months, Babiš and Matovič lost the ability to maintain their position, so their potential partners became critical of their pandemic policies. Therefore, comparative studies seek to find determinants of the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder in social structures.

Results

According to ACLED's data in both states, from March 2020 to March 2022, 399 protests were organized in five cities (273 protests in Czechia, and 126 in Slovakia). One hundred and fifty of them were related to the pandemic policy (101 in Czechia, 49 in Slovakia). The others were related to the economic situation and, after February 22, 2022, also to the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Twice as many corona-related collective actions were organized in Czechia than in Slovakia. Similarly, corona-related protests occurred more often in Czechia. However, only 21 corona-related collective actions in both states transformed into civil disorder (8 in Czechia, 13 in Slovakia). Although more demonstrations were organized in Czechia, the phenomenon occurred more often in Slovakia, which increased the risk of civil disorder. Considering information about COVID-19 cases from Our World in Data⁸⁰, in the two states, the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder did not coincide with waves of coronavirus. Instead, civil disorder mainly occurred when new restrictions were put in place (Czechia), and the government crisis stemmed from distrust of the pandemic policy (Slovakia). Therefore, civil disorder incidents were a response to the strategy of dealing with the pandemic. The frequency of civil disorder cases is presented in the diagrams below. Value 1 means a civil disorder that occurred on a specific day, whereas 0 marks corona-related collective actions, which did not transform into civil disorder:

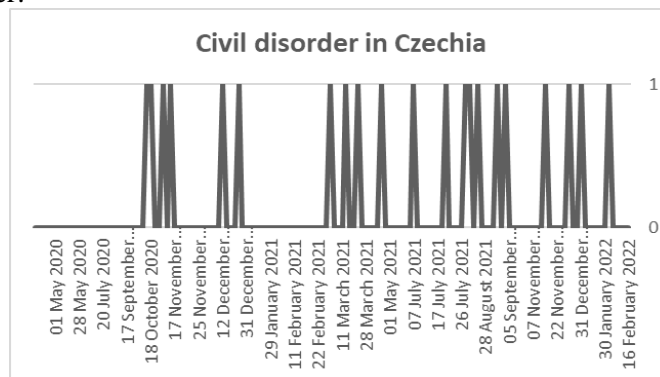


Diagram 1. Civil Disorder Cases in Czechia⁸¹



Diagram 2. Civil Disorder Cases in Slovakia⁸²

⁸⁰ *Coronavirus (COVID-19) Cases*, <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-cases> (5.11.2023)

⁸¹ *Idem*

The QCA is allowed to indicate necessary conditions for the outcome or its absence⁸³. For this purpose, the author followed provisions on the value of measures for a constituency and the coverage. The first is a numerical expression of the extent to which empirical evidence is in line with the relation. Essentially, the consistency threshold above which a condition could be considered necessary should not be below 0.9. In turn, coverage is a measure of how trivial a condition is regarding the outcome. The coverage was used to calculate how much of the entire outcome (transformation of collective actions into civil disorder) is “explained” by a causal condition (factor of protest policing). Firstly, it is worth noting that such factors as RESPECT, TOLERANCE, and COMMUNICATION occurred in all cases of negotiated management variants, and according to QCA’s provisions, the same value means that conditions are irrelevant. Therefore, the author avoided them while building notations to indicate necessary conditions.

Calculation of every possible configuration of factors allowed us to indicate that the combination of ARREST and FORCE (value: 0.95) was the necessary condition of the outcome, with full coverage (value: 1.0). The same values occurred in the case of combinations of these factors with PARTISANSHIP. Therefore, the last one is irrelevant and does not change the value of consistency. However, the last factors occurred in fewer (2) cases to be classified as equally important as ARREST and FORCE. Both demonstrations took place in Bratislava, and a common feature was the participation of opposition politicians. The analysis of the lack of outcome (no transformation of collective actions into civil disorder) allows us to conclude that all possible configurations of factors in the negotiated management model may be recognized as necessary conditions. However, the highest values of coverage occurred in two conditions: ~ARREST (0.94) and ~FORCE (0.94). Therefore, the presence of one of these factors increases the lack of outcome more than others. Summarizing, the QCA provided evidence that the variants of arrests as a method of managing demonstrators and the use of **force** were crucial for the trajectory of collective actions in pandemic-ridden Czechia and Slovakia.

The QCA allowed us to indicate necessary conditions for the outcome or its absence. To determine them, it is necessary to follow provisions related to the value of measures for a constituency and the coverage. It is a numerical expression of the extent to which empirical evidence aligns with a set relation. As a practical rule, the consistency threshold above which a condition could be considered necessary should not be below 0.9⁸⁴. In turn, the coverage measures how trivial a condition is for an outcome. The coverage was used to calculate how much of the entire outcome (transformation of collective actions into civil disorder) can be "explained" by a causal condition (protest policing). Firstly, it is worth noting that factors such as RESPECT, TOLERANCE, and COMMUNICATION occurred in all cases in the negotiated management variant, and according to QCA provisions, that same value means that conditions are irrelevant. Therefore, the author avoided them while formulating notations to determine the necessary conditions.

The calculation of every possible configuration of factors indicated that the combination of ARREST and FORCE (value: 0.95) was a necessary condition for the outcome, with full coverage (value: 1.0). The same values occurred in a combination of these factors with PARTISANSHIP. Therefore, the last one is irrelevant as it does not change the value of consistency. However, the factors occurred in too few cases (2) to classify them as crucial than ARREST and FORCE. Both demonstrations took place in Bratislava, and their common feature was the participation of opposition politicians. The analysis of the lack of outcome (no transformation of collective actions into civil disorder) showed that all configurations of factors were possible in the negotiated management model. Thus, they may be recognized as necessary conditions. However, the highest coverage values occurred in two instances: ~ARREST (0.94) and (~FORCE0.94). Therefore, the occurrence of one of these factors increases the probability of the lack of outcome more than others. In summary, the QCA analysis provided evidence that the arrests as a method of managing demonstrators and the use of force were crucial for the trajectory of collective actions in pandemic-ridden Czechia and Slovakia.

After the necessary conditions for the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder are determined as widespread arrests. Even if the law was breached and certain behaviors forced by police officers in confrontation with protesters, it is worth examining the essential features of the demonstrations. In Czechia,

⁸² *Idem*

⁸³ *Annex to the paper entitled From Collective Action to Civil Disorder: Comparative Analysis of Pandemic-ridden Czechia and Slovakia*

⁸⁴ Charles C. Ragin, *Set relations in social research: Evaluating their consistency and coverage*, “Political Analysis”, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2006, pp. 291-310

forms of civil disorder depended on forms of physical violence in response to coercive measures used by the police. For instance, football hooligans intentionally seek to clash with the police. One incident occurred on October 18, 2020, in Prague, after the protest was disbanded, chiefly due to the violation of hygiene measures. Hooligans began to throw bottles, firecrackers, and garbage cans, and the square became shrouded in smoke from chimneys. Some protesters expressed their intention to harm the Czech Health Minister or made the Nazi salute. In response, the police used firecrackers, tear gas, and dog handlers to disperse most of the protesters. Water cannons were also deployed. This incident contrasted with mostly peaceful protests in Czechia. Police officers confiscated various items, such as brass knuckles, collapsible truncheons, fireworks, and a gun. Then, the police changed their tactics to document offenses rather than engaging in large-scale maneuvers to disperse crowds⁸⁵. The police action against hooligans was supported by President Miloš Zeman, who condemned the protesters. Prime Minister Andrej Babiš also expressed astonishment at the recklessness and selfishness of some citizens who put themselves and others in danger. Police officers initially attempted to communicate with the protesters, emphasizing the need to maintain social distancing and wear facial masks. In short, police officers had support from the executive power, which legitimized law enforcement actions and blamed protesters for stimulating civil disorder. In the official state narrative, police actions were described as justified responses to protesters' behavior. This explained changes in the model of protest policing.

In general, other protests in Czechia against pandemic policies primarily involved collective actions and did not pose a significant threat to public order and safety. They focused on economic issues rather than opposing mass vaccination programs. They were also supported by members of opposition parties and political associations but mostly by non-parliamentary entities with marginal social support. The presence of anti-vaccination movement members primarily did not determine the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder. It confirmed that accidental cases of civil disorder were the result of a combination of hooligan aggressive behavior and police responses to these actions. Police partiality there was minimal, even if former Prime Minister Babiš attempted to label protesters, especially anti-vaccination activists, as agents of the opposition. Police officers focused on maintaining public order and, even in the face of rapidly decreasing support for the government, became independent in protest policing.

In Slovakia, football hooligans also resorted to physical violence. However, the main feature of corona-related protests, including forms of civil disorder, was the participation of members of mainstream opposition parties. Their presence during assemblies under the party's banner was reported nine times and seven of them escalated to civil disorder. The presence of radical opposition parties (People's Party Our Slovakia, Slovak National Party, and Direction - Social Democracy) legitimized the use of violence by protesters (e.g. on October 19, 2020, in Bratislava). Therefore, being the "enemies of the establishment", they supported incidents that increased the risk of civil disorder. Other essential features of corona-related protests, which transformed into civil disorder, were obstructing, and devastating public infrastructure and spaces. In both cases, police officers responded by using force and arresting the most dangerous individuals. On July 23, 2021, protesters against vaccination programs blocked entry to the Slovak parliament during a debate on exempting people vaccinated against COVID-19 from some domestic restrictions. Police officers used tear gas to disperse crowds trying to break into the parliament building⁸⁶. One policewoman was injured⁸⁷.

Then, on September 1, 2021, several thousand people took to the streets of the two largest Slovak cities, Bratislava and Košice, to protest government and pandemic restrictions. Demonstrations in the capital were orchestrated by the People's Party Our Slovakia and transformed into civil disorder.

On December 16, 2021, during a protest in Bratislava, Robert Fico, former Prime Minister, and the leader of the Direction - Social Democracy party, was arrested by the police for a few hours just before the protest started. It was a case of unfair and inadequate repressions used against one of the most important opposition politicians. Then, his popularity among opponents of the pandemic policy increased. Fico became

⁸⁵ *Demonstrace proti vládním opatřením se změnila v potyčky s těžkooděnci. Policie zadržela přes 100 lidí*, https://www.irozhlaz.cz/zpravy-domov/praha-protesty-koronavirus-fotbalovy-fanousci-demonstrace-staromestske-namesti_2010181508_tkr (5.11.2023)

⁸⁶ *Protesters attempted to enter parliament, and police intervened with tear gas (updated)*, <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22707443/people-protest-against-covid-related-measures-in-front-of-the-parliament.html> (4.02.2023)

⁸⁷ *'Fooled by disinformation': Vaccine protests at Slovak parliament*. <https://www.euronews.com/2021/07/23/fooled-by-disinformation-vaccine-protests-at-slovak-parliament> (4.02.2023)

recognized as a victim of the illegal police action. The anti-vaccination movement organized clashes with the police. In response, the police used water cannons and tear gas against demonstrators. Three people were brought into custody, while another three were injured⁸⁸. On December 31, 2021, Fico was detained again when he was about to make a statement to the media to encourage people to protest despite restrictions on gatherings⁸⁹. Therefore, the level of police partiality was higher than in Czechia. The leader of the opposition party was arrested and detained without any reason. Labeling protesters as opposition agents by the ruling elites was strengthened by the open support for demonstrators from some opposition politicians. Nevertheless, compared with Czechia, the Slovak ruling elites supported the police in public, which decreased the legitimacy of law enforcement decisions. Therefore, a higher level of partisanship did not impact wide support for the police from the government. In Slovakia, the extent and scope of using arrests and force against protesters were higher and occurred more frequently than in Czechia. Despite similar approaches to the respect to freedom of assembly, tolerance of disruption, and communication between officers and protesters, arrests as a method to manage demonstrations, the use of force, and police partisanship occurred in the escalated force model. This triggered more civil disorder instances than in Czechia.

Conclusions

In summary, comparative studies led to several conclusions regarding the trajectory of coronavirus-related protests in pandemic-ridden unconsolidated democracies. The QCA analysis provided evidence that the necessary condition for the full coverage of demonstrations analyzed was a combination of arrests as a method of managing demonstrators and the use of force in the escalated force variant. Therefore, these two factors were more important than the others. This applied especially to the right of peaceful assembly, tolerance to disruption, and communication with protesters which occurred in the negotiated management model. It confirmed that protest policing in both states had a hybrid nature. On the one hand, law enforcement services tried to maintain communication with protesters and provide non-discriminatory treatment of participants in anti-government demonstrations and disruption as a by-product of manifestations. On the other hand, in a few cases when violence was used by protesters the police abandoned the negotiated management model and resorted to escalated force. Furthermore, in some instances, the negotiated management model included collective actions without the transformation to civil disorder. Therefore, in the case of collective actions, it is crucial to resign from widespread arrests and the use of force to avoid civil disorder. In Czechia, civil disorder involved the participation of armed hooligans and the use of physical violence, whereas, in Slovakia, civil disorder occurred when protesters devastated public spaces. This happened in conjunction with violence addressed to police officers and when members of opposition parties participated in these demonstrations. Experiences of pandemic-ridden Czechia and Slovakia confirmed that the combination of McPhail, Schweingruber, and McCarthy's approach with Rak and Owczarek's proposition was useful for exploring protests during the coronavirus crisis.

Considering della Porta and Reiter's typology, the following factors occurred in both states: prohibited behavior, timing of law enforcement, involvement of repressed groups, and degree of communication with demonstrators. Therefore, the latter offers a less in-depth explanation of the difference between collective actions and civil disorder. This study also confirmed Rak's findings that since the 2007-2009 economic crisis law enforcement has often applied a hybrid strategy to the policing of protests. Experience from Czechia and Slovakia showed that the use of extensive arrests and force by police officers in the escalated force model increased the risk that collective actions may transform into civil disorder. At the same time, factors related to the respect of freedom of assembly, tolerance of disruption, and communication with protesters were close to the negotiated management model. As regards police partiality, it is hard to determine its role as a factor that occurred in both states. Therefore, to explain the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder we need further studies and cases involving diversified models of protest policing.

The results of the study also provided the methodological contribution that the crisp-set QCA technique to differentiate the impact of various factors on protest policing. Therefore, in pandemic-ridden post-

⁸⁸ *Anti-government protests take place in Slovakia's two largest cities*, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/anti-government-protests-take-place-in-slovakias-two-largest-cities (4.02.2023)

⁸⁹ *Slovakia police arrest former PM Fico ahead of rally*, <https://www.dw.com/en/slovakia-police-arrest-former-pm-fico-ahead-of-rally/a-60154805> (4.02.2023)

communist democracies in Central-Eastern Europe **arrests as a method of managing demonstrators and the use of force** in the escalated force variant were more significant than other factors that contributed to the transformation of collective actions into civil disorder.

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Annex to a Paper Entitled "From Collective Action to Civil Disorder. Comparative Analysis of Pandemic-Ridden Czechia and Slovakia"

Statistics Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum	N Cases	Missing	
civil disorder	0.14	0.346987	0	1	150	0	
RESPECT	1	0	0	1	150	0	
TOLERANCE	1	0	0	1	150	0	
COMMUNICATION	1	0	0	1	150	0	
ARREST	0.08666667	0.281346	0	1	150	0	
FORCE	0.08666667	0.281346	0	1	150	0	
PARTISANSHIP	0.01333333	0.1146977	0	1	150	0	

Analysis of Necessary Conditions | Outcome variable: civil disorder

Conditions tested:

Consistency Coverage

ARREST+FORCE+PARTISANSHIP 0.952381 1.000000

ARREST+FORCE 0.952381 1.000000

ARREST+PARTISANSHIP 0.619048 1.000000

FORCE+PARTISANSHIP 0.714286 1.000000

Analysis of Necessary Conditions | Outcome variable: ~civildisorder

Conditions tested:

Consistency Coverage

~ARREST+~FORCE+~PARTISANSHIP 1.000000 0.860000

~ARREST+~FORCE 1.000000 0.895833

~ARREST+~PARTISANSHIP 1.000000 0.871622

~FORCE+~PARTISANSHIP 1.000000 0.860000

TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS

Model: civildisorder=f(RESPECT, TOLERANCE, COMMUNICATION, ARREST, FORCE, PARTISANSHIP)

Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- COMPLEX SOLUTION ---

frequency cutoff: 2

consistency cutoff: 1

raw unique

coverage consistency

RESPECT*TOLERANCE*COMMUNICATION*ARREST*~FORCE 0.333333 0.333333 1

RESPECT*TOLERANCE*COMMUNICATION*FORCE*~PARTISANSHIP 0.619048 0.619048 1

solution coverage: 0.952381

solution consistency: 1

TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS

Model: civildisorder=f(RESPLECT, TOLERANCE, COMMUNICATION, ARREST, FORCE, PARTISANSHIP)
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION ---

frequency cutoff: 2
consistency cutoff: 1
raw unique
coverage consistency

ARREST 0.619048 0.333333 1
FORCE 0.619048 0.333333 1
solution coverage: 0.952381
solution consistency: 1

TRUTH TABLE ANALYSIS

Model: civildisorder=f(RESPLECT, TOLERANCE, COMMUNICATION, ARREST, FORCE, PARTISANSHIP)
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey

--- INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION ---

frequency cutoff: 2
consistency cutoff: 1
Assumptions:
ARREST (present)
FORCE (present)
PARTISANSHIP (present)
raw unique
coverage consistency

RESPLECT*TOLERANCE*COMMUNICATION*ARREST 0.619048 0.333333 1
RESPLECT*TOLERANCE*COMMUNICATION*FORCE 0.619048 0.333333 1
solution coverage: 0.952381
solution consistency: 1