

**CZECH TRANSITION TO
AND BACKSLIDING FROM DEMOCRACY:
WILL “TRUTH PREVAIL” OVER THE
ILLIBERAL CHALLENGE?**

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Dissertation Project
Masters in the International Relations

Lisbon
2020

Veritas vincit

Seek the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, hold the truth, and defend the truth until death. – Jan Hus

Democracy is not only a form of government, it is not only what is written in the Constitution; democracy is a perspective on life, it consists in the trust in people, in humanness and humanity, and there is no trust without love, no love without trust. I once said that democracy is a discussion. But true discussion is only possible, where people trust each other and honestly search for truth. Democracy, that is a conversation between equals, reflection of free citizens in front of the entire public. – Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk

Truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred. – Václav Havel

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Marcos Farias Ferreira, whose interactive cross-disciplinary classes on Russia motivated my choice of thesis topic and whose insightful reading recommendations and feedback helped me think beyond given theoretical and methodological concepts, and thus approach research in a more critical way.

Next, I would like to acknowledge all my other teachers at ISCSP whose lectures also had a significant impact on my thesis, particularly Professor Andreia Soares e Castro's classes on European Union, Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, and Professor Sandra Maria Rodrigues Balão's Geopolitics class.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my colleagues and friends from Lisbon, who accompanied and helped me on the International Relations journey, Julieta, Teo, Inês, Breno, and especially Pedro.

Most of all, I need to thank my one-year old daughter Sofia and my dear Aurelio for putting up with me throughout this process. A huge thanks goes to the rest of my family; I could not have done it without your love and support.

ABSTRACT

Democracy is in crisis around the world. Boosted by global phenomena such as globalization and the development of internet, along with a series of crises, which widened the gap between the elite and citizens, this trend was characterized by the rise of populism in both mature democracies and post-communist countries. The former model democratizers in Central-Eastern Europe turned into model democratic backsliders. The illiberal tendencies in the region have been generally judged by the Hungarian and Polish playbook. Although not as dramatically, also in Czech Republic democracy has been declining, mostly since the government of Andrej Babiš in 2017 and the reelection of Miloš Zeman president in 2018. This work examines the changes in the official post-1989 discourse through a two-dimensional discourse analysis, and thus explains what are the origins and character of the current democracy crisis, which arenas of democracy have been affected the most thus far, and finally if the “truth will prevail” over the illiberal challenge. Based on the theoretical concepts of democracy, transitology, democratic backsliding, populism and postfunctionalism, and an overview of historical-cultural context, we analyze the rhetorical strategies, domestic policy, and foreign policy dominant in the corpus of selected speeches of the Prime Minister and President. Next, we assess the impact of their new discourse on the arenas of democracy contrasting EIU’s *Democracy Index* and Freedom House’s *Nations in Transit* rankings. Overall, we sustain that the rise of the Czech illiberal populists has been rather a consequence than the origin of the current crisis, that the character of their new discourse is particular despite similarities with the backsliding neighbors, and finally, that there is hope for truth to prevail, consisting in a reform of certain arenas of the Czech democracy.

Keywords: Czech Republic; transitology; postfunctionalism; democratic backsliding; populism; discourse analysis

RESUMO

Democracia está em crise em todo o mundo. Reforçado pelos fenómenos globais como a globalização e o desenvolvimento da Internet, junto com uma série de crises, que aumentaram o fosso entre a elite e os cidadãos, esta dinâmica foi caracterizada pela ascensão de populismo em ambas democracias maduras e países pós-comunistas. Os antigos exemplos da democratização na Europa Central e de Leste tornaram-se exemplos de *democratic backsliding*. As tendências iliberais na região têm sido geralmente julgadas com base na cartilha húngara e polaca. Embora não tão dramaticamente, também a democracia na República Checa tem estado em declínio, sobretudo desde o início do governo de Andrej Babiš em 2017 e a reeleição presidencial de Miloš Zeman em 2018. Este trabalho examina as mudanças no discurso oficial pós-1989 através de uma análise de discurso de duas dimensões, e assim explica quais são as origens e o carácter da crise de democracia atual, quais arenas de democracia têm sido afetadas mais até agora, e finalmente se “a verdade prevalece” contra o desafio iliberal. Com base nos conceitos teóricos de democracia, transitologia, *democratic backsliding*, populismo e pósfuncionalismo, e um resumo do contexto histórico-cultural, analisamos as estratégias retóricas e as políticas doméstica e estrangeira dominantes no corpus de discursos selecionados do Primeiro-Ministro e do Presidente. Logo, avaliamos o impacto do seu novo discurso sobre as arenas de democracia contrastando os rankings do *Índice de Democracia* de EIU e de *Nations in Transit* de Freedom House. Contudo, defendemos que a ascensão dos populistas na República Checa tem sido uma consequência mais do que a origem da crise atual, que o carácter do seu novo discurso é particular apesar de semelhanças com os seus vizinhos em retrocesso, e finalmente que há esperança para a verdade prevalecer, consistindo numa reforma de certas arenas da democracia checa.

Palavras-chave: República Checa; transitologia; pósfuncionalismo; *democratic backsliding*; populismo; análise de discurso

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANO – Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (Czech political movement)

BIS – Security Information Service of the Czech Republic

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

CEFC – China Energy Company Limited

COVID-19 – coronavirus disease 2019

ČSSD – Czech Social Democratic Party (Czech political party)

EIU – The Economist Intelligence Unit

EU – European Union

Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance (Hungarian political party)

GAL – Green, Alternative, Libertarian

KSČM – Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

ODS - Civic Democratic Party (Czech political party)

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PiS – Law and Justice (Polish political party)

SPD – Freedom and Direct Democracy (Czech political movement)

TAN – Traditionalist, Authoritarianist, Nationalist

US – United States of America

V4 – The Visegrád Group or Visegrád Four

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1. INTRODUCTION

Multiple reports confirm that global dissatisfaction with democracy has been growing for the past years, reaching its record in 2019, and affecting even mature democracies. The euphoria from the triumph of democracy marking the “end of history” after the end of the Cold War was replaced with gloomy discussions of democratic backsliding and even democratic reversal in many parts of the world. The series of global crises such as the economic crisis in 2008, the migrant crisis in 2015, and most recently the coronavirus crisis in 2020 have been deemed responsible for this regression, along with new challenges such as the globalization, the development of the internet, particularly the social media, or the hybrid warfare employed chiefly by China and Russia. In fact, the macrostructural conditions revealed the growing gap between the political elite and much of the electorate when it comes to the liberal democratic consensus. Consequently, the unexpected events of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump signaled the rise of populism, whose proponents politicized the issues traditional parties failed to address, offering the deluded voters quick and simple solutions to the complex problems. On one hand, these changes were positive for democracy boosting political participation due to global protests and higher voter turnout, on the other, populist policies led to “executive aggrandizement” in certain democracies limiting the rule of law and civil liberties. The latter trend has been exemplified by the one-time democratization frontrunners Hungary and Poland, nevertheless the neighboring Czech Republic has also been derailing from its official course taken after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, particularly since the first government of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš in 2017 and the reelection of President Miloš Zeman in 2018.

Taking into account the country’s historical experience marked by 41 years of communist dictatorship preceded by the occupation of Nazis during the Second World War, I find essential to explore the origins of this retreat of democracy and look for its solutions to preserve the country’s freedom and its integration in the Western international structures. Furthermore, democratic backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe is a current, and thus relevant phenomenon, however the research has been dominated by analyses of Hungary and Poland leaving the case of the Czech Republic insufficiently investigated. Moreover, the choice of topic has been motivated by my Czech origin, which can represent an advantage, enabling an insider perspective in the cultural-historical context especially through reading

in the Czech language¹ and life-long exposure to Czech education and media. Simultaneously, the personal importance of the topic could potentially cloud judgement, nevertheless it is important to note that there was a physical distancing from the object of the study during the redaction of this thesis, as I studied in Portugal and lived in Italy. In order to assess the current retreat of democracy in the Czech Republic and the associated risk of the country's sliding back to totality, I will demonstrate in a two-dimensional discourse analysis how has the official political discourse transformed since the transition from communism to democracy in 1989 and which pillars of democracy have been the most affected thus far. While the first dimension focusing on a sub-systemic level of analysis is based on a selected corpus of speeches of the current political leaders, President Miloš Zeman and Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, the second dimension offers a systemic perspective founded on a comparison of international democracy ranking indices, the *Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index* and the *Freedom House's Nations in Transit*. Considering the breadth of the subject of democracy and the related (de)democratization processes, in contrast to the limited length of the thesis, there was a need to focus on a single case study and select a temporal framing for a more in-depth analysis.

In sum, my work asks the following the research questions and proposes hypotheses:

1. *What are the origins and character of the retreat of democracy in the Czech Republic?*

HYPOTHESIS 1: Thanks to the mobilization of exclusive identity following a series of internal and external crises, which caused the dislocation of the official post-transition discourse, populist TAN forces, represented by the current Prime Minister Babiš and President Zeman, managed to rise to power, and gradually implement “executive aggrandizement”.

2. *Which arenas of democracy have been the most affected and why?*

HYPOTHESIS 2: Due to the accumulation of economic, political and media power in the hands of the Prime Minister, coupled with president's attempts at stretching his constitutional powers, no arena of democracy has been left intact, with the political society being affected the most so far.

¹ All used texts originally in the Czech language were translated into English by the author of this research.

As for the structure of the thesis, in the *Theoretical Framework*, we will review and critically evaluate the literature concerning transitions to and backsliding from democracy. First and foremost, we will attempt to conceptualize democracy, considering its minimalist and maximalist definitions in *The Concept of Democracy* chapter. Next, we will discuss democratization process through the optics of the *Transition Paradigm and its Critics*. The chapter entitled *Problems of Democracy* will investigate the “reverse transition paradigm” and the reasons behind de-democratization process, defining the related phenomena of *Democratic Backsliding* and *Populism*. Finally, the chapter *Postfunctionalism* analyzes the democratization and de-democratization processes within the context of the European (dis)integration theories. The section dedicated to *Methodological Options* offers a short overview of the developments in the social science research on the Central and Eastern European region, and specifically the Czech case, presents discourse analysis as the preferred *Research Theory*, and lastly explains the choice and employment of methods as part of the *Research Strategy*. Before else, the *Empirical Investigation* highlights important historically specific discourses in the chapter *Historical-Cultural Context*, which have formed *Czech Identity Post-1989* and contributed to *Czech Identity Today*. Based on the outcomes of the discourse analysis, the chapter dedicated to the *New Official Discourse(s)* will present the rhetorical strategies and dominant domestic and foreign policy agenda of the President and the Prime Minister, with a special focus on their construction of social antagonism. The penultimate chapter entitled *Impact of the New Discourse on the Arenas of Democracy* contrasts and evaluates the international scores of the Czech democracy pillars converting them into the five variables of democratic consolidation, “arenas of democracy” as suggested by Linz and Stepan (1996). In conclusion, synthesizing the findings from the theoretical and empirical parts we will answer the question enunciated in the subtitle of this thesis, *Will “Truth Prevail” over the Illiberal Challenge?*

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The Concept of Democracy

Democracy, derived from the Greek terms *demos* (the people), and *kratein* (rule), is usually understood as “a form of government in which the sovereign power resides in the people as a whole” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). People may partake in the decision-making directly or through elected officials, as there are two types of democracy, direct and representative. Besides this dual differentiation, the term has been modified by hundreds of adjectives with the goal of characterizing the diverse subtypes of democracy. In his famous essay “The End of the Transition Paradigm”, Carothers (2002, p. 10) names some of these new terms denoting “qualified democracy” in countries transitioning from post-authoritarian regimes: “semi-democracy, formal democracy, electoral democracy, façade democracy, pseudo-democracy, weak democracy, partial democracy, illiberal democracy, and virtual”. This reveals the complexity of the concept at hand and the issues arising with the attempts to define or measure it. Contemporary Western democracy, which originated in the city-states of Classical Athens and the Roman Republic, and further developed with the emergence of nation-states, is most often described as liberal. Influenced by the ideas of the architects of classical liberalism, particularly the philosopher John Locke and the economist Adam Smith, this form of government combines electoral democracy with the protection of civil liberties, hence emphasizing the separation of powers, rule of law and a system of checks and balances. Overall, in the words of the father of transitology, Rustow (1970, p. 339), democracy can nowadays be understood as “a process of ‘accommodation’ involving a combination of ‘division and cohesion’ and of ‘conflict and consent’”.

According to Professor Stanislav Štěpáník (2018), most Western transitologists base their theories on the conceptual models of democracy developed by Joseph Schumpeter (1942) and Robert A. Dahl (1971). Schumpeter’s classical elitist model perceives democracy as a mechanism for competition between leaders. Besides contestation, Dahl also stresses participation in his two-dimensional model of polyarchy, a term describing actual democratic governance, as he deems the democratic ideal-type unachievable. In sum, both definitions of democracy can be considered minimalist. Compared to the maximalist approach, which is of little analytical use, minimalist definitions of democracy are preferred by many theorists and particularly ranking institutions. However, they can obscure reality leading to misevaluation and subsequent misclassification of diverse cases under one subtype.

In order to avoid negative evaluations, many studies fall back on a minimalist definition of democracy based on electoral democracy with its “free” elections and some basic human rights. Supposedly, this allows these polities to qualify as democracies but at the high price of ignoring the “unfair” illusory and non-representative nature of their elections and the actual socio-political exclusion of large communities, which prevents them from enjoying their individual freedoms. (Ágh, 2016, p. 9-10)

Taking into account the fading dichotomy between democracy and autocracy due to the growing number of countries “in the gray zone”, Professor Attila Ágh alerts against such simplistic definitions suggesting a new system for defining the opposing regimes that would capture all the subtypes in between. Licia Cianetti, James Dawson and Seán Hanley (2018, p. 247) also denounce the present system of democratic measurement as flawed, “prone to inflating the democratic credentials of states whose political elites are willing to undertake superficial institutional reforms without any broader societal process to validate and embed the values implied by those institutions”. Consequently, the authors point to the difference between democratic stability and quality, advocating a Tillyan process-oriented perspective of democracy analysis.

In his book *Democracy* (2007, p. 10), Charles Tilly distinguishes four main types of definitions of democracy: constitutional, substantive, procedural, and process-oriented. While Dahl’s five criteria² for an ideal democracy fall in the last category, Tilly claims that they read as “a static yes-no checklist”. Instead, he proposes comparing the degree of democracy in diverse regimes, but also following the processes of democratization and de-democratization in individual regimes through time. Thus, he rejects solely searching for definitions of an ideal-type political system and of conditions to achieve and maintain it, considering that “democratization is a dynamic process that always remains incomplete and perpetually runs the risk of reversal – of de-democratization” (p. xi). Taking into account the three historical waves of democratization, as popularized by the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (1991)³, we may agree that transition to democracy is quite an unpredictable process, as it emerges in the world at different times and follows diverse paths, which can, but do not necessarily have to, result in a democratic consolidation. According to Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996), democracy becomes the only game in town when the following five interactive arenas are in place: “a lively civil society, a relatively autonomous political society, a rule of law, a usable state, and an economic society” (p. XIV). Furthermore, the

² In *Democracy and Its Critics* (1989, p. 37-38), Robert Dahl lists the following criteria as conditions to reach the ideal of democracy: effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda and the inclusion of adults.

³ In his book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Huntington distinguishes three waves of democratization: the first “slow” wave of the 19th century, a second wave after World War II, and a third wave beginning in the mid-1970s in South Europe, then Latin America and Asia.

comparatists consider other seven independent generic variables: two “macrovariables” of prior regime type and stateness, two actor-centered referring to the leadership of the pre-transition regime and during the transition, and three context-centered concerning the international influence, the impact of political economy, and constitution-making environments. Considering the reversibility of the transition process, some theorists question the adequacy of consolidation as a concept. Nevertheless, the leading scholars in the field of democratic studies, Donald L. Horowitz and Larry Diamond (2014, p. 94), acknowledge it as a category of though representing “the crossing of some threshold of stability, of solidity, of consensus”.

2.2 The Transition Paradigm and its Critics

With the “third wave” of democratization, a global trend “away from dictatorial rule toward more liberal and often more democratic governance” (Carothers, 2002, p. 5) affecting seven different regions of the world⁴, many scholars from the fields of political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology, strived to answer the genetic question of democracy identifying conditions that both enable and preserve the regime. While some explained the political system changes as a result of social and economic development (S. M. Lipset’s theory of modernization), others stressed the need for particular psychological attitudes in citizens (E. Barker’s “Agreement to Differ”) or analyzed the social structures (A. Gidden’s structuration theory). With his renowned essay, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model” (1970), Dankwart Rustow, the German professor of political science and sociology, broke from the predominant schools, criticizing their methodological shortcomings and introducing a new model of transitions to democracy. When it comes to methodology, Rustow emphasizes distinguishing between genesis and function, as well as correlation and causation in the explanations of democracy. Consisting of preparatory, decision and habituation phases, his transition model recognizes a single background condition, national unity. Thus, Rustow rejects other often proposed preconditions of democracy, “e.g. high levels of economic and social development or a prior consensus either on fundamentals

⁴ In his essay “The End of the Transition Paradigm”, Carothers (2002, p. 5) identifies the following trends: “1) the fall of right-wing authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s; 2) the replacement of military dictatorships by elected civilian governments across Latin America from the late 1970s through the late 1980s; 3) the decline of authoritarian rule in parts of East and South Asia starting in the mid-1980s; 4) the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s; 5) the breakup of the Soviet Union and the establishment of 15 post-Soviet republics in 1991; 6) the decline of one-party regimes in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the first half of the 1990s; and 7) a weak but recognizable liberalizing trend in some Middle Eastern countries in the 1990s.”

or on the rules” (p. 362). Based on the democratization framework put forward by Rustow, a “loosely related body of diverse literature” developed, entitled transitology (Gans-Morse, p. 322).

Early transitologists, such as O'Donnell⁵ and Schmitter (1986), produced their transition models on the cases of democratizing regimes in Southern Europe and Latin America. In their four volume seminal work *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, they draw a distinction between liberalization and democratization, dividing the democratization process in two phases, the transition itself and consolidation. Like Rustow, the comparatists stress the “no preconditions” perspective and the role of elite bargaining, while downplaying the importance of civil society and international actors. Including the transitioning Eastern European regimes in his article *Democracy and the Market; Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (1991), Adam Przeworski accentuates that the process of liberalization does not always grow into the phase of democratization, and thus can easily be reversed. Nonetheless, the so called “transition paradigm” developed by the above mentioned scholars, has been deemed inapplicable to post-communist studies by many critics for its limitedness to a specific region and period, hence inadequate variables, and finally its teleological tendency characterized by a linear historical progression towards a single endpoint. Considering the importance of international factors and mass protests in the post-communist transitions, but especially the overall diversity of the *democratizing* regions when it comes to historical legacies, ethnicity and religion, most scholars who decided to construct their research on the transitologist approach often had to modify it or combine it with other existing theories in order to accommodate these specificities.

For instance, the British political expert Taras Kuzio (2001) draws attention to the post-communist uniqueness issue asserting that the early area transitologists were limited to the analysis of double transitions of democratization and marketization as in Southern Europe and Latin America, while neglecting the problems of stateness and nationality. Consequently, he stresses the utmost importance of the two variables for a successful consolidation of democracy in the studied region, reconceptualizing the post-communist transitions as triple, in Central-Eastern Europe, and even quadruple, in the Soviet successor states. One of the most prominent transitologist critics, Thomas Carothers (2002), questions the universal transition

⁵ Guillermo O'Donnell, unlike Philippe C. Schmitter, never considered himself a ‘transitologist’. (Biekart, 2015)

paradigm all together, deconstructing its five core assumptions while putting forward multiple “gray-zone” cases of alleged “transitional” countries that are not in fact in transition to democracy, but to other types of hybrid regimes. Addressing the teleological problem, the sociologist Paul Blokker (2005) argues to discard the “convergence thesis” of the transition paradigm and rather embrace the diversity created by the EU enlargement acknowledging there are as many “modernities”, as there are “modernizing agents”. Similarly, the anthropologist Manduhai Buyandelgeriyn (2008, p. 236) criticizes the transitologist notion of a “single modernity as an objective stage of a unilinear history at which all societies arrive at some point through a complete break with the past”, while emphasizing the multidimensionality of experiences following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and thus the necessity to consider the specific cultural and historical context of post-communist countries.

Nevertheless, many transitologists have later on distanced themselves from the simplistic and universalistic theories of democratization of the post-1989 period prompted by the Fukuyama's End of History (1989, p. 1) thesis proclaiming “the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”. In a 2014 panel discussion (p. 93), Fukuyama himself stated that “there’s no reason to think there is a necessary one-way movement of history. All along we should have been focusing on the institutionalization of democracy much more than on the initial ending of autocracy.” O'Donnell, on the other hand, believed his *Transitions* work has been misinterpreted by critics when it comes to the open-endedness and outcomes of the transition process. In his essay “Illusions about Consolidation” (1996, p. 41), he even attacked his academic colleagues’ concept of democratic consolidation as teleological and static, stressing the importance of “informal institutionalization” of democracy instead:

Polyarchies are regimes, but not all polyarchies are the same kind of regime. Here we see the ambiguity of the assertion made by Juan J. Linz, Adam Przeworski, and others who argue that consolidation occurs when democracy becomes ‘the only game in town’... Przeworski argues that democratic consolidation occurs ‘when no one can imagine acting outside the democratic institutions’. But this does not preclude the possibility that the games played ‘inside’ the democratic institutions are different from the ones dictated by their formal rules.

Based on his broad review of post-communist transition literature, Gans-Morse (2004, p. 338) concludes that it is not clear whether the open-ended transformation approach suggested by many critics “is a superior theoretical framework to a carefully formulated, closed-ended conception of transition”, considering the importance of comparison, and thus the necessity of regime ideal types, in understanding diversity. That is why, despite O’Donnell’s critique,

this research will employ the transition variables as suggested by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan's in their study *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (1996). Exceptionally, the comparatists managed to incorporate the post-communist cases in the transition literature, while taking into account the major issues discussed also by many of the critics listed above, thus creating a synthesis of "antecedent regime or legacies approach with that of liberal imperatives" (Chessa, 1997, p. 381).

2.3 Problems of Democracy

In general, transitologists⁶ agree that a successful transition does not rule out the possibility of a future regime breakdown. However, such a reversal, Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 6) claim, "would not be related to weaknesses or problems specific to the historic process of democratic consolidation per se, but to a new dynamic in which the democratic regime cannot solve a set of problems, a nondemocratic alternative gains significant supporters, and former democratic regime loyalists begin to behave in a constitutionally disloyal or semiloyal manner." In this regard many recent critics disagree, demanding the joining of the democratic transition and democratic breakdown literatures, as the processes of democratization and de-democratization are two sides of the same coin. In fact, as early as in 1997, Fareed Zakaria warned against the rise of illiberal democracy. Despite the third wave of democratization, half of the transitioning countries failed to grow into liberal democracies, emphasizing the minimalist election-centered definition of democracy: "(...) without a background in *constitutional liberalism*, the introduction of democracy in divided societies has actually fomented nationalism, ethnic conflict, and even war." (p. 35) In this sense, Zakaria argues, the Central European countries were more successful thanks to their historical experience with liberalism. Overall, the author underlines the need for the basic tenants of liberal governance, respect for the civil rights and the rule of law, which alone can keep democracy in check, and hence prevent the usurpation of power by demagogues.

⁶ Compare with Gans-Morse (2004, p. 336): "Scholars of post-communist regime change on average have been remarkably cautious, if not downright pessimistic, with regard to their predictions concerning the prospects of democracy and capitalism in the post-communist region. They have recognized the possibility of multiple outcomes of transition, including the revival of authoritarianism, new forms of hybrid regimes, or some entirely unpredictable turn of events."

Many famous thinkers since Classical antiquity alerted against the potentially dangerous nature of democracy as a form of government. That is why a series of documents such as the American Constitution or the Helsinki Final Act were drafted to codify certain “unalienable” human rights, and thus regulate democracies. In his famous book entitled *Democracy in America* (1835), Alexis Tocqueville, besides listing the advantages of democracy, also discusses some of the problems which may arise from democratic rule. Firstly, he warns against the tyranny of the majority: “the very essence of democratic governments is that the dominion of the majority be absolute; for, in democracies, nothing outside of the majority can offer resistance.” (2010, p. 403) John Stuart Mill echoes his preoccupation about direct democracy in his book *On Liberty* (1859, p. 8):

The will of the people, moreover, practically means the will of the most numerous or the most active part of the people; the majority, or those who succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority; the people, consequently may desire to oppress a part of their number; and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power.

Furthermore, both authors agree that democracy may produce ineffective government due to fragmented political parties, incompetent leaders, and thus inefficient policies. Finally, they consider negative effects of the masses on culture and morals of the society. Moreover, at times the unidentifiable governing mass denominated “the people”, can easily give way to demagoguery embodied by populist politicians, but also to authoritarianism masked as democracy. Hungary’s Viktor Orbán is a great example of both problems of democracy, as his speeches “envisioning an ‘illiberal state’ show precisely how illiberal actors can ‘think, speak, and act outside ...institution seven as they are inside them’ and in so doing change those institutions” (Dawson & Hanley, p. 715).

Even in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which Zakaria called successful in introducing liberal democracy, “malaise about democracy became the dominant mood (...) with a populist turn and growing Euroscepticism”, the Hungarian Professor Attila Ágh argues (2016, p. 13). In fact, as there was a positive scholarly consensus about the region’s exemplary democratic consolidation in the 90s, today there is a growing negative consensus that democracies across the region are “in decline and some might be ‘backsliding’ towards semi-authoritarian hybrid regimes or even full authoritarianism” according to Licia Cianetti and Seán Hanley (2020). Consequently, the once model democratizers, Hungary and Poland, are now treated as model democratic backsliders. In this sense, the authors discourage scholars from perceiving the whole region through the same lens, and thus falling into the trap

of a “reverse transition paradigm”. In an earlier essay, the authors together with James Dawson (2018, p. 245) also denounce this tendency, advancing that only a few scholars offer “a coherent comparative perspective” of diverse causes for democratic decline across the region. As for the temporal frame of the democratic change in the CEE region, Ágh asserts that consolidation, the key transitologist term of the 1990s, has been replaced by deconsolidation/decline/backsliding in the 2010s. In addition, he claims that the process of deconsolidation in the region has begun already under the Old World Order in early 90s owing to the “contrast between the presence of formal-legal democratization and the lack of social consolidation” (p. 13) boosted by the triple crises⁷. Under the New World Order, the process of deconsolidation in the CEE region was only sped up by the changes in global security and economy, and the emerging EU’s geopolitical crisis. Enhanced by the Refugee crisis, the sweeping victory of populism in the Visegrád countries, facilitated the formulation of a common agenda and thus enabled the emergence of V4 as a collective regional actor within the EU in 2016 (Koš & Séville, 2020). This so called “unholy alliance”, overstressing national sovereignty while opposing mainstream EU policies, has changed its strategy from the “return to Europe” to a “return to the past” (Ágh, 2016, p. 25).

2.3.1 Democratic Backsliding

As mentioned above, the concept of democratic backsliding is increasingly used when referring to the deteriorating democratic regimes across the globe, and of course in the CEE region. In their article, Licia Cianetti and Seán Hanley (2020) affirm that the interest in the phenomenon has “exploded” among scholars in the past decade, reaching almost thousand Google search results in 2018. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the term *backslide* accordingly: “to lapse morally or in the practice of religion” or subsequently “to revert to a worse condition”. Due to the original religious meaning, Cianetti, Dawson and Hanley highlight, that the label “democratic backsliding” has been criticized for its “moralistic and normative overtones” (2018, p. 253). Also called democratic erosion, the term represents a wide range of negative phenomena including multiple processes and agents. More precisely, scholars employ this label when investigating “changes in formal or informal institutions that move the polity in the direction of a hybrid or authoritarian regime” (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018, p. 278). Perceiving democracy as “a collage of institutions” that can be put together and taken apart, Nancy Bermeo (2016, p. 14) argues that there has always been democratic

⁷ The ECE transformation crisis, post-accession adjustment crisis and the crisis over competitiveness due to the global fiscal crisis. (Ágh, 2016, p. 15)

backsliding, it has only become more vague, and therefore more difficult to detect by international observers. Consequently, she manifests that following the end of the Cold War, open-ended coups d'état were replaced by *promissory coups*, executive coups by *executive aggrandizement* and election-day vote fraud by *longer-term strategic harassment and manipulation* (p. 6)⁸. As a result, contemporary democratic backsliding tends to be more gradual rather than rapid and radical. Often executed by a democratically elected official, it can lead to the weakening of democracy and subsequent formation of a hybrid regime or full authoritarianism. On the other hand, Ellen Lust and David Waldner (2015, p. 6) see democratic backsliding as changes affecting the three realms of competitive electoral procedures, civil and political liberties, and accountability, recognizing without precedent that the “apparent setbacks in democratic practices and institutions may ultimately provide context or catalysts for further democratization”. Offering a different structural approach to the phenomenon than Bermeo, they identify six theory families: *political leadership*, *political culture*, *political institutions*, *political economy*, *social structure*, and *political coalitions*, and finally, *international factors*. These families are treated as switches producing changes in outcomes including backsliding based on three types of causes: *long* and *short-term*, *supply* and *demand-side*, *institutional* and *systemic*. For example, the theory of political leadership exemplifies institutional choices of agents that can be considered short-term, directed at the supply-side, while the structural theories of political economy influence political outcomes systemically both in the short and long-term and are controlled by both the supply and demand-sides. Overall, they stress the need to transition from non-testable overly abstract theories to specific hypotheses subject to testing, which, in fact, they present in their work in great numbers.

As suggested in the previous chapter, scholars tend to explain the malaise about democracy in the Eastern-Central European countries based on the Hungarian and Polish playbook: “illiberal populist party winning an absolute parliamentary majority and embarking on a conservative-nationalist project, concentrating executive power, stripping away or disabling checks and balances, and exerting partisan control over public institutions” (Cianetti, Dawson & Hanley, 2018, p. 245). In their recent article, Cianetti and Hanley (2020)

⁸*Promissory coups* are temporary and framed as a necessary step toward a new and improved democratic order. In *executive aggrandizement*, elected executives slowly weaken checks and balances, limiting the power of opposition. *Longer-term strategic harassment and manipulation* can consist in hampering media access, using government funds for incumbent campaigns, keeping opposition candidates off the ballot, hampering voter registration, packing electoral commissions, changing electoral rules to favor incumbents, and harassing opponents. (Bermeo, 2016, p. 6)

note that some forms of change in democracies may fit this backsliding model “only awkwardly” and the case of the Czech Republic proves their argument. For example, despite the similarities in forms of concentrating power, Babiš’s ANO party “lacks a powerful narrative of Czech nationalism” compared to Orbán’s Fidesz and Kaczyński’s PiS (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018, p. 278). Furthermore, Babiš amassed great political, economic and media power as an oligarch before creating the ANO “anti-corruption” party. This shows that the “entrenchment of private interests in the state and in party politics” rather than a grand nationalist narrative, as well as “political disruption” rather than a transformation of existing traditional political parties can represent an alternative route to backsliding (Cianetti, Dawson & Hanley, 2018, p. 249). Contrasting the Czech case with the more radical Hungarian and Polish cases, Hanley and Vachudova (2018, p. 278) conclude that Babiš “may represent a quieter politics of backsliding that is just as consequential in the longer term”. Moreover, Cianetti, Dawson and Hanley (2018, p. 251) alert against abusing the label of democratic backsliding when studying the (un)democratic changes in the CEE region, for “not all forms of destabilization of the status quo necessarily imply backsliding”. Distinguishing between illiberal turns and swerves, Bustikova and Guasti (2017), claim that with the exception of Hungary, the rest of the V4 countries are not, in fact, experiencing backsliding but a series of volatile episodes, so called swerves. Supported by a number of factors such as the rise of populism and “uncivil society”, these processes are allegedly temporary and reversible, but can grow into illiberal turns under three conditions: “executive aggrandizement, contested sovereignty that increases polarization, and dominant party winning two consecutive elections” (p. 168). Overall, Cianetti, Dawson and Hanley (2018, p. 247) deem backsliding a “problematic” concept, as it is constructed on the assumption of a successful democratization based on institutionally-oriented measurements and the Copenhagen criteria which often distort the reality of actual democratic progress in the post-communist region.

2.3.2 Populism

The emergence of the phenomenon of democratic backsliding has been associated with a “broader global populist trend challenging liberal democracy” (Cianetti, Dawson & Hanley, 2018, p. 245). Following the Second World War, right-wing authoritarian populism was thought to be defeated. However, Timbro’s annual report (2019) documents its continuing rise

in Europe since the 1980s. Having gained significant support over the past decade⁹, authoritarian populism has become the second biggest ideology in Europe, trumping liberalism, equating social democracy, and challenging conservatism. Nonetheless, the report warns against “avantgardes”, comparing the ideology to fascism or communism. Despite being fundamentally anti-liberal, it can also be considered fundamentally democratic:

In essence, populism raises the question of who controls the controllers. As it tends to distrust any unelected institution that limits the power of the demos, populism can develop into a form of democratic extremism or, better said, of illiberal democracy. (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 82)

Just like democratic backsliding, the term populism creates conceptual confusion as it takes on different meanings around the world. In their book entitled *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (2017, p. 3-4), Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, recapitulate the most common six perspectives of the concept, used in diverse academic and geographical areas. The popular agency approach views the phenomenon as an overall positive popular mobilization force. Laclauan approach goes even further, identifying liberal democracy as the problem and populism as the “emancipatory force” towards radical democracy. Next, the socioeconomic approach understands populism as an irresponsible policy involving “too much redistribution of wealth and government spending”. A recent approach perceives populism as a political strategy of a strong charismatic leader, while yet another perspective associates the term with a “folkloric style of politics”. Adhering to an ideational approach, which combines many of the ideas mentioned above, the authors finally define populism followingly:

(...) a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. (p. 6)

Defined by what it opposes, essentially elitism and pluralism, the authors stress the transitory and flexible nature of the phenomenon. Consequently, besides the key aspect of morality, populists take advantage of the vagueness of the core concepts: the people, the elite and general will¹⁰. These terms are further adapted by the populists based on secondary criteria such as political power, socioeconomic status, and nationality.

⁹ Support for left-wing populism grew following the financial crisis, between 2009-2014, especially in Southern Europe. While right-wing populism gained strength with the migration crisis, between 2014-2018, particularly in the CEE region. (Timbro, 2019)

¹⁰ While the term the people can be understood as sovereign, the common people or as the nation; the elite can stand for political establishment, the economic elite, the cultural elite, or the media. General will is best

Thanks to viewing populism as an ideology, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) manage to analyze both the demand and supply side of populist politics. As for the supply side, the authors identify three types of populist mobilization: personalist leadership, social movement, and political party, while the common model is a “top-down mobilization around a strong populist leader” (p. 55). Most often, populist leaders carefully construct their image based on an insider-outsider status¹¹ and authenticity, depending on their host ideology and society’s political culture. Presenting themselves as the charismatic strong men, vox populi, entrepreneurs or ethnic leaders, they often create a sense of crisis to effectively politicize certain issues important to the people and neglected by the elite. When analyzing the demand for populism, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 100) stress the importance of specific socioeconomic and sociopolitical context, in which “threats to the very existence of society are present”. Accordingly, the Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index explains the current rise of populism in Europe as fueled by “popular dissatisfaction with elites, immigration and supranationalism” (Timbro, 2019, p. 30). On a more theoretical level, Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2019), explore the demand side of the phenomenon through the economic inequality perspective and the cultural backlash thesis. While the first theory emphasizes economic reasons behind the rise of populism, taking into account the winners and losers of globalization, the second theory perceives it as a social psychological phenomenon, “a silent counter-revolution” (p. 15) of traditionalists against post-materialists. Overall, populism may have both positive and negative impact on liberal democracy. Through politization, it gives voice to people who feel underrepresented by the elite. However, in promoting majority rule without constraints, it can also endanger minority rights. Consequently, it also plays a different role in each stage of (de)democratization: acting as “a positive force for democracy” in the first stage of liberalization, defending election rights during the democratic transition, but opposing the final stage of democratic deepening (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 88). Finally, the governing parties in Poland and Hungary, PiS and Fidesz, described as “challengers to the European consensus and politics as usual” (Timbro, 2019, p. 8), are great examples of populism’s decisive role in the process of de-democratization.

expressed through direct democracy and can “legitimize authoritarianism and illiberal attacks on anyone who (allegedly) threatens the homogeneity of the people”. (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 18)

¹¹ Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, p. 75) define insider-outsiders as “men and women who have never been members of the political elite, i.e., the inner circle of the political regime, but have (strong) connections to them”.

2.4 Postfunctionalism

With the goal of finding answers to the recent de-democratization and de-Europeanization processes in the Czech Republic, and in the CEE region in general, we need to analyze the phenomenon within the context of the European integration. After all, democratization in the countries in question was possible particularly thanks to the EU's pre-accession "interest- and incentive-based frameworks" related to the fundamental *Copenhagen criteria*, but also to the more specific EU rules of the *acquis*. Many scholars, including Linz and Stepan (1996), assumed that the leverage created by these conditionalities would produce "a cultural lock-in mechanism: over time, actors eventually shift from meeting liberal-democratic standards because of a rationalist cost-benefit calculus to genuine 'hearts and minds' commitments based on a logic of appropriateness and identity change" (Dawson & Hanley, 2019, p. 712). However, already in the 90s, other academics were wary of the over-optimism when it comes to the "automatic effects" of the EU membership, deeming impossible the replication of the Western model in the East in such a short period of time due to contradictions between political, economic and social transformations.¹² Besides the positive impact of the EU conditionalities on the new democracies, Ágh (2016, p. 15) draws attention to "negative externalities" of EU's modernizing transnational actions which together with the triple crises allegedly exacerbated the internal problems of the triple transition. Despite the potential negative side-effects of EU's actions, many authors view precisely "the falling away of EU accession conditionalities and the Union's subsequent inability to sanction backsliding member states" (Cianetti, Dawson, Hanley, 2018, p. 245) as the cause of the current backsliding tendency in the region. Taking into account the diverse challenges that the democracies in the CEE region face, we will explore the European (dis)integration theory of postfunctionalism, developed by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks in 2009 with the aim of interpreting these new empirical facts escaping the existing theories, namely, neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism.

Rooted in diverse literature, all three schools attempt to explain the course of European integration identifying chief actors and suggesting paths of inquiry. While in neofunctionalism promoted by Ernst B. Haas, further regional integration is achieved through the cooperation and competition of societal actors leading to a spillover of policies,

¹² For example, the British-German sociologist, Ralf Dahrendorf (1990), alerted that "political-legal transformation requires about six months while economic transformation takes six years and social transformation 60 years". (Ágh, 2016, p. 12)

in intergovernmentalism proposed by Stanley Hoffmann and refined by Andrew Moravcsik, national governments, respectively their economic and issue-specific interests, determine the level and speed of integration. Both theories perceive the future of European integration positively, as their key actors are motivated by economic gains. Postfunctionalism, on the other hand, “agnostic” about functionality of decision making and its outcomes, draws attention to “the disruptive potential of a clash between functional pressures and exclusive identity” (Hoogh & Marks, 2019, p. 1116) which may result in constraining European integration. Adopting a multi-level governance approach, the postfunctionalist theory acknowledges the impact of domestic conflict on the course of European integration. Its authors argue that the elite-centered debate over Europe changed with the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, when European issues entered the arena of mass politics, and thus public opinion became “a field of strategic interaction among party elites in their contest for political power” (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 9). Consequently, they analyze the causes and effects of this politization, constructing the following model:

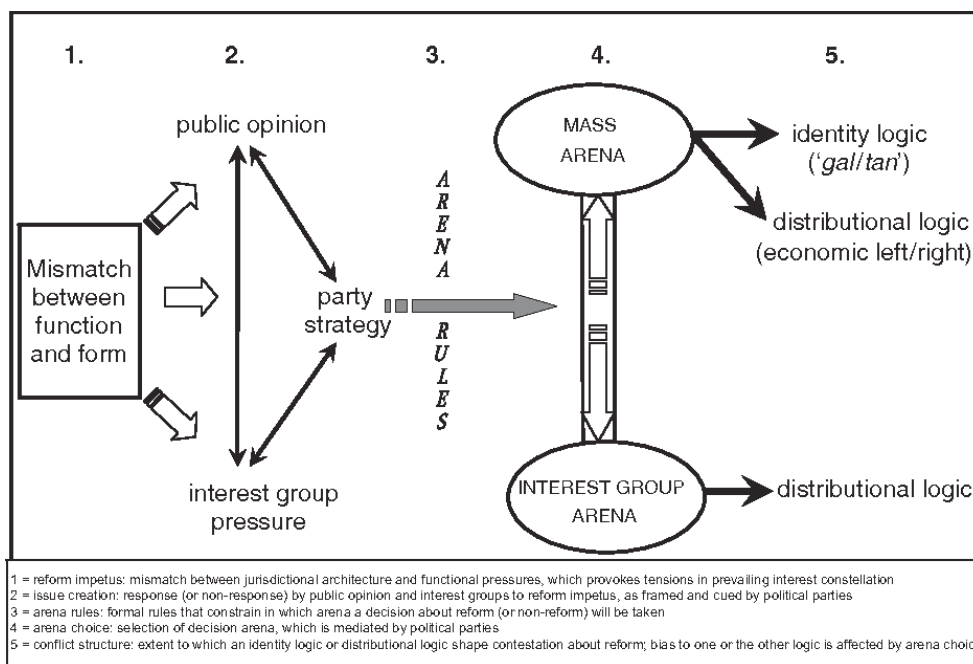


Figure 1. A model of domestic politization (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 9)

Identity, either *inclusive* or *exclusive*, having a significant impact on the formation of public opinion, becomes the subject of mobilization reflected in the *GAL/TAN* social dimension of party politics. As traditional parties fail to accommodate the pre-material values introduced by the European integration within the *left/right* contestation, Eurosceptic populist *tan* parties

cue¹³ these issues to mass publics that identify as exclusive nationals, thus restraining EU treaty bargaining and compromise overall. Accordingly, postfunctionalism calls attention to the fact that besides functional and distributional pressures, European integration is driven by identity politics.

The founder of liberal intergovernmentalism, Andrew Moravcsik, calls postfunctionalism a non-testable theory, claiming that public pressure on the EU remains an “issue-driven phenomenon”, while defending the continuation of trend toward transnational interdependence and intergovernmental problem-solving (Moravcsik, 2018). In turn, Hooghe and Marks discard his critique for downplaying the impact of the rise of migration and populism on European integration, stressing, in defense of their theory, that “ideology, identity and the desire for self-rule, are no less rational or irrational than the pursuit of material self-interest” (2020, p. 506). Borzel and Risse (2017) point to postfunctionalism’s inability of explaining the Euro crisis which, unlike the Schengen crisis, resulted in a deepening of the integration through supranational delegation, accentuating that inclusive national identities can be mobilized too. Despite its critics, the theory of postfunctionalism can shed light on the current de-democratization processes taking place in the studied post-communist region of Central-Eastern Europe. Leaders of all three governing *tan* parties, Fidesz in Hungary, PiS in Poland, and ANO in the Czech Republic have been systematically utilizing exclusive identity mobilization during their rise to power and in office. Thanks to the politization of European issues, they started implementing “executive aggrandizement”, leading to a progressive dismantling of checks and balances (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018).

¹³ Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 13) distinguish the following phases of public opinion construction: “priming (making a consideration salient), framing (connecting a particular consideration to a political object) and cueing (instilling a bias)”.

3. METHODOLOGICAL OPTIONS

When it comes to social sciences research of the changes following 1989 in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, these have been investigated as part of *transitology* or *transition studies*, introduced in the theoretical part of my work. According to Petsinis's qualitative study (2010) covering 362 relevant articles published between 1989 and 2009, most of the early transitologist literature emerged in the field of political science and sociology, employed qualitative methods, and explored predominantly the political side of transitions. With the fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria and the subsequent accession of the post-Communist states to the European Union, the democratization process was deemed successful, and thus the focus of social sciences research shifted from the analyses of transitions to the integration of the new member states into the European structures. In other words, the case studies carried out in the first half of the 1990s preferred rather "inward-looking" approaches concentrating on the internal transition processes and potentially regional comparisons, while the research in the second half of the 1990s took on "macro-level" approaches to assess these developments on a supranational level. Petsinis's work reveals that Czechoslovakia¹⁴ and later the Czech Republic has been among the most often studied geographic areas with elite-level and institutional politics at the center of most early analyses. In the later articles, occupied with the problems of the European integration or "reintegration" in sociological context, the country was usually studied together with the other Visegrád states and the three Baltic republics as the best EU candidates. Finally, the Czech case has been treated as part of the comparative research on "old" and "new" member states, and thus the transition studies of the CEE region became integrated into the *European studies*. In line with the developments in the social science research on the Central and Eastern European region, my thesis aims to present an analysis of the democracy crisis in the Czech Republic anchored in the European studies. However, to contextualize and better comprehend the current processes of de-democratization and de-Europeanization, it will also shortly assess the processes of democratization within transitology.

3.1 Research Theory

As for the choice of a meta-theory, the empirical investigation opts for *discourse analysis*, which has been one of the preferred theoretical lenses employed by researchers in the

¹⁴ Following the Velvet Divorce, ethno-politics became the area of interest in the case of Slovakia, due to the anti-Hungarian government of Vladimír Mečiar (Petsinis, 2010, p. 312).

CEE region, after positivism and constructivism, according to Petsinis's study. The revolutionary theory, which emerged in 1970s as a critical response to mainstream theories, combines post-structuralist and post-modernist ideas, and thus offers a new analytical perspective on "the more or less sedimented rules and meanings that condition the political construction of social, political, and cultural identity" (Torfing, 2005a, p. 153). Although the methodological apparatus for the application of discourse analysis in empirical studies is yet underdeveloped compared to its theoretical and philosophical scope, the theory has already had a great impact on social science research thanks to its cross-disciplinary approach combining linguistics with social and political science. Over the many generations of discourse theory, scholars progressed towards "a more inclusive and quasi-transcendental notion of discourse and towards a broader constructivist notion of power" (Torfing, 2005b, p. 9), defended for example by Michel Foucault, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Slavoj Žižek. With the rejection of the idea of a transcendental center safeguarding Truth or Science, omnipresent in the history of Western thought, discourse becomes the only judge of reality. Consequently, all meanings and identities are constructed and interpreted through diverse discourses subject to specific contexts. As reiterated by Torfing (2005b, p. 14-17), Laclau and Mouffe present the following five key arguments about discourse analysis:

- 1) A background of historically specific *discourses* conditions all human action.
- 2) Discourse is a result of *hegemonic struggles* for power through articulation of identity.
- 3) The construction of *social antagonism* implying the exclusion of *Otherness* is essential in the hegemonic articulation of identity to stabilize the discursive system.
- 4) *Dislocation* of a stable hegemonic discourse occurs with the introduction of new disruptive events.
- 5) With the dislocation, the subject becomes *a split subject* and might attempt to reconstruct full identity through acts of identification, involving social antagonism.

Considering the phenomena under investigation and the diverse areas of social reality they affect, from transition to democracy to democratic backsliding and populism, discourse analysis appears as the ideal methodological fit thanks to its cross-disciplinary orientation and focus on context and history. In a globalized world of the 21st century full of new threats and challenges questions of identity take center stage. That is why, discourse analysis' focus on political formation of identity accompanied by dislocation and social antagonism, might illuminate the current illiberal tendencies in the Czech Republic and the region. After all, the dynamic processes of democratization and de-democratization prove that the end

of history is not coming any time soon, so we are left with the discursive system which can neither reach its “total fixation” to make sense of the ever-changing social reality. Consequently, the empirical investigation proposes a two-dimensional discourse analysis to illustrate the recent distancing of the Czech Republic from the *Acquis Communautaire*, and generally from its post-1989 official discourse.

3.2 Research Strategy

(...) discourse analysts need to be more explicit about what they choose to look for in empirical analysis, why they want to look for it, how they are going to do it, and what kind of research results they are likely to obtain.

In this way Torfing (2005a, p. 170) stresses the importance of a research strategy, when contemplating on the methodological challenges of discourse analysis in empirical studies. This work adopts the interpretation of methods as critical and political rather than scientific “hygienizing” devices, according to Claudia Aradau and Jef Huysmans (2013, p. 18) who encourage methodological experimenting in research, a quest for the “messy truth” rather than “fragile objectivity”. At the same time, it aims to incorporate the inward-looking and macro-level approaches subsequently assumed by the transitologist and later European studies with the view of achieving a more complex picture of the phenomena under consideration. Consequently, the first dimension of the empirical investigation will analyze the changes in Czech official discourse(s) on a sub-systemic level, based on qualitative data, e.g. official speeches supported by government publications, interviews, tweets and more. The second dimension, on the other hand, will present a systemic level analysis of five variables, “arenas of democracy” as suggested by Linz and Stepan (1996), comparing quantitative data, e.g. rankings of selected indices of democracy. The use of levels of analysis in international relations originated from the debate between the atomistic/reductionist and holistic/systemic approaches of the behavioral movement in the 50s, focusing their study on parts/components or upon the whole/system (Soltani, 2014). Kenneth Waltz (1959) was first to identify three levels of analysis, the individual, the unit or state, and the system. Professor J. David Singer (1961), on the other hand, considers two levels of analysis, the international system, and the national state. While the “most comprehensive” systemic level, permits for more generalizations, but often lacks in detail, the national sub-systemic level, allows “significant differentiation among our actors”, and hence richer details, but it may lead to over differentiation and ethnocentrism hampering comparison.

To examine the origins and character of democracy crisis in the Czech Republic as enunciated in our research question, we shall investigate the changes in the official discourse, and thus the political (trans)formation of national identity, through the analysis of the most important speeches of the President and the Prime Minister, which represent the dominant political forces. When it comes to the selected corpus of texts, we shall analyze four discourses in the case of President Zeman: the official *Christmas Messages* (2018, 2019) and his two special addresses to the nation regarding the coronavirus pandemic (2020), completed by his significant comments in interviews. As for the Prime Minister Babiš, we selected the following four discourses as the most relevant: “Preamble and Key Government Priorities” in the *Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic* (2018), *Prime Minister’s New Year’s Speech* (2020), *Prime Minister’s Address to all Citizens* (2020) and *Prime Minister’s Extraordinary Speech* (2020) concerning the coronavirus pandemic, again completed by his informal Facebook addresses, interviews and especially his book *What I Dream Of When I Happen to be Sleeping* (2017). To characterize the discourse(s) and its implications for democracy, we shall focus on the political actors’ rhetorical strategies, domestic policy and foreign policy agenda, paying special attention to the above noted Laclau and Mouffe’s five key arguments about discourse analysis, particularly the construction of social antagonism. Moreover, we shall relate the study of the texts to the theoretical insights reviewed in the first part of this research, namely transitology, the concepts of democratic backsliding and populism, and postfunctionalism. Before all else, we will consider the specific cultural-historical context, particularly the legacy of communism and the transition process.

As for the second dimension of our discourse analysis, we will attempt to answer our second research question: which of the five arenas of Czech democracy has been the most affected so far by the recent illiberal tendencies. By the five democracy arenas, we intend the “interconnected and mutually reinforcing conditions” which must exist for a democracy to be consolidated according to Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, p. 7). As previously mentioned in the *Concept of Democracy* chapter, these include lively and free *civil society*, autonomous and valued *political society*, *rule of law*, usable *state bureaucracy* and institutionalized *economic society*. Employing these arenas as variables of our research, we selected the reports of two leading global democracy indexes, the American Freedom House’s *Nations*

*in Transit*¹⁵ and the British Economist Intelligence Unit's *Democracy Index*¹⁶. While Freedom House's annual report has been published since 1995 and covers the 29 formerly communist countries from Central Europe to Central Asia, the more recent Democracy Index began in 2006 and tracks 165 independent states and two territories. Besides their tradition and scope of research, both base the rankings on a maximalist definition of democracy, which corresponds to our variables, unlike other indexes such as the Polity IV data series. Notwithstanding their effort at measuring "thicker" conceptions of democracy, their reports are still limited to examining a set of institutions, which can obscure reality about the actual quality of the system. Moreover, a certain amount of subjectivity is always inevitable despite the strive for scientific rigor, as demonstrates John Högström (2013, p. 53) in his study of statistical discrepancies and regional preferences in the three indexes of democracy, the EIU, Freedom House, and Polity IV:

(...) Freedom House strongly favors Western Europe, the EIU favors Asia and strongly disfavors Eastern Europe, and Polity IV favors Africa and North and Central America, and strongly disfavors the Middle East and Oceania.

Accordingly, in line with the discourse theory, we will investigate the macro data in the form of these selected democracy rankings, not as objective elements, but rather as discursive interpretations of reality which constitute the political environment.

¹⁵ Freedom House scores the countries on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the lowest and 7 the highest level of democracy, in seven categories: National Democratic Governance, Local Democratic Governance, Electoral Process, Independent Media, Civil Society, Judicial Framework and Independence, and Corruption. The average of these scores equals the country's Democracy Score (translated to a 0—100 scale the Democracy Percentage), which determines whether a country is a "consolidated democracy" (5.01-7.00), "semi-consolidated democracy" (4.01-5.00) or "transitional/hybrid regime" (3.01-4.00).

¹⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index considers 60 indicators grouped into five categories, with each rating on a 0 to 10 scale: electoral process and pluralism; the functioning of government; political participation; political culture; and civil liberties. The average of these categories makes up the overall Index, in which each country is classified as one of four types of regime: "full democracy" (8.00-10.00), "flawed democracy" (6.00-8.00), "hybrid regime" (4.00-6.00) or "authoritarian regime" (0-4.00).

4. EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

4.1 Historical-Cultural Context

4.1.1 Czech Identity Post-1989: Totalitarian Legacies, Democratization and Havel

Czechoslovakia's transition from communism to democracy in 1989, forming a part of the so called "third wave" of democracy, has been widely considered one of the most successful examples of democratization in the world. According to the transitologists Linz and Stepan (1996), the country's transition commenced with the collapse of the "frozen" post-totalitarianism-by-decay. This prior regime type, characterized by party-bureaucratic-technocratic leadership with geriatric tendencies, de-ideologization and the creation of a parallel culture, was in place during the period of "Normalization" since the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968, which gave end to the reforms of the "Prague Spring". Having lost its legitimacy, the regime collapsed with the Velvet Revolution in 1989, prompted by mass student demonstrations, and especially international events, from the Gorbachev' reforms of "Perestroika" and "Glasnost" to the Fall of the Berlin Wall, to name a few. Notwithstanding the Velvet Divorce, the monoethnic Czech Republic did not face any stateness problem, hence representing a "double transition" according to Taras Kuzio (2001, p. 174). Overall, the country had good democratization prospects, as it fulfilled the preconditions for democracy, such as "relative economic wealth, as well as past experience with political pluralism" (Carothers, 2002, p. 16), owing to the exposure to democracy and economic growth in the interwar First Republic. Thus, the Czech Republic managed to achieve quite quickly the five arenas of democracy, which culminated in the country's (re)integration in the Western structures, the NATO in 1996 and the EU in 2004. Today, the Czech Republic classifies as a consolidated democracy in global rankings, suggesting that democracy has become "the only game in town". Nevertheless, the previously mentioned recent rise of populism and democratic backsliding in the country embodied in the figures of Prime Minister Babiš and President Zeman, make us question the actual degree of this consolidation.

Although significant, Czech historical experience with democracy was rather brief, hence we may assert that nor political institutions, nor civil society had time to mature as in long-standing democracies. First, with the outbreak of the Second World War, the country was transformed into a Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia administered by the Nazi Germany, and later, during the Cold War, upon falling into the Soviet sphere of influence,

Czechoslovakia lived 41 years under the communist regime, while being occupied by the Soviet troops for 21 years. Therefore, we must not neglect the impact of totalitarian and post-totalitarian legacies on both the system and the citizens' mentality. The long-term exposure to propaganda, all-encompassing control, repression, and persecution, reflected particularly in "a subservient political culture" and "a weak civil society" (Klíma, 2015, p. 323). Besides the success of the country's transition to democracy, the process marked by velocity and hence the unpreparedness of its actors, also produced shortcomings. According to Janík (2010), the political transformation was completed in a year or two, while the transition from centrally planned economy to a market economy took the first half of the 90s. The first process consisted in the restoration of parliamentary democracy based on the separation of powers by abolishing the leading role of the communist party, recreating the multi-party system and organizing the first free elections, whereas the second involved privatization and restitution. Due to the simultaneousness and interconnectedness of the processes, accompanied by a lack of clear legal regulation, the mass privatization generated corruption and clientelist structures in the emerging dominant political parties, ODS and ČSSD. Accordingly, the political scientist Michal Klíma (2015, p. 324) radically sustains that the "privatization and colonization of political parties by non-transparent business" invoked a so-called "state capture", thus degrading Czech democracy into a hybrid regime, specifically *clientelistic* or *illiberal democracy*, a variation of *defective democracy*, long before the arrival of Prime Minister Babiš and President Zeman. Klíma's argument is in a broader sense reiterated by Professor Antoaneta L. Dimitrova (2018, p. 257) in her article, which views current backsliding in the CEE region as the outcome of processes of state capture "by rent-seeking elites united in party ideological or network configurations". With the widening gap between elite and citizens, both indicate that the recent protests and "earthquake elections" reflect genuine societal demands for political reform.

Nonetheless, following the Velvet Revolution, the country adopted a clearly democratic, pro-Western discourse, which is still strongly present in the current *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy*¹⁷. The official post-1989 discourse was formulated particularly

¹⁷ "The starting point for the values espoused by the Czech foreign policy is represented by our pertinence to the Euro-Atlantic area, underscored institutionally above all by our membership in the EU and NATO. The values underlying Czech foreign policy are entirely consistent with the principles and objectives promoted by the EU in its external relations: democracy, rule of law, universality, indivisibility of human rights, respect for human dignity, equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. Specifically, Czech foreign policy is based on the legacy of Czech humanist philosophy, especially that of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, on the legacy of the current of democratization spearheaded by the Prague Spring

by the last President of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992) and the first Czech President (1993-2003), a playwright and former dissident Václav Havel, who emphasized the “Back to Europe” strategy and the building of a vibrant civil society throughout his time in office. By founding his political philosophy on the search for truth, promoting human rights above economic interests in foreign policy, and uniting the Czech society but at the same time criticizing it unscrupulously for “racism, chauvinism, exaggerated caution, destruction of the environment and local politicians for power-hunger, arrogance, opportunism and more”, Havel took up the legacy of Professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia (Tabery, 2017, p. 153). After all, besides defending the basic principles of parliamentary democracy, constitutional state and general westward orientation, both President-Liberators were “deeply concerned with the moral basis of politics, and in particular, the moral basis of their own participation in politics” (Gellner, 1995, p. 45). While praising their brave dedication to morality, Ernest Gellner (1995) criticizes Masaryk’s and Havel’s “velvet approach” to politics arguing that they took the Czech national motto, “Truth Prevails”¹⁸, too seriously:

What had really prevailed in 1989 was consumerism and the all-European endorsement of a system which satisfies its imperatives, as against one which conspicuously fails to do so, and is oppressive and sleazy into the bargain. Democracy and decency obtained a free ride to victory on the back of the consumerist triumph, and while we must be duly and deeply grateful for that, it is dangerous to delude oneself and suppose that they owed the victory to their inherent political appeal.

Furthermore, Václav Havel has also been accused of “apoliticism” and “populism” based on his aversion to political parties following the experience with communist party-state rule, e.g. the slogan from 1989: “Parties are for party members, the Civic Forum is for everyone”¹⁹. Although, truth may not always prevail in history, the search for it, embodied in Havel’s legacy, surely can give the country and its citizens purpose and direction.

and Charter 77, and on the tradition of promoting human rights as a prerequisite for a dignified existence.” (MZV, 2015, p. 3)

¹⁸ The “Truth Prevails” motto, that appears on the standard of the President of the Czech Republic, was derived from the proclamations of Jan Hus referring to the theological truth, was adapted by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk as an ethical concept and later echoed in Václav Havel’s notion of “life in truth” in opposition to the “life in lie” referring to the Czech communist regime.

¹⁹ According to Žantovský, Václav Havel was not an apolitical politician, but a non-political one. While he refused to identify with a single party or ideology, he was extremely political in his thoughts and values. (Půr, M., Jirsa, T., 2020) Thus, he supported the establishment of the party system, the “transformation” of the political movement, Civic Forum, into political parties.

4.1.2 Czech Identity Today: New Challenges and Threats, Zeman and Babiš

(...) I believe that above all, we alone are the architects of our own destiny, we shall not be saved from that by the excuse about the selfishness of the world powers, our geographic size, nor by the reference to the centennial fate of balancing between sovereignty and subjugation. (Havel, 1969, p. 473)

Most leading Czech commentators in the collection of essays, *Czechia on a Crossroads* (2019), see the way out of the current democracy crisis precisely in rediscovering the values promoted by Masaryk and Havel, or some new leaders who would promote them, as both of which seem to be lacking at present. General Petr Pavel (2019, p. 31) claims, that Czech society, like many post-communist societies, has not yet fully understood its role in “continual formation and cultivation of democracy”, as it expected, after the transition, fast improvement of material and social conditions without any contribution. Similarly, the psychiatrist Radkin Honzák (2019, p. 45) points to the Czech historical passivity born from handing over control and responsibility to the ruling party: “the dream of a majority of the Czech population consisting in the idea of preserving socialist achievements, and at the same time the arrival of capitalist level of consumption, did not come true after 1989 – therefore shame on Havel and his visions”. However, the dominant political discourse after Havel did not favor the cultivation of democratic values, as “politicians with a narrower vision of democracy took over” (Pehe, 2018, p. 65). Václav Klaus, who led the privatization process after 1989 and founded the ODS party, went down in history as a nationalist conservative Eurosceptic president (2003-2013), tapping into the Czech myths of the “Munich Syndrome” and the “Hussite stigma”²⁰. While both concepts have always been driving the Czech political debate, the difference between the older reformers, such as Havel, and current Eurosceptics, such as Klaus, is that they do not see the threat for Europe in the moral decline, consumerism or materialism, but in the “bureaucratic unifying socialism” of the European Union (Beneš, 2011, p. 186). Klaus’s Euroscepticism culminated in his refusal to sign the Lisbon treaty. Among other controversies of his presidency, stands out his demoralizing mass amnesty including high-profile corruption cases, or his fierce criticism of environmentalism, the “new religion of the West” limiting human freedom, and civil society, “the unelected elites” seeking to interfere without mandate in politics.

²⁰ The first myth refers to the Czech geopolitical insecurity and a sense of distrust in the real intentions of superpowers flowing from the “Munich Betrayal” or the “Munich Agreement”, when the main European powers (France, UK, Italy and Germany) decided about the cession of the Czech part of Sudetenland to Nazi Germany without the presence of Czechoslovakia, “about us, without us”. According to the second myth, the Czech Republic ought to play the role of a reformer or mentor of the European or world order thanks to its unique historical experience and geographical position, in order to preserve European civilization.

Besides the already mentioned domestic factors, such as the (post)totalitarian and transition legacies, and the failure of traditional parties and its leaders, it is important to mention other macro-structural conditions which influenced the change in official discourse, and thus the current democracy crisis. The Czech society was certainly not immune to the polarization prompted by globalization and the emergence of the internet, respectively the social media. These growing divisions between the economic winners and losers, and ideological *GAL* and *TAN*, are further deepened by Russian and Chinese geopolitical players ranging a disinformation war on Europe. The most recent Security Information Service (BIS) report confirms that Russian and Chinese hybrid activities, attempting to weaken Czech democratic system and influence the country's foreign policy, continue to represent a serious security risk. According to the spokesman of BIS, Ladislav Šticha, "while the goal of Russia is to get the Czech Republic back into its sphere of influence, the Chinese use us as a gateway to the European Union, which means to economic prosperity" (ČT24, 2019). Although the Czech Republic has not accepted almost any migrants nor experienced terrorist attacks like other European countries, the fear of an invasion of the unknown, boosted by the intense politicization of the migration and terrorism issues, pervaded the population. Instead of trying to reunite the nation under a coherent, long-term program ensuring stability and continuity, populists rose to the occasion offering apparently simple and quick fixes to the complex new challenges and threats of security, criminality, modernization etc., while triggering even more social antagonism on their chase for the enemy responsible for the crises. Consequently, thanks to a combination of the above cited micro and macro-structural conditions, the populist movement ANO of the billionaire Andrej Babiš celebrated a landslide victory in the 2017 parliamentary election²¹, with almost 30% of the vote and 70 seats, and the reelection of President Miloš Zeman with 52% of the vote following a tight run-off against his rival Jiří Drahoš, a pro-European academic. Moreover, the two leading politicians formed an alliance, which played a significant role in their government and reelection success, respectively²².

According to Tabery (2017), President Miloš Zeman represents "a phenomenon of the 20th century", while the Prime Minister Andrej Babiš "a phenomenon of the 21st century".

²¹ Besides ANO, two other parties entered the Chamber of Deputies for the first time, the Pirate Party (22 seats), focused on transparency and anti-corruption, and SPD (20 seats), concentrated on anti-immigration and Euroscepticism.

²² President Zeman appointed Andrej Babiš twice Prime Minister despite his criminal prosecution and the lack of a parliamentary majority. In turn, the Prime Minister officially endorsed the reelection of the President.

While the former transformed his political career of an intellectual star of the Velvet Revolution warning against the dangers of populism²³ into that of a populist yearning for power and attention, the latter, younger and richer, could be considered his pupil when it comes to the lack of vision and greatly emotional populist means of expression and government. Unlike their predecessors, Masaryk or Havel, neither of the two presents a clear political-ideological orientation, which fits Mudde and Kaltwasser's (2017) definition of populism as a thin-centered ideology. Rather, both the Prime-Minister and the President claim to represent the general will of the people against the corrupt elite. As the first directly elected President in Czech history, Miloš Zeman has taken advantage of the increased legitimacy to assume a role of an active political player, stretching, on many occasions, his constitutional powers to push his agenda. President's transgressions, summarized in the constitutional complaint filed by the Senate, include attempts to influence court cases, appointing governments regardless of the no confidence motion (case of Rusnok and Babiš), refusing to appoint (case of Poche) and dismiss (case of Babiš) ministers proposed to him by the head of government or disrespecting the official *Concept of of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy* (iRozhlas, 2019). Despite claiming to fight corruption, Andrej Babiš's time in politics has also been filled with controversies followed by mass demonstrations²⁴. As the first criminally prosecuted Prime Minister in Czech history, the billionaire has been investigated for the abuse of €2 million in EU subsidies designated for small businesses in the construction of his farm and hotel complex "Stork's Nest" and the related kidnapping of his son to Crimea, and last but not least for the conflict of interest²⁵, regarding the EU funding of his Agrofert conglomerate, operating agriculture, food, chemicals and mass media²⁶. Overall, Andrej Babiš and Miloš Zeman "have the Czech Republic in their power", as they control a decisive part of political, media, business and public sphere, the journalist Pavel Šafr

²³ Miloš Zeman, as a deputy in 1992, proclaimed: "I would like to warn against a generally spread and so to speak populist illusion, which rises from the idea, that the voice of the people is the voice of God, and that what the Parliament does not fix, citizens do (...). A third of this country's population is simple-minded. Every seventh person is either idiotic, retarded or an alcoholic. About half of the population has a below-average IQ in this country. (... These people divide the world – authors' note) into simple, often opposite elements. Sometimes it is called black-and-white thinking." (Zeman, 1992, as cited in Naxera & Krčál, 2020)

²⁴ One of the demonstrations calling for the resignation of Babiš and his justice secretary Marie Benešová organized by "Million Moments for Democracy" in Letná Park in Prague on 23 June 2019 counted around 250 thousand people, thus becoming the largest protest since the Velvet Revolution.

²⁵ The second audit of the European Commission confirmed PM Babiš' alleged conflict of interest stopping the EU subsidies for Agrofert Group until its resolution, which the PM should do "by either selling his business interests, stop receiving public subsidies or stepping down from public office". (European Parliament, 2020)

²⁶ The MAFRA media group belonging to Agrofert runs, among others, two of the largest Czech newspapers, Mladá fronta DNES and Lidové noviny, the online news portals iDNES.cz and Lidovky.cz, and the most popular radio station Impuls.

warns (2019, p. 223). However, besides their similar populist appeal, effective collaboration, and executive aggrandizement tendencies, the two politicians differ in their image, rhetoric style and even some policy preferences, which shall be explored in further detail through the discourse analysis.

4.2 New Official Discourse(s)

4.2.1 Rhetorical Strategies

As mentioned in the *Populism* chapter, also Miloš Zeman and Andrej Babiš construct their populist image based on an insider-outsider status. While the President was clearly a political insider already upon his first election, having led the ČSSD party (1993–2001) and served as the Prime Minister (1998-2002). After taking time off politics, he returned with a new perspective to stand up to the corrupt elite and the others making use of his long-standing experience and study. Andrej Babiš, on the other hand, built his populist appeal on the identity of an outsider with a non-political background, despite his evident past involvement with top politicians, including Zeman²⁷, as he allegedly collaborated with Czechoslovak secret police and later “his business profited from privatization and state agricultural subsidies” (Havlík, 2019, p. 373). Like the President, Andrej Babiš also decided to fight the corrupt elite, but as a hard-working self-made businessman promising to “run the state like a (family) business”. The respective insider-outsider identities assumed by the President and the Prime Minister are reflected in their rhetorical strategies, “that appear normal and neutral on the surface but which may in fact be ideological and seek to shape the representation of events and persons for particular ends” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5). By exposing these strategies employed in the selected corpus of official discourses, namely the lexical choices, overlexicalization, intertextual references, rhetorical tropes, modality, and hedging, we seek to understand why and how the President and the Prime Minister use language and grammar to assert their authority, influence the audience, and thus push a specific agenda. As for the lexical choices determining the genre of communication, both the President’s and the Prime Minister’s style could be described as conversational, mixing

²⁷ In 2001, Zeman’s Government decided to privatize Unipetrol to Babiš’s company Agrofert, that got out of the contract last minute. This resulted in Zeman’s criticism of Babiš, when the businessman decided to enter politics: “As for Mr. Babiš, I was a direct participant in the signing of a treaty with him during the privatization of Unipetrol and I declare that Mr. abide by this signed agreement. This for me is a sufficient proof of Mr. Babiš’s lack of credibility. Regardless of certain other suspicions, which shall eventually be investigated, I hope.” (Zeman, 2011)

informal and formal lexicons to create an impression of a “dialogue between equals”, thus infusing official discourse with a populist voice (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 44-45).

Nevertheless, Zeman’s vocabulary compared to that of Babiš is quite varied, ranging from even vulgar expressions, employed when referring to the others, e. g. “primitive fools” (D1), “barking and screeching of our news commentators” (D3) to literary language often enriched by metaphors and other tropes, e. g. “We have only one weapon at our disposal since the vaccine does not yet exist. A small piece of fabric is that weapon. (...) We called up to arms the victor over the first wave of coronavirus. (...) When the dust settles, we will count our gains and losses” (D4). Furthermore, the President is known for his love of neologisms, with “The Prague Café”²⁸ being the most popular one. Present in almost every analyzed discourse, these new terms mostly used to characterize the other, and thus to further divide the society, carry a pejorative connotation, e. g. “The Better-People” (D1), “The Climate Prophets” (D2) and “The Anti-Mask People” (D4). Besides metaphors and neologisms, Zeman often takes advantage of intertextuality to show off his intelligence, and infuse his discourse with humor, as his references often entail a satirical undertone. Most often he cites the founder and first President of Czechoslovakia Masaryk, thus assuming the authority of the well-esteemed professor, e.g. “I would just like to recall two Masaryk’s quotes. First, we already have democracy; now we need some democrats. (...) The second quote goes, being upset is not a program.” (D1). Overlexicalization is a common repetition tool, which the President uses to build up the emotional intensity, even urgency, of the message. In the case of the redundant expression “normal citizens” (D1), the ideological content is clear, creating the populist opposition to the elite or the other. Throughout his discourses, the President uses lowered modality most often, to assert his authority in a sincere and educated way, no matter the message. Simultaneously, he thus manages to communicate “a sense of his moral stance, giving access to his internal world” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 188). His last discourse is more assertive, but still polite sounding, as he uses first person plural imperative (softening impact) considering himself one of the addressees of his own appeal. Finally, The President uses hedging to a great degree predominantly to structure his discourse to appear detailed, precise, and more credible, listing examples and offering extra historical and statistical information. Overall, his use of strategies translates into his relation to the audience, which comes off as rather superior, as that of a teacher patiently educating students and occasionally

²⁸ “The Prague Café” is a pejorative term, which became popular after Zeman’s 2013 election, referring to an indefinite group of city intellectuals which are interested in politics promoting Havel’s truth and love philosophy.

rebuking them, e.g. “*Do you know who the parachutists are in this sense? They are people, who are thrown on the candidate list from the top.*” (D2), “Allow me to *remind you* of a beautiful phrase from Talmud, the one who saved one human life, saved the entire humankind” (D4).

In the case of the Prime Minister, it is important to note that his discourse is determined to a great degree by the work of his PR team, as he decided to invest extensively into political marketing, employing some of the country’s best experts²⁹. Like Zeman, Babiš combines the informal and formal lexicons to approximate the audience, however his colloquial word choice is more moderate, e.g. “These show-offs who are supposed to be in quarantine and instead are having a beer together at the pub door are not really heroes.” (D7), “We all wanted to breathe freely and enjoy summer” (D8). Moreover, in spoken form, the Prime Minister often makes grammar mistakes, mispronounces certain words, and invents others, as his native language is Slovak, not Czech. When it comes to formal language, Babiš makes use of his background, favoring business rhetoric over literary expressions. The empty corporate speak, which “serves to conceal where the actual responsibility lies” as it distracts us “from the real causes and necessary solutions” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 34), is evident in the use of ambiguous expressions related to performance, English words and statistical information: “The solution designed in such a way is ineffective (...) the pursuit of six core strategic tenets for the development of our country” (D5), “Moody's raised our *rating* to the highest point in history (...) according to the Deloitte Index (...) of the thirty-six countries evaluated by the OECD, we are the tenth best” (D6). Also the Prime Minister employs rhetorical tropes such as metaphors and similes, however they are more popular and modern than those of the President: “Imagine I was Harry Potter and had a magic wand and could transform these projects into reality right now. We would immediately become a second Switzerland” (D6). Overlexicalization, giving “a sense of over-persuasion and is normally evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 37), is utilized in the Prime Minister’s speeches for example to convince the citizens of the country’s progress under his Government:

Can we take joy in the fact that we are so well off? Don't think we are doing well? I do! (...) Yes, the Czech Republic is doing well. Very well. (...) Everyone wants to be well off. I don't know anyone who doesn't want to be well off. So I wish for YOU, for you to be well off! (D6)

²⁹ Marek Prchal, who is responsible for his social media image and partook in Babiš’s book *What I Dream Of When I Happen to be Sleeping* (2017), Petr Topinka, who invented the main ANO party slogans, or Alexander Braun, who prepared the public opinion poll *We Want Better Czechia*. (Český rozhlas, 2017)

Intertextuality is present only in one of the analyzed discourses, when Babiš channels the authority of Václav Havel, citing his 1992 New Year's speech. However, instead of answering the existential question concerned with public discontent despite economic growth, the Prime Minister misinterprets it, offering a discourse reminiscent of the Normalization period which Havel was in fact caricaturing.³⁰ Babiš asserts his authority particularly through modality and hedging, or the lack of the latter. Unlike the President, he uses high modality transmitting certainty, confidence and decisiveness: “We want to engage in specific action without lengthy and futile debate. (...) We must be more assertive in defending our interests in a unifying Europe” (D5). With the first-person plural he often includes himself in the appeal making it thus more compelling. He prefers shorter, even nominal, sentences to emphasize action, resoluteness, and results, using padding only when communicating something unpleasant.



Figure 2. Andrej Babiš thanking his marketing specialist Marek Prchal after ANO's victory in the 2017 legislative election (Český rozhlas, 2017)

4.2.2 Domestic Policy

The centrality of the empty signifiers, the good people against the corrupt elite and the others, is evident from the analysis of the linguistic strategies employed in the populist discourses of both the President and the Prime Minister. In fact, already in his 2013 *Inauguration Speech*, Miloš Zeman declared wanting to be “the voice of the lower ten million

³⁰ The message of the Prime Minister's New Year's speech will be further explored in the next chapters concerned with the domestic and foreign policy agendas.

underprivileged citizens, since the privileged ones have acquired their voice, or rather voices, already a long time ago.” He reiterated his promise in the 2018 *Inauguration Speech*:

(...) without the contact with citizens, the lower ten million if you will, the president is not worthy. A president, which considers himself a part of some chosen elite, is simply an ornament on a state building nothing more.

However, his concept of the people is quite exclusive as all the analyzed discourses demonstrate, including only his sympathizers. These are referred to as “normal citizens” doing “respectable jobs” (D1), who “do not let themselves be manipulated” (D2) specifically by the others, that is media, political adversaries, GAL, and civil society. Overall, this diverse group is repeatedly described as unsuccessful, clueless, and foolish, simply falling into the category of “The Better-People”:

(...) those who consider themselves better than the rest of us, who keep mentoring us on what to do and who regard their views superior to those of others. However, when we look at the structure of the “Better-People” community, we can see that, for example, media often consist of commentators who write about something else every day whilst understanding nothing. And these people want to advise us. The same applies to unsuccessful politicians, of course. (D1)

To further establish structural oppositions in his speeches the others are collectivized or anonymized, while those responding to the will of the people, such as the Government, are treated by names and titles. Even in the time of the coronavirus crisis, the President does not leave the social antagonism behind, as D3 and D4 show³¹. The Prime Minister, on the other hand, claims that his ANO party³² is here for everyone, which translates in its wide electoral base: “But I also want to involve you, all the citizens of our country.” (D6), “I am here for each of you at any time.” (D7), “Our government tries to think of all groups of the population.” (D8) At the same time, his policies target predominantly the young and the elderly, with the latter representing almost half of his voters³³. As a unifying characteristic of his version of the people, Babiš accentuates the traditional notion of “Czech golden hands”

³¹ As usual, the President castigated the media and the political opposition, but also regular citizens suffering from the crisis. He controversially proclaimed in an interview that unsuccessful entrepreneurs should bankrupt, artists should starve to create their best artworks, and the unintelligent Prague elite should educate itself a bit reading now that the clubs closed (Zeman, 2020c).

³² The democratic character of the ANO party has been disputed as Andrej Babiš himself proclaimed in an interview for the British newspaper *The Financial Times*: “The party is connected to my person. The party is me.” (Foy, 2016) The fact that Babiš is the undisputed leader and that there is no opposition within his movement, has been proven by constant reelections and numerous members quietly leaving after discords (Robert Pelikán, Martin Stropnický, Ivan Pilný, Adriana Krnáčová, Karla Šlechtová, Pavel Telička). His most loyal collaborators, former Agrofert employees such as Jaroslav Faltýnek or Richard Brabec remain.

³³ Despite initially presenting itself as a center-right party, ANO has attracted particularly in the 2017 legislative election the traditional voters of ČSSD and KSČM. Besides his left-wing policies, Babiš gained the support of pensioners thanks to his age, simple language and emphasis on topics such as “strong state, effective government, partial critique of the post-1989 conditions or cultural conservativeness, for example on the issue of migration” (Nádoba, 2019).

also elaborated in his 2017 book. The Prime Minister accuses the elite and the others, consisting of corrupt politicians and media, of leading a gross conspiracy “campaign” or “a political process” against his person (Buchert, 2019). Furthermore, he criticizes them for spreading negativism and fear among the people:

I know the opposition says that our national plan is unrealistic. Once again: the same skepticism, the negativism at all costs. (...) You often hear in the media that the global economy is cooling down and harder times are coming. That we can't manage all these plans. Someone is always trying to drum up fear with this. (D6)

All in all, the Prime Minister’s definition of the people and the elite can be summed up by the following statement posted on his Facebook profile before entering politics: “We are a talented nation. We are only governed by the inept” (Babiš, 2013).

The construction of social antagonism also pervades the President’s main agenda, as in both of his inaugural speeches he promises to fight the three “islands of deviation”: corruption, extremism, and media. Out of the three, Zeman criticizes media the most throughout his time in office (Naxera & Krčál, 2020, p. 94-95), for lying and manipulating the people (D1, D2, D3). Specifically, he repeatedly warns against the media owned by Zdeněk Bakala³⁴, and the businessman himself, who represents the second “island of deviation”, corruption. Moreover, he often accuses the public television broadcaster, Česká televize³⁵, of bias, of giving unlimited space to NGOs, but censoring him. As the first directly elected president, Zeman generally promotes direct democracy, as a way of fighting the corrupt elite by giving voice to the good people. That is why he also suggests the direct election of city and county representatives (D2), warning against clientelist structures on all political levels: “citizens, godfathers do not exist solely at central level, godfathers exist also at regional and communal level” (Zeman, 2017). Although civil activity including demonstrations are an integral part of democracy, as the society should have the right to express their discontent with the government, Zeman believes such behavior is undemocratic (D1, D2), claiming civil activists supposedly “cure their inferiority complex” in this way (2018). After participating in the elections, which the President considers the most legitimate demonstration of active citizenship (D1, D2), people should step aside and let the rules rule. Otherwise they are disrespecting the will of the voters. This points to Zeman’s minimalist understanding

³⁴ Zdeněk Bakala, a Czech billionaire investigated for a series of corruption scandals, owns *Hospodářské noviny*, *Respekt* or *Aktuálně.cz*.

³⁵ Zeman has referred to Česká televize pejoratively many times, calling the television station “a food conserve with rotten meat” in an interview for *Parlamentní Listy* (2017) or “a smelly cocktail” in the *Barrandov TV show Week with the President* (2018).

of democracy. Considering the President’s collaboration with the Prime Minister discussed above, Zeman reiterates support for Babiš’s government in all four discourses, agreeing on the promotion of digitalization and investment (D1, D2), and defending its COVID-19 measures. However, with the Prime Minister’s decreasing popularity due to the mishandling of the second wave of the coronavirus, President’s support seems to fade, which is indicated in D4: “I fully support the measures of the Government, *although I think they could be communicated better sometimes*”. Some journalists presume that the President even wished to replace the PM and put into place a caretaker government headed by the Minister of Health Prymula, which resulted in the Minister’s controversial replacement (Švehla, 2020; Dolejší & Stuchlíková 2020).

President Zeman: Domestic Policy Agenda	D1	D2	D3	D4
I represent normal citizens with <i>respectable jobs</i> , who have their own head and do not let themselves be manipulated.				
Citizens should ignore “The Better People” (the media) because they do not understand anything.				
It is not democratic to demonstrate against a regime that was democratically elected.				
City and county representatives should be elected directly to avoid the formation of coalitions against the winner of elections.				
Elections are the most important part of democracy.				
I support the Government and its vision.				
We should not be afraid of digitalization but embrace it as it could help speed up the state and thus simplify our lives.				
Investments are the future, that is why I support the Government’s long-term plans.				
During the coronavirus crisis, it is important not to panic, follow the Government’s measures and listen to experts, not fake news.				

Figure 3. President’s domestic policy agenda (own table)

As indicated above, the support of ANO and Andrej Babiš is not clearly conditioned by ideology, policy attitudes nor a specific social class. Instead, the Prime Minister offers his sympathizers deluded with traditional parties, effective businesslike solutions. The dichotomy between the slow party democracy dominated by inexperienced corrupt politicians and the more moral and straight-forward world of business the Prime Minister represents, summarized in the pre-election slogan of the ANO party, “We are not like politicians, we work hard”, is emphasized in all analyzed discourses: “We want to engage in specific action without lengthy and futile debate.” (D5), “I will impress upon the ministers to actively work with this plan” (D6), “The whole government is working non-stop in every possible way” (D7), “we’ve been working round the clock to tackle this unparalleled situation” (D8).

To achieve greater effectivity, Babiš suggests in his 2017 book and different interviews reforms of the Czech constitutional system, which would in fact weaken the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances. These include:

Lowering the number of MPs in the lower chamber to 101 (instead of 200), introducing a first-past-the-post electoral system for elections to both chambers of the parliament; eventually abolishing the Senate (the upper parliamentary chamber); limiting parliamentary discussion; reducing the number of ministries; introducing referenda; abolishing regional administration; directly electing mayors; possibly abolishing local councils; and also strengthening the influence of the state on the public media. (Havlík, 2019, p. 380)

Furthermore, the Prime Minister continually stresses his openness and honesty when it comes to keeping promises (D1, D2, D3, D4). To demonstrate these qualities, he regularly posts about his hard work on social media, summarizing his weekly achievements in the informal video report “Hey, People”. The content of these videos and posts portraying the Prime Minister as one of the people³⁶, but also as the one responsible for all the progress, is often problematic being taken out of context, incomplete, inconsistent or taking credit for someone else’s work. (Tvrdoň, 2019) Despite claiming to have a long-term vision for the Czech Republic, Babiš has focused predominantly on short-term populist policies, such as discounted train and bus fares for seniors and students, and the increases of pension and child benefits, thus keeping his word to invest in people (D5, D6). On the other hand, he has neglected the proposed long-term reforms, disinformed about the kilometers of highway constructed³⁷, instead of the promised “balanced” government budget increased the deficit, among others (Břešťan, 2020). The Government also did not advance digitalization and the centralization of state services (D5, D6), as the coronavirus crisis revealed. During the pandemic, it repeatedly failed to clearly communicate a concrete plan. Relying on public opinion polls rather than specialists, and thus lifting all COVID-19 restrictions, the Czech Republic went from being “best in COVID” to one of the most affected countries in the world. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister sustained that “nobody could have been prepared for” the second wave of the pandemic (D8).

³⁶ Besides presenting the Government’s program, the Prime Minister often mentions his personal life, talking of dogs, food, and family, to approximate the citizens.

³⁷ In his New Year’s speech (D6), the Prime Minister claims: “Since I entered the cabinet, we have opened 91 kilometers of new motorways and started construction on a further 163 kilometers.” Nevertheless, since 2001, 70,1 km of new motorways were opened and the construction of a further 113 km was started (Demagog.cz, 2020).

Prime Minister Babiš: Domestic Policy Agenda	D5	D6	D7	D8
ANO party/Government is for everyone. I am the ANO party/Government.				
We particularly think of our children and seniors.				
We are a small nation but with great talent and values.				
We invest in people.				
We do not just talk about goals like other politicians, but we work hard to achieve them.				
I am open and honest; we keep our promises.				
We build a lot, and reconstruct.				
We support digitalization including centralized governmental services.				
We offer a new long-term vision for a prosperous future of the Czech Republic.				
We will get through the coronavirus pandemic if we work together and follow the Government's measures.				
During the coronavirus crisis, we made <i>some</i> mistakes because we could not be ready for this.				

Figure 4. Prime Minister's domestic policy agenda (own table)

4.2.3 Foreign Policy

For forty years in this day you have heard from the mouths of my predecessors in diverse version the same thing. *How our country is flourishing, how many other billions of tons of steel we made, how we are all happy, how we trust our government and what beautiful perspectives open in front of us.* I suppose, you did not elect me to his office, so that I too would lie to you. Our country is not flourishing. (...) The worst thing is, that we live in a corrupt moral environment. We fell ill morally since we got used to saying one thing and thinking another. We learned to believe in nothing, ignore one another, *take only care of ourselves.* (Havel, 1990)

In this way, President Havel reflects on the situation in Czechoslovakia post-transition in his first New Year's speech, rejecting the lies told by the representatives of the communist regime and emphasizing the need of a national moral rebirth. Furthermore, he hopes to reinforce the country's authority in the world through the promotion of humanist values, which still form the base of the *Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy* (2017) as discussed in the *Historical-Cultural Context* chapter. Nevertheless, the analyzed discourses demonstrate that both the current Prime Minister and the President do not always act (or speak) in compliance with this official conception failing to harmonize the formulation of foreign policy even within the political representation, which results in the incoherent and unpredictable image of the country in the world. Overall, the discourse analysis reveals that the President and the Prime Minister concentrate mostly on domestic issues. In relation to NATO and the EU, they politicize predominantly the problem of migration and to a lesser

degree terrorism and ecology. The promotion of economic diplomacy appears to dominate over the protection of human rights and the environment. Both the Prime Minister and the President appreciate cooperation with the V4 countries, but their views diverge on the issue of the relations with Russia and China. As Vít Borčany e Vít Dostál (2018, p. 13) sum up, the Czech foreign policy has been lately characterized by indifference, absence of a long-term vision, egoism and even aggression towards other actors:

Its current creators deepen the Czech self-infatuation, which compromises the possibility to co-create rules of the international system and thus take advantage of the benefits the contemporary system brings to the smaller countries.

This tendency is confirmed in the message reiterated in most of the discourses, that the Czech Republic is doing better than the rest of the countries, and in the lack of international solidarity demonstrated during the migration and coronavirus crises. Due to the preference for pragmatism over moral values expressed in both the President and Prime Minister's discourses, various commentators compared the leaders' rhetoric to that of Gustáv Husák, last communist president of Czechoslovakia and the symbol of the Normalization period.

Zeman invites the Czech nation to enjoy the current economic growth and leave the "bad mood" behind, nevertheless his appeal is relatively more sober than that of the Prime Minister, addressing also potential economic problems due to the US-China Trade War, Brexit and labor shortage (D1, D2). During the coronavirus pandemic, the President did not showcase much international solidarity, portraying the Czech Republic as a country that is not doing as bad as the others: "Look at Sweden for example, there are now already over six thousand dead and I am not even talking of Israel" (D4), only thanking China for the delivery of medic supplies, Czechia in fact purchased: "I would like to thank the People's Republic of China, which has as the only country helped in the supply of these resources" (D3). Although the Parliament, respectively the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plays the principal role in the formulation of foreign policy, the Constitution grants the Head of State instruments to significantly influence it³⁸: "I promise to strive to defend the national interests of the Czech Republic and its sovereignty in the area of migration as well as other areas. I promise that I will continue to support economic diplomacy" (D1). It is questionable whether Zeman's

³⁸ According to the article 63 of the Constitution, President of the Republic has the power to represent the State with respect to other countries, negotiate and ratify international treaties, receive, appoint, and recall heads of diplomatic missions. (Ústava ČR, 1993)

promotion of economic diplomacy particularly with China and Russia³⁹ does not at times collide with his promise to defend national interests and security, considering the country's integration in the Euro-Atlantic area. According to Zeman, migration is connected to Islamism, hence extremism, his first “island of deviation”, which represents a security and an ideological threat. In his 2017 Christmas message the President pleaded NATO to be more active in the fight against Islamic terrorism and reproached the EU for not being able to protect its borders. He reiterates this message, supporting the NATO mission in Afghanistan and complimenting the activity of V4 that stood up to the incapable EU elite: “It managed to achieve the almost impossible. It successfully stopped the discussion about the nonsensical idea of migrant quotas” (D1). His criticism of the EU in confront with his praise of Russia and China, is expressed in the following statement for the Russian NTV⁴⁰:

Russia has a strong leader, China has a strong leader, the United States have a strong leader. Please, find me a strong leader on the level of the European Union. I look left, I look right, I look straight, I look back — I simply do not see a strong leader. (Malát, 2018)



Figure 5. Miloš Zeman drinking a beer with Xi Jinping in Prague (AMO, 2016)

When it comes to China, Zeman hoped the Czech Republic would become “an unsinkable aircraft carrier of Chinese investment expansion” in Europe, paying multiple visits to the country, inviting the Chinese president Xi Jinping for the first time to Prague in 2016 despite

³⁹ Zeman's promotion of business deals with China and Russia is linked to the interests of the President's controversial collaborators without security clearance, Chancellor Vratislav Mynář, and Martin Nejedlý connected to the Russian energy company Lukoil. Moreover, Jaroslav Tvrdík and Petr Kellner lobby for the Czech-Chinese relations.

⁴⁰ In the same interview the President confirmed his opposition to the EU sanctions against Russia, as he had proclaimed the annexation of Crimea *fait accompli*.

public protests, and even appointing the chairman of CEFC Ye Jianming⁴¹ his honorary economic adviser (Barbosa, Santora & Stevenson, 2018). Although most of the promised Chinese investments did not materialize, President continues to defend Chinese interests, ridiculing the BIS reports warning of Chinese espionage through the Huawei Technologies: “the Chinese do carry out industrial espionage here. They come to the Czech Republic to investigate why our trains are so slow while theirs run at 300 km an hour” (D1).⁴² Finally, as his predecessor Klaus, Zeman is skeptical about global warming. He dismisses the European Green Deal as ideological and hurtful to economics, considering that the Czech Republic is still quite dependent on traditional energy sources (D2).

President Zeman: Foreign Policy Agenda	D1	D2	D3	D4
We should rejoice from current economic growth but beware of potential problems.				
I will defend national interests and sovereignty, and economic diplomacy.				
NATO should continue to fight Islamic terrorism and EU should protect its borders. Thanks to the V4, the migrant quotas were rejected.				
We should not accuse the Chinese of spying, but learn from them, as they are more technologically advanced. We should be grateful to China for their help during the coronavirus pandemic.				
The human impact on climate change is overrated, discussions of climate change are exaggerated and dangerous for the economy of the Czech Republic and the EU.				
During the coronavirus crisis, other countries are doing worse than us and we should be grateful to China for their help.				

Figure 6. President’s foreign policy agenda (own table)

In all four analyzed discourses, even during the coronavirus pandemic, the Prime Minister aims to convince the citizens that the country is and will keep doing extremely well, particularly thanks to his Government:

We want to (...) do everything we can to improve our lot. (D5); We have an amazing time before us. We are the Czech Republic, a country for the future. (D6); We are doing very well. And I am sure we will see this through. (D7); We saved thousands of lives. That is why we coped with the first wave so well. (D8)

This is consistent with his populist appeal built on competence, not ideology. Despite the favorable economic situation in Europe which influenced the growth of economy, the Babiš’s Government has increased its spending which cumulated in the highest deficit during the coronavirus pandemic. To further persuade the public of the Government’s achievements,

⁴¹ CEFC gained shares in several important Czech companies including the Lobkowicz Group, Travel Service, Médea Group, Empresa Media and bought the Slavia football club. Ye Jianming was arrested in China in 2018 and his company’s investments were moved to the state CITIC Group.

⁴² Despite the security threat, Zeman is also pushing the construction of a new unit at the nuclear power plant Dukovany by the Russian Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation, which lately led to the cooling of relations with the Prime Minister.

Babiš often stresses the exceptionality of the Czech Republic regarding security, economic performance, and the reaction to the coronavirus crisis, in relation to other countries:

Our citizens live in a safe country, a blessing bestowed on few of the nations around us. (D5); We are growing. We are getting richer. More than most eurozone and European Union countries (D6); We are one of the few countries that did not miss the right moment to put in place strict measures to prevent the unrestrained spread of the disease. (D7); That was after we became one of the first countries in Europe to stop the spread of the disease. (D8)

Although the Czech Republic is one of the safest countries in the world, as the Prime Minister himself claims, national security and the rejection of migrant quotas become top priorities of his Government (D5, D6). This agenda is also reflected in Babiš's relationship with the European Union. Together with the V4 countries, he promotes *Better Europe* over *More Europe*, stressing strong Member States and depoliticization of the European Commission, the preservation of Schengen and protection of external borders. Although the country has fulfilled the criteria for joining the eurozone⁴³, Babiš chooses to wait until the EU reforms (D5). Even though the Prime Minister presents himself as a more pro-European than the President, his rhetoric in fact encourages Euroscepticism⁴⁴, fighting for membership benefits without responsibility-sharing:

One of this Government's headline objectives is to *fight* for Czech citizens' interests within the European Union (...) We must be *more assertive in defending* our interests in a unifying Europe. (...) We do not simply want to *nod* to Brussels, we want to change its policies. (D5); Our government *confidently represents* our country abroad. At the UN and in Brussels at the European Council (...) where I *fight hard* for Czech interests. (D6)

Unlike Zeman, Babiš acknowledges the importance of climate change but argues that every country should device their energy mix, stressing the importance of nuclear energy in achieving carbon neutrality in the Czech Republic⁴⁵ (D5, D6). Overall, the Prime Minister wants the Czech Republic to be "seen" in Europe, however, currently his previously mentioned conflict of interest is the most visible.

⁴³ According to the annual report *Evaluation of Fulfillment of the Maastricht Convergence Criteria and Degree of Economic Convergence of the Czech Republic with the Euro Area* by the Ministry Finance and CNB (2018), the Czech Republic currently meets the public finance, interest rate convergence and price stability criteria. Nevertheless, the process of real economic convergence remains unfinished, as the local price and wage levels are still substantially below the older EU member states.

⁴⁴ In the analyzed discourses addressed to the Czech citizens, Brussels is painted almost in opposition to the Czech Republic and its interests, however in other speeches particularly at conferences, the Prime Minister acknowledges the Czech co-creation of Brussels policies and the importance of the membership: "I don't know what they mean, who is this Brussels, because we are part of this Brussels. (...) We are definitely not losing national sovereignty (...) I think it is useless to talk of how positive our membership in the European Union has been during those 15 years." (Babiš, 2019)

⁴⁵ When it comes to climate change, the Prime Minister's attitude is also unclear, as he defends the European Green Deal at diverse conferences and in the EU but presents a much more of a skeptical view to the citizens: "I expect that Brussels will finally forget those green deals, which ruined our automotive industry or ruined the economics, those emission permits." (Honzejek, 2020)

Prime Minister Babiš: Foreign Policy Agenda	D5	D6	D7	D8
The country is doing extremely well, and it will be doing even better.				
We are doing better than other countries of the EU.				
National security and the rejection of the migration quotas are our top priorities.				
We fight actively for national interests abroad, in the European Union.				
We promote ecological policies.				

Figure 7. Prime Minister's foreign policy agenda (own table)

4.3 Impact of the New Discourse on the Arenas of Democracy

The change in official discourse characterized by illiberal tendencies indicated in the analysis of the President and Prime Minister's speeches influenced the position of the Czech Republic in international democracy rankings. Since its origin in 2006, the Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit has categorized the Czech Republic as a *full democracy* achieving generally an overall score of **8.19/10**. After 2013, coinciding with the election of Miloš Zeman President and the entrance of Andrej Babiš and his ANO party into politics, the country's ranking started dropping progressively, being demoted to a *flawed democracy* by 2014 and reaching the lowest score of **7.69/10** in the most recent 2019 index. Nevertheless, ranking 32nd in the world, Czechia is still doing better than the rest of the Central European region, with Slovakia taking 42nd, Hungary 55th, and Poland 57th place. With the sum of **5.64/7** points, the Czech Republic followed by Slovakia, is still classified as a *consolidated democracy* in the most recent Freedom House report. However, both countries are almost approaching the semi-consolidated democracy category to which the neighboring Poland has already been downgraded, with Hungary having declined to a transitional or hybrid regime. Similarly, as the Democracy Index, also the Nations in Transit detect a decrease in the Czech Republic's democracy score following 2013, with a further drop after 2017. While both analyzed indices demonstrate that the Czech Republic is still doing better than its neighbors, it is a question whether the country will not follow down their path, considering the declining tendency of its democracy score since 2013. Nevertheless, despite the regional proximity and similar historical development, we must not neglect the significant differences in Poland and Hungary's prior regime type and democratization, which unlike Czechoslovakia underwent a negotiated transition from an authoritarian communism in the case of the former and from mature post-totalitarianism in case of the latter (Linz & Stepan, 1996), and consequently the specific character of their current de-democratization

processes, particularly when it comes to the role of the religion in both of the national-conservative right-wing ideologies.

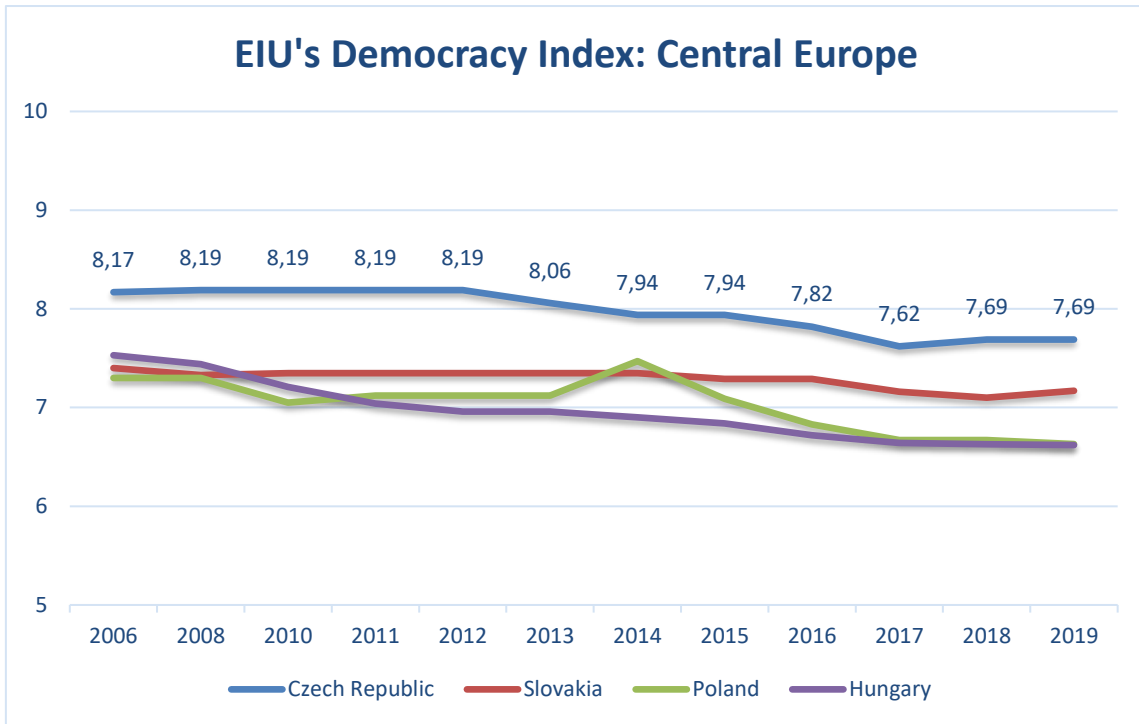


Figure 8. EIU's Democracy Index scores of the Central European countries (own table)⁴⁶

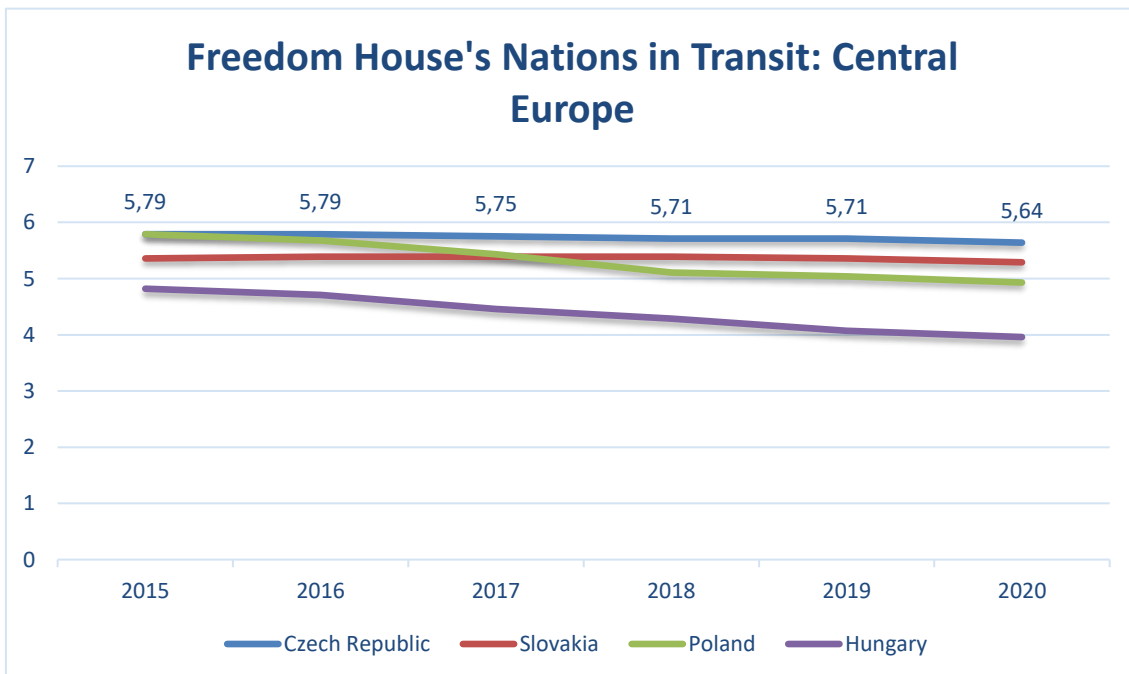


Figure 9. Freedom House's Nations in Transit scores of the Central European countries (own table)⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Scores since 2006, when the Index was first published, with updates for 2008, 2010 and later years, retrieved from the most recent EIU's Democracy Index report (2019).

In the analyzed years coinciding with Miloš Zeman’s presidency and Andrej Babiš’s accession to power, Democracy Index records a decrease in civil liberties, but also in the functioning of government. This decline points to the Prime Minister’s conflict of interests and issues with the formation of government. Furthermore, the scores reveal two constants, an underdeveloped political culture and low levels of political participation, weaknesses common for all the Eastern and Central European democracies. These aspects of democracy are continuously undermined by political instability and corruption scandals, which contribute to the decreasing popular faith in the political class and democracy overall. Moreover, illiberal political discourse and the politization of issues such as migration and terrorism encourage xenophobia and even racism in the population. The most recent EIU’s Democracy Index report adds that many CEE countries reject “liberal” democratic values giving preference to “strongmen” who bypass political institutions (2019, p. 17). Despite problems with media freedom suggested in the decline in civil liberties, the Czech Republic continues to have free and fair elections, which the high numbers regarding electoral process and pluralism confirm.

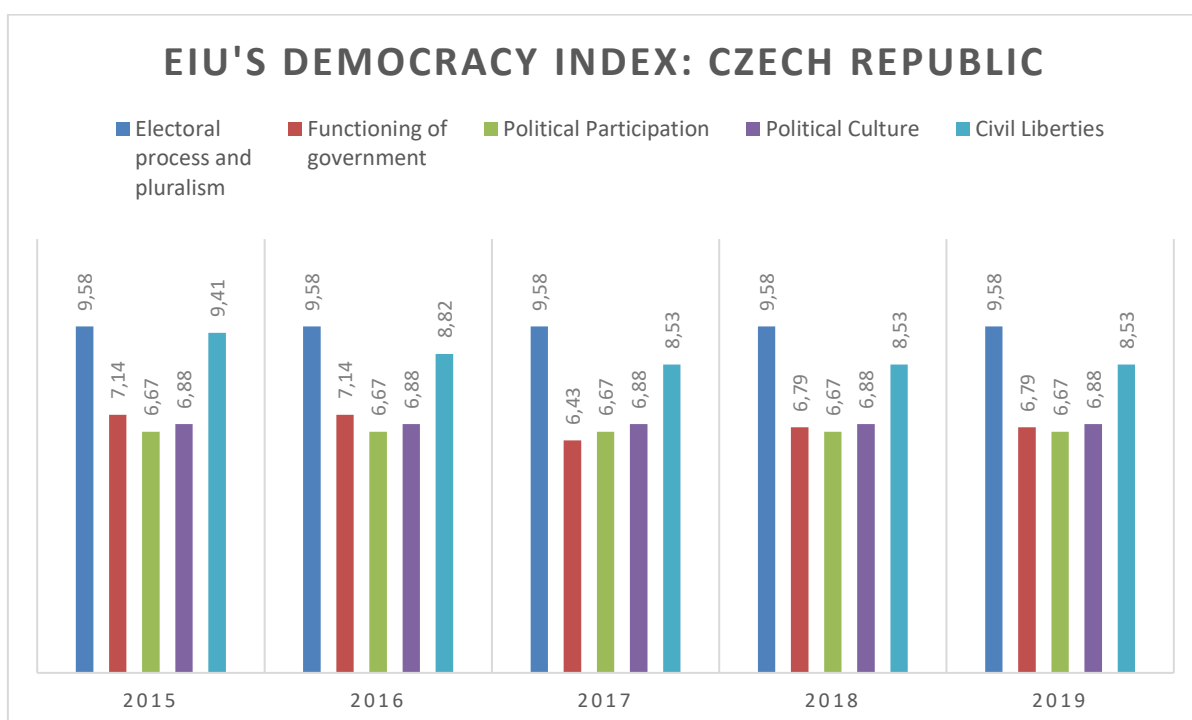


Figure 10. EIU’s Democracy Index scores of the Czech democracy arenas (own table)⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Scores since 2015, when Freedom House reversed its methodology (before rating 1 represented the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest), retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit>.

⁴⁸ Table created based on the data available in the yearly EIU’s Democracy Index reports. The graph shows the years available in both analyzed indices, illustrating the drop in ratings in 2017.

When it comes to the Freedom House's Nations in Transit reports, these tell a similar story. Electoral process rates highest, followed by local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and civil society. Nevertheless, as in the EIU's Democracy Index, civil society suffers a decline in 2017 due to the impact of illiberal and far-right groups on the public discourse. Also the score of independent media, which has been low since 2014, when Babiš entered in office as Minister of Finance, decreased even more in 2020 to reflect the growing oligarchs' influence in the sector⁴⁹ and the continued attacks on the public broadcaster Česká televize. What more, Freedom House registered attempts at executive interference with the rule of law, specifically around the fraud investigation of the Prime Minister, which is manifested in the most recent judicial framework and independence score decline. Like the Democracy Index, also Freedom House indicates issues with government instability as the consistently low national democratic governance and corruption score show.

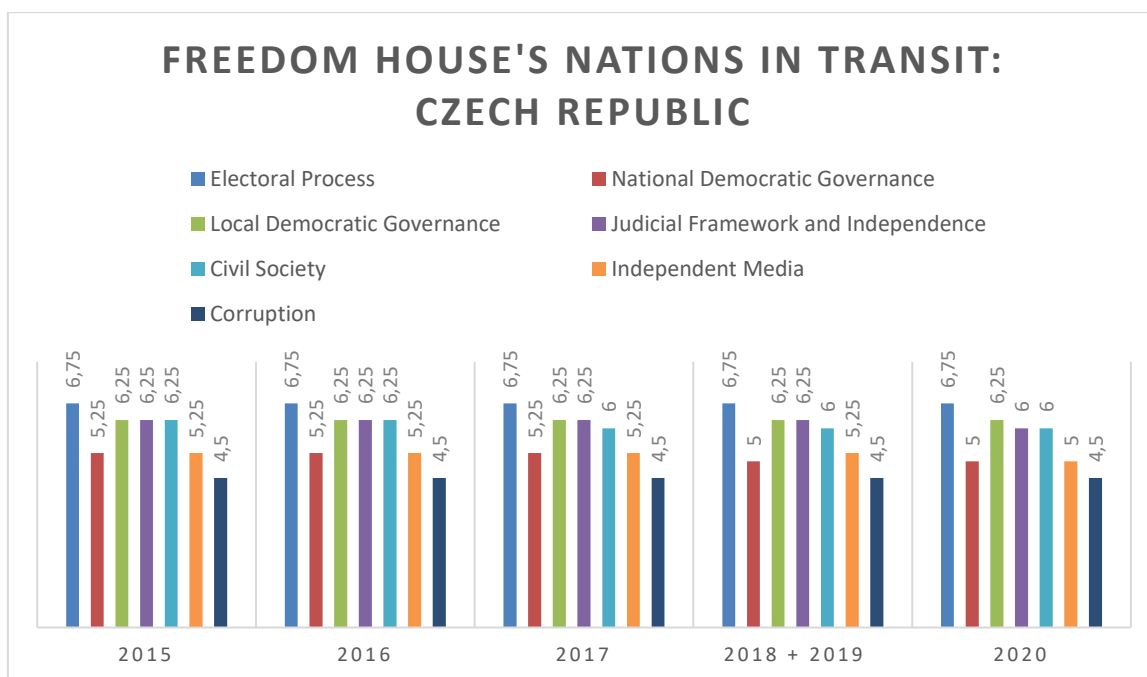


Figure 11. Freedom House's Nations in Transit scores of the Czech democracy arenas (own table)⁵⁰

The diverse aspects of democracy rated by the examined indices could be translated into the five major arenas of a modern consolidated democracy introduced by Linz and Stepan (1996), consisting of civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus and economic

⁴⁹ Freedom House refers to the already mentioned Babiš's ownership of the country's largest newspapers Mladá fronta DNES and Lidové noviny, but also to the recent acquisition of the largest Czech commercial broadcaster, TV NOVA, by the PPF group, owned by the wealthiest Czech entrepreneur, Petr Kellner.

⁵⁰ Table created based on the data available at the Freedom House Nations in Transit website. The graph shows the years available in both analyzed indices, illustrating the drop in ratings in 2017.

society. Considering the recent developments reflected in the rankings, we can conclude that the arena of political society has been affected the most thus far. Despite the preservation of free and inclusive electoral contestation, there is an evident lack of effective political leadership and a stable party system upholding democratic values. Due to clientelist structures, the gap between citizens and the political elite widened enabling the rise of populism and creating governmental instability. The emergent populist discourse has had a deteriorating effect on another arena, the civil society, which shows the problem of complementarity as “one of these two dimensions is frequently neglected in favor of the other” (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 9). In fact, leaders such as Zeman and Babiš discredit the political elite promoting strongman leadership and majoritarian democracy. At the same time, they condemn critical civil society actors, particularly media and NGOs, as unelected elite, contributing to their decreasing public legitimacy. Through the mobilization of exclusive national identity, boosted by the ownership of important media outlets, they manage to win over a part of the public opinion. Nevertheless, the civil opposition remains strong, which was manifested in a series of successful demonstrations against the illiberal tendencies, with one “Million Moments for Democracy” protest becoming the largest since the Velvet Revolution. Neither the rule of law arena has been left intact, as the leading political actors attempt to disrespect the Constitution, however, unlike in the neighboring Poland or Hungary, constitutional changes have so far remained discursive. Although the Czech Republic is not experiencing stateness problems like other post-communist countries, the obsolete, slow, excessive state apparatus favoring corruption complicates both the governance and the lives of citizens, as the coronavirus pandemic uncovered. Finally, as “no single arena in such a system can function properly without some support from one, or often all, of the other arenas” (1996, p. 13), also the autonomy and competitiveness of economic society arena, which has been the emblem of transition success, has suffered from the accumulation of power in the Prime Minister’s hands.

5. CONCLUSION: WILL “TRUTH PREVAIL” OVER THE ILLIBERAL CHALLENGE?

How we conceptualize democracy, favoring either minimalist or maximalist definitions, conditions how we explain a successful democratization or democratic backsliding. The theoretical part of this work demonstrated that democracy is a complex concept, difficult to define or measure, taking into account all its diverse subtypes. We adhere to the definition of Western democracy founded on the principles of constitutional liberalism. Without the respect of the rule of law and civil rights, democracy is reduced to its electoral characteristics risking “the tyranny of the majority”. Moreover, we must understand democratization and de-democratization as dynamic processes, for many countries today remain in the “gray zone”, and even consolidated democracies run the risk of reversal. The prototypical CEE backsliders, Poland, and Hungary, manifest that illiberalism can grow even inside a “successfully” institutionalized democracy. At the same time, we need not to reject all theoretical categories of thought such as transition models, regime ideal-types or the democratic consolidation concept because of teleology, instead we may critically employ them as a framework that can help us organize the complex reality. After all, the limits of the early transitologist comparativist transition paradigms have been discussed extensively leading to a consensus among the transitologists themselves that rejects the idea of a single modernity emphasizing rather the formal and informal institutionalization of democracy. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the post-communist transitions revealed the relevance of preconditions for democracy, and particularly importance of historical-cultural context. Similarly, we cannot fall into the trap of a “reverse transition paradigm” when analyzing the recent democratic decline in the CEE region, acknowledging the countries’ diversity. Despite its recent popularity, democratic backsliding is not a new phenomenon having only become vaguer and more gradual. This illiberal process has been associated with the rise of populism, both anti-liberal and democratic thin-centered ideology based on the antagonism of “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”. As the EU conditionalities significantly impacted democratization in the post-communist countries, postfunctionalism sustains that the current (de)democratization processes in these now member states can negatively influence the course of the European integration owing to the clash between functional pressures and exclusive identity.

Thanks to its post-structuralist cross-disciplinary context-focused approach, the present investigation opted for a two-dimensional sub-systemic and systemic-level *discourse analysis*

to illuminate the recent distancing of the Czech Republic from the *Acquis Communautaire*, and generally from the country's post-1989 official discourse. The incursion into the historical-cultural context revealed that the democracy decline in the Czech Republic is certainly not an isolated phenomenon, having been influenced by macro-structural conditions such as geopolitical changes, globalization, the development of the internet and social media, and the consequent disinformation campaigns, along with a series of external crises such as terrorist attacks, economic crises, the migrant crisis or the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the Czech populist leaders, similarly as their international counterparts, take advantage of the economic inequality, winners and losers of the globalization, and cultural backlash, GAL/TAN divide, created by these global trends. Although their populist appeal and their executive aggrandizement tendencies appear similar from the outside, there are fundamental differences in their narrative owing to specific regional and domestic experiences. Unlike its neighbors, Poland and Hungary, Czechoslovakia transitioned from the "frozen" post-totalitarianism-by-decay to democracy abruptly, through collapse after a series of mass demonstrations, and crucial international events. Václav Havel's humanist program inspired by Tomáš G. Masaryk and his search for truth, along with the "Back to Europe" strategy shaped the Czech national discourse post-1989. Thus, also thanks to the preconditions for democracy, the country achieved consolidation quickly, which culminated in its integration in NATO and the EU. Nevertheless, the negative legacies of (post)totalitarianism reflected in a weak civil society and subservient political culture, coupled with the shortcomings of the transition, particularly the unregulated mass privatization, led to the spread of corruption and clientelist structures within the new political parties, alighting a growing gap between the elite and citizens. Thus, the rise of the populist Andrej Babiš and Miloš Zeman should be understood as a consequence of all these developments, rather than the origin of the democracy crisis, which leads us to question the effective institutionalization of Czech democracy in the first place.

As for the character of the illiberal challenge, President Zeman works with the identity of an insider, whose age, studies, and experience in politics allow him to lecture the audience, employing a wide range of literary tropes and intertextuality, referencing for example Professor Masaryk. To assert his teacher-like authority in a non-superior way, he approximates the audience mixing in informal expressions, using lowered modality and the first person imperative. The Prime Minister's outsider identity of a hard-working businessman, product of the country's best marketing, is sustained by his empty corporate

speak consisting of English terms and statistics to designate performance, but also simple colloquial expressions creating the impression of “a dialogue between equals”, and finally high modality verbs and short nominal sentences indicating confidence and action. Both political leaders claim to defend the will of common working people against the corrupt elite, represented by their political opponents and the media, occasionally immigrants and Brussels, (in case of the President) GAL, and civil society. Except for the politization of security, migration and to a lesser degree ecology issues, their discourses are predominantly concerned with domestic policy, referencing other countries to illustrate how well the Czech Republic is doing in comparison. Due to the President’s controversial promotion of Russian and Chinese interests, together with Prime Minister volatile pro-Europeanism, the Czech Republic comes off as an unpredictable international player. Overall, the new discourse introduced by the current President and Prime Minister, is not so new after all, constructed on the national myths of the “Munique Syndrom” and the “Hussite stigma” feeding Czech geopolitical insecurity and exceptionalism respectively, employed by the former President Václav Klaus. Furthermore, their populist ideology relies on economic pragmatism rather than the higher moral ideals promoted by Masaryk and Havel or the Polish and Hungarian grand conservative-nationalist narrative, recalling the Normalization period discourse. Finally, neither of the two current leaders presents a coherent, long-term vision for the Czech Republic, but they rather build their appeal around the construction of social antagonism, short-term goals, and a minimalist conception of democracy. They emphasize the importance of elections and promote aspects of direct democracy, but also attempt to dismantle checks and balances, and centralize power in their hands. These growing illiberal tendencies have been registered in the democracy rankings of EIU and Freedom House, particularly in the low scores when it comes to the functioning of the government and political participation, and but also in the decrease in civil liberties, the independence of media and the rule of law. Owing to the lack of a truly democratic leadership, political instability and corruption, political society seems to be suffering the most, nevertheless the trend underlines the interconnectedness of all the democracy arenas.

Considering the above cited findings, we may conclude that the empirical investigation overall confirmed our research hypotheses. As for our first research question, which aimed to identify the origins and character of the retreat of democracy in the Czech Republic, the sub-systemic-level discourse analysis validated that the current Prime Minister Babiš and President Zeman, managed to rise to power, and gradually implement “executive

aggrandizement”, effectively thanks to the mobilization of exclusive identity as a consequence of a series of internal and external crises, which originated the dislocation of the official post-transition discourse. Bearing in mind the thorough inspection of the political leaders’ rhetoric and agenda, we may characterize the illiberal challenge as populist, but we cannot categorize both Babiš and Zeman unequivocally as TAN forces, as in the case of their Hungarian and Polish counterparts. Contrasting the EIU’s and Freedom House’s international democracy rankings in the systemic-level part of our empirical investigation, we answered the second research question focused on indicating which arenas of democracy have been the most affected and why by the crisis. Based on the compared scores, we verified that, in fact, the arena of political society has been affected the most so far, with no democracy arena persisting intact, due to the accumulation of economic, political and media power in the hands of the Prime Minister and the President’s attempts at stretching his constitutional powers. However, as their suggested system alterations have remained mostly discursive, also thanks to the critical opposition in form of the Senate, civil society and media, there is hope that “truth will prevail” over this illiberal challenge. Nonetheless, democracy in the Czech Republic is clearly in need of a revitalization, when it comes to political leadership, party-system, state apparatus but also civil society.

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7. APPENDIX

7.1 Discourse Analysis of the President Miloš Zeman

In order to characterize the President's agenda and rhetorical strategies, with a special focus on the construction of social antagonism, and thus uncover the changes in the official Czech discourse and its impact on democracy, the following four discourses were analyzed:

D1: Christmas Message of the President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman (26/12/2018), *original Czech title: Vánoční poselství prezidenta republiky Miloše Zemana*

D2: Christmas Message of the President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman (26/12/2019), *original Czech title: Vánoční poselství prezidenta republiky Miloše Zemana*

D3: The Address of the President of the Czech Republic to the Nation (18/03/2020), *original Czech title: Projev prezidenta republiky k národu*

D4: The Address of the President of the Czech Republic to the Nation (16/10/2020), *original Czech title: Projev prezidenta republiky k národu*

President Zeman: Agenda			
Message	Quotation (CZ)	Translation (EN)	Interpretation
I represent normal citizens with <i>respectable</i> jobs, who have their own head and do not let themselves be manipulated.	D1: „(...) i nadále se budu, a to velmi rád, setkávat s normálními občany tváří v tvář během mých výjezdů po jednotlivých krajích. (...) aby v příštím roce za vámi zůstala úctyhodná práce, které si druzí lidé budou vážit.“	D1: “(...) I promise that I will continue meeting normal citizens face-to-face, and that with utmost pleasure, during my tours into the regions. (...) your leaving behind respectable work which others will appreciate.”	The centrality of the empty signifiers “ the good people ” against “ the corrupt elite ” in Zeman’s populist program. However, his concept of “the people” is quite exclusive as it includes only his sympathizers, while labeling others negatively. This is true even in crisis, as the D3 and D4 demonstrate.
	D2: „Chtěl bych vám všem popřát, abyste i nadále byli svobodnými osobnostmi, které si vytvářejí svůj vlastní názor a nenechají se nikým manipulovat. Abyste si vážili sami sebe právě proto, že máte vlastní informovaný názor.“	D2: “I would like to wish everyone, to keep on being free people, which form their own opinion and do not let themselves be manipulated by anyone. To have respect for yourselves precisely because you have your own informed opinion.”	
	D3: „Nesmírně vítám spontánní aktivity dobrovolníků, kteří se sdružují, aby pomohli svým spoluobčanům (...) <i>Dokonce i herci, z nichž někteří si stěžovali, že nemají kšefty, by udělali lépe, kdyby například navštívili domovy důchodců a přinesli tam trochu radosti.</i> “	D3: “I welcome immensely spontaneous activities of voluntaries who get together to help their fellow citizens (...) <i>Even actors, some of whom complained they didn’t have gigs, would do better if they would for example visit a retirement home and bring some happiness there.</i> ”	

	D4: „Jsme v situaci, kdy o lidské životy bojují naši zdravotníci a já bych jim chtěl vyjádřit úctu, obdiv a poděkování. Ale o lidské životy může bojovat každý z nás.“	D4: “We are in a situation, when our medics are fighting for human lives and I would like to express my respect, admiration and thanks to them. But everyone of us may fight for human lives. ”	
I support the Government and its vision.	D1: „Chtěl bych poděkovat předsedům tří politických stran, kteří našli odvahu k vytvoření a podpoře takové vlády, Andreji Babišovi, Janu Hamáčkovi a Vojtěch Filipovi. Vládě přeji úspěch v její práci (...).“	D1: “I would like to thank the leaders of the three political parties - Andrej Babiš, Jan Hamáček and Vojtěch Filip, who found the courage to create and support such a government. I wish our new government success in its work (...).”	This reiterated message reflects the President’s collaboration with PM Babiš since his double appointment (and Babiš’s endorsement of Zeman’s reelection). However, Zeman’s support of Babiš decreases during the coronavirus crisis.
	D2: „Ted’ bych pochválil vládu za to, že předložila národní investiční plán s horizontem 30 let, protože některé velké projekty samozřejmě přesahují funkční období jakékoliv vlády.“	D2: “Now I would like to compliment the Government to presenting a national investment plan with the horizon of 30 years, since some large projects exceed the term in office of any government.”	
	D3: „V tomto prohlášení jsem plně podpořil vládu České republiky v jejich opatřeních.“	D3: “In that statement I fully supported the Government of the Czech Republic in their measures.”	
	D4: „Plně podporuji opatření vlády, i když si myslím, že někdy mohla být lépe komunikována.“	D4: “I fully support the measures of the Government, although I think they could be communicated better sometimes.”	
Elections are the most important part of democracy.	D1: „Demokracie, to nejsou jenom práva. Demokracie, to jsou i povinnosti. Já dlouhodobě doporučuji, opět po vzoru první republiky, abychom se vrátili k myšlence povinné volební účasti, která není časově náročná, ale která by výrazně rozšířila počet voličů, a tím přinutila politické strany k vyšší aktivitě.“	D1: “Democracy does not mean just rights. Democracy also means duties. I have long recommended that we return to the practice of the First Republic and to the idea of a mandatory voter turnout, which is not time consuming, but it would significantly increase the number of voters and force political parties to increase their activity thereby.”	Unlike the media or other activities of civil society Zeman promotes the participation in elections in all his speeches, even suggesting that elections become obligatory. (minimalist concept of democracy)
	D2: „V parlamentní demokracii, kterou jsme a budeme, premiéři přicházejí a odcházejí na základě výsledku svobodných voleb.“	D2: “In a parliamentary democracy, which we are and we will be, the prime ministers come and go based on the results of free elections.”	
City and county representatives should be elected directly to avoid the formation of coalitions against	D1: „Mnohdy se stává, že vítěz voleb je obejit a že vzniká koalice proti tomuto vítězi. Nepokládám to za správné, považují to za obcházení vůle voličů. Co	D1: “It often happens that the winner is eliminated, and a coalition is formed against such a winner. In my opinion, this is not right, and I consider it a circumvention of the	Zeman promotes direct democracy as a way of fighting the corrupt elite. He repeatedly warns against clientelist

the winner of elections.	proti tomu dělat, abychom jen nelamentovali. Dlouhodobě navrhuji přímou volbu jak starostů, tak primátorů, tak hejtmanů, a to tak, že jimi jsou zvoleni ti, kdo na kandidátce nejúspěšnějšího kandidujícího subjektu dostali největší počet preferenčních hlasů.“	voters' will. What shall stop us whining about it? I have long been suggesting the introduction of the direct vote of both mayors and regional council presidents, so that the candidate with the largest number of preferential votes on the winning candidate list would be automatically elected to this position.”	structures on all political levels, including regional and communal.
It is not democratic and <i>hysterical</i> to demonstrate against a regime that was democratically elected.	D1: „(...) demonstrovat za svržení, tedy demisi vlády v podmínkách svobodných voleb podle mého názoru pohrdáním vůlí voličů. Já bych jen chtěl připomenout dva Masarykovy citáty. První, tož demokracii již máme, teď ještě nějaké ty demokraty. Demokrat je ten, kdo respektuje výsledky svobodných voleb, i když se mu třeba nelíbí. Druhý citát zní, rozčilení není program.“	D1: “(...) I see the demonstration to overthrow a government created after free elections contemptuous of voters’ will. I would just like to recall two Masaryk’s quotes. First, we already have democracy; now we need some democrats. A democrat respects the outcome of free elections, even if they do not like it. The second quote goes, being upset is not a political program.”	Zeman believes that civil activity, such as demonstrations , is undemocratic . After expressing their active citizenship in the election, people should step aside and let the rules rule.
	D2: „Povšiml jsem si rovněž demonstrací v Praze, jejichž účastníci vyžadovali demisi ministerského předsedy. Na to se dá odpovědět velice stručně. V parlamentní demokracii, kterou jsme a budeme, premiéři přicházejí a odcházejí na základě výsledku svobodných voleb.“	D2: “I also noticed the demonstrations in Prague, whose participants demand the demission of the Prime Minister. That can be answered quite briefly. In a parliamentary democracy, which we are and we will be, prime ministers come and go based on the results of free elections.”	
Citizens should ignore “The Better People” because they do not understand anything.	D1: „(...) televize, dále tištěná média, dále neziskové organizace a konečně církve asi s 25 procenty důvěryhodnosti. (...) Lepšiolidé jsou ti, kteří se považují za něco lepšího než my ostatní a kteří nám neustále radí, co máme dělat, a kteří své názory považují za nadřazené názorům těch druhých. Když se ovšem na strukturu lepšiolidů podíváme, tak vidíme, že například sdělovací prostředky jsou mnohdy složeny z komentátorů, kteří každý den píšou o něčem jiném, a přitom pořádně ničemu nerozumí. A tyto lidé nám chtějí radit. (...) ignorujte radíčky, kteří sami v životě nedokázali nic.	D1: “(...) television, printed media, non-profit organizations, and finally the Church came last with about 25 per cent of credibility. (...) The Better-People are those who consider themselves better than the rest of us, who keep mentoring us on what to do and who regard their views superior to those of others. However, when we look at the structure of the “Better-People” community, we can see that, for example, media often consist of commentators who write about something else every day whilst understanding nothing. And these people want to advise us. (...) ignore the smart alecks who have yet to prove	Although the media represent the third “island of deviation”, which Zeman promised to fight against (in both of his Inaugural Speeches, 2013 and 2018), he criticizes it the most throughout his time in office, for lying to the people. He warns against the media owned by Zdeněk Bakala and the public television station, Česká televize.

		themselves.”	
	D2: „Chtěl bych vám všem popřát, abyste i nadále byli svobodnými osobnostmi, které si vytvářejí svůj vlastní názor a nenechají se nikým manipulovat.“	D2: “I would like to wish everyone, to keep on being free people, which form their own opinion and do not let themselves be manipulated by anyone.”	
	D3: „Nevšímejte si příliš poštěkávání a vřeštění našich novinářských komentátorů, kteří jako obvykle píší o všem a nerozumí ničemu.“	D3: “Do not mind too much the barking and screeching of our news commentators, who, as usual, write about everything and understand nothing.”	
We should rejoice from current economic growth but beware of potential problems.	D1: „Všichni jsme se radovali a dosud radujeme nad ekonomickým růstem. Dnes poprvé bych chtěl naopak poněkud varovat, varovat před zpomalením ekonomického růstu, které má několik příčin. Zaprvé je to vznikající obchodní nebo celní válka mezi dvěma největšími světovými ekonomikami, tj. americkou a čínskou. Zadruhé je to brexit, ale zatřetí je to také to, že náš ekonomický růst brzdí nedostatek pracovních sil.“	D1: “We were and we still are enjoying a steady economic growth. Today, for the first time, I would like to warn you against a deceleration of the economic growth which might be coming for several reasons. First, it is the emerging trade and customs war between the two world’s largest economies, the USA and China. The second reason is the Brexit. Third, the shortage of skilled labor force is hindering our economic growth.”	Like the PM, also the President invites the population to enjoy the positive economic situation, but simultaneously warns against potential problems. Throughout his terms, Zeman has promoted economic diplomacy particularly through business deals with Russia and China. Also, he has criticized the effort to completely replace traditional energy with renewable sources.
	D2: „vítejte v úspěšné zemi, zemi, která má nejnižší míru nezaměstnanosti v Evropské unii, která má stabilní ekonomický růst, která má relativně klesající a poměrně nízký státní dluh, zemi, kde roste jak průměrná mzda, tak starobní důchody. Toto vše jsou úspěchy. A i když o nás češích se říká, že jsme nejskeptičtější národ v Evropě, myslím si, že nad těmito úspěchy bychom se měli společně radovat. To samozřejmě neznamená, že by neexistovaly problémy (...)“	D2: “welcome to a successful country, country, which has the lowest unemployment rate in the European Union, which has a stable economic growth, which a relatively decreasing and quite low state debt, country where the average wage as well as retirement income are growing. All these are achievements. And although the Czechs are called the most skeptical nation in Europe, I think that we should rejoice together at these successes. That does not mean that there would not be any problems (...)”	
We should not be afraid of digitalization but embrace it as it could help speed up the state and thus simplify our	D1: „Dlouhodobé řešení vidím ke zvýšení produktivity práce, a to konkrétně formou robotizace. (...) Považuji za nesmyslné, abychom této tendenci bránili.“	D1: “I see the long-term solution in the increase of work productivity, in particular via robotic automation. (...) I find it pointless to resist this tendency.”	Digitalization and Investment appear to be the two topics promoted by both the PM and the President.

lives.	D2: „Pomalost. Pomalost soudních řízení, pomalost stavebních řízení, pomalost výstavby dopravní infrastruktury.“	D2: “Slowness. Slowness of legal proceedings, slowness of construction proceedings, slowness of transport infrastructure development.”	
Investments are the future, that is why I support the Government’s long term plans.	D1: „Závěrem ekonomické části bych chtěl vysoce ocenit vládní návrh Národního investičního plánu rozpočítaného na 12 let (...) jedině investice, i když nemají volební právo, nás přenášejí do budoucnosti.“	D1: “To conclude the economic part, I would like to highly appreciate the government’s 12-year National Investment Plan proposal (...) only investments carry us to the future, even if they have no suffrage.”	
	D2: „Teď bych pochválil vládu za to, že předložila národní investiční plán s horizontem 30 let, protože některé velké projekty samozřejmě přesahují funkční období jakékoli vlády.“	D2: “Now I would like to compliment the Government to presenting a national investment plan with the horizon of 30 years, since some large projects exceed the term in office of any government.”	
NATO should continue to fight Islamic terrorism and EU should protect its borders. Thanks to the V4, the migrant quotas were rejected.	D1: „Pokud jsme o Severoatlantickou alianci, víte, že dlouhodobě plně podporuji naše zahraniční mise v rámci boje proti mezinárodnímu islámskému terorismu, zejména pak v Afghánistánu. (...) Co se týče Evropské unie, velice si vážím činnosti Visegrádské skupiny. Té se podařilo téměř nemožné, dosáhnout toho, že už se v zásadě přestalo diskutovat o nesmyslné myšlence migračních kvót.“	D1: “You know that within the NATO I have long and fully supported our participation in foreign missions against the international Islamic terrorism, especially in Afghanistan. (...) As far as the European Union is concerned, I highly appreciate the activities of the Visegrad Group. It managed to achieve the almost impossible. It successfully stopped the discussion about the nonsensical idea of migrant quotas.	According to Zeman, migration is connected to Islamism, and hence extremism , his first “island of deviation”, which represents a security and an ideological threat. That is why NATO should be more active in the fight against Islamic terrorism and the EU in the protection of its borders. V4 stood up to the “incapable EU transnational elite”, defending national interests and security.
We should not accuse the Chinese of spying, but learn from them, as they are more technologically advanced. We should be grateful to China for their help during the coronavirus pandemic.	D1: „Číňani tady opravdu provádějí technologickou špionáž, oni se sem jezdí seznamovat s tím, proč naše vlaky jezdí tak pomalu, když jejich vlaky jezdí 300 km/h.“	D1: “the Chinese do carry out industrial espionage here. They come to the Czech Republic to investigate why our trains are so slow while theirs run at 300 km an hour.”	The President has, at various occasions, promoted Chinese interests above the Czech national interest , criticizing the Security Service’s reports warning of the Chinese threats (the Huawei case). Also, he has repeatedly thanked China for sending (purchased) supplies amid the first coronavirus wave.
	D3: „Chtěl bych proto poděkovat Čínské lidové republice, která nám jako jediná země pomohla v dodávce těchto prostředků.“	D3: “I would like to thank the People’s Republic of China, which has as the only country helped in the supply of these resources.”	
I will defend national interests and sovereignty (migration), and economic	D1: „budu usilovat o obranu národních zájmů České republiky a její suverenity jak v oblasti migrace, tak v oblastech dalších. Slibuji, že i	D1: “I promise to strive to defend the national interests of the Czech Republic and its sovereignty in the area of migration as well as other	It is questionable whether the President’s promotion of economic diplomacy with China

diplomacy.	nadále budu podporovat ekonomickou diplomacií, a to jak náš vývoz do zahraničí, tak příliv efektivních zahraničních investic k nám.“	areas. I promise that I will continue to support economic diplomacy, both our export abroad and the inflow of effective foreign investments to our country.”	and Russia does not at times collide with his promise to defend national interests and security (the country’s pledge to promote human rights and its Euro-Atlantic integration).
The human impact on climate change is overrated, discussions of climate change are exaggerated and dangerous for the economy of the Czech Republic and the EU.	D2: „Domnívám se, že z diskuzí o klimatických změnách se stává nové náboženství, a dovolte mi proto, abych byl kacířem. (...) Nejsem si jist, zda rozhodujícím faktorem globálního oteplení je právě lidská činnost, a nikoli přírodní zákony, pohyb zemské osy a další kosmické vlivy.“	D2: “I believe that the discussions about climate change are becoming a new religion, and allow me then to be a heretic. (...) I am not sure whether human activity is a decisive the factor of global warming, or rather natural laws, the movement of the Earth’s axis and other cosmic effects.”	Similarly, as his predecessor Klaus, Zeman is skeptical about global warming . He dismisses the European Green Deal as ideological and hurtful to economics, considering that the Czech Republic is still quite dependent on traditional energy sources.
During the coronavirus crisis, it is important not to panic, follow the Government’s measures and listen to experts, not fake news.	D3: „abyste se vyhnuli dvěma extrémům. Ten první spočívá v tom, že tuto epidemii budete zlehčovat. Například jakýsi divadelní principál zcela nedávno prohlásil, že koronavirus je jenom lehká chřipka, a kritizoval opatření vlády. Ten druhý extrém pak spočívá v tom, že propadnete panice a strachu. (...) A o to větší pozornost věnujte radám odborníků, které vám mohou pomoci.“	D3: “try to avoid two extremes. The first consists in playing down the epidemy. For example, some theatre manager quite recently proclaimed, that coronavirus is just a light flu and criticized Government’s measures. The other extreme then consists in sinking into panic and fear. (...) Pay even greater attention to the advice of specialists, which can help you.”	Besides clearly criticizing people disrespecting the Government’s measures (promoting soldierlike measures but not a full lockdown) and spreading fake news, the president did not strife to unite the nation during the crisis, but triggered more social antagonism , criticizing media and the political opposition as usual, but also regular citizens suffering from the crisis.
	D4: „Máme k dispozici jenom jednu jedinou zbraň, protože vakcína ještě neexistuje. Touto zbraní je malý kousek látky, který si přivěsíme na obličej a který nás chrání před nákazou a naopak my chráníme druhé před touto nákazou. (...) Ignorujte názory těchto lidí, protože nejsou odborné, a věřte odborníkům, protože jedině ti nám mohou pomoci.“	D4: “We have only one weapon at our disposal since the vaccine does not yet exist. A small piece of fabric is that weapon which we hang on our face and which protects us against the contagion and vice versa we protect others against this contagion. (...) Ignore the opinions of these people because they are not expert, and trust the specialists, because only those can help us.”	
During the coronavirus crisis, other countries are doing worse than us and we should be grateful to	D3: „Chtěl bych proto poděkovat Čínské lidové republice, která nám jako jediná země pomohla v dodávce těchto prostředků.“	D3: “I would like to thank the People’s Republic of China, which has as the only country helped in the supply of these resources.”	Similarly as the PM, the President did not take much advantage of the pandemic to showcase international solidarity, repeatedly

China for their help.	D4: „Podívejte se třeba na Švédsko, tam už je teď přes šest tisíc mrtvých, a to nemluvím o Izraeli.	D4: “Look at Sweden for example, there are now already over six thousand dead and I am not even talking of Israel.”	appreciating only China’s help with the medic supplies (CR purchased), otherwise portraying the Czech Republic as a country that is not doing as bad as the others.
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Figure 12. Discourse analysis of the President’s agenda (own table)

President Zeman: Rhetorical Strategies			
Figures of speech	Quotation (CZ)	Translation (EN)	Interpretation
Lexical choices and genre of communication	D1: primitivní hlupáci; ignorujte radílky, kteří sami v životě nedokázali nic; milí přátelé	D1: primitive fools; ignore the smart alecks who have not achieved anything in life; dear friends	The President mixes informal (sometimes vulgar) and formal (even literary, Latin) lexicons to create an impression of a “dialogue between equals”, but his relation to the audience sounds often rather superior, as that of a teacher explaining something to students and occasionally rebuking them.
	D2: Víte, co to jsou v tomto smyslu parašutisti? To jsou lidé, kteří jsou na kandidátku shozeni shora; zlostně nadávají	D2: Do you know who the parachutists are in this sense? They are people, who are thrown on the candidate list from the top; they grumble angrily	
	D3: poštěkávání a vřeštění našich novinářských komentátorů; herci, z nichž někteří si stěžovali, že nemají kšefty	D3: barking and screeching of our news commentators; actors, some of whom complained they didn’t have gigs	
	D4: Ignorujte názory těchto lidí, protože nejsou odborné	D4: Ignore the opinions of these people, because they are not expert	
Overlexicalisation: epistrophe, epizeuxis	D1: Nesmírně si toho vážím a slibuji , že i nadále budu usilovat o obranu národních zájmů České republiky a její suverenity jak v oblasti migrace, tak v oblastech dalších. Slibuji , že i nadále budu podporovat ekonomickou diplomacii, a to jak náš vývoz do zahraničí, tak příliv efektivních zahraničních investic k nám. A konečně slibuji , že i nadále se budu, a to velmi rád, setkávat s normálními občany tváří v tvář během mých výjezdů po jednotlivých krajích.	D1: I deeply appreciate it and I promise to strive to defend the national interests of the Czech Republic and its sovereignty in the area of migration as well as other areas. I promise that I will continue to support economic diplomacy, both our export abroad and the inflow of effective foreign investments to our country. Finally, I promise that I will continue meeting normal citizens face-to-face, and that with utmost pleasure, during my tours into the regions.	Zeman employs repetition tools often to build up the emotional intensity of the message. In the case of the redundant expression “normal citizens”, the populist content is clear.
	D2: Pomalost . Pomalost soudních řízení, pomalost stavebních řízení, pomalost výstavby dopravní infrastruktury.(...) Chtěl bych vám popřát bolest . Ale víte, jakou bolest ? Takovou bolest , o které mluvil Tomáš Masaryk, když řekl, myšlení	D2: Slowness . Slowness of legal proceedings, slowness of construction proceedings, slowness of transport infrastructure development. (...) I would like to wish you pain . But you know what kind of pain ? That type to pain Tomáš Masaryk spoke of, when he	

	bolí.	said, thinking is painful.	
	D3: Přál bych vám, abychom se měli rádi, abychom k sobě byli laskaví a vstřícní, abychom pomáhali jeden druhému a abychom dokázali v této těžké době svoji lidskost.	D3: I wish that we would love each other, that we would be kind-hearted and forthcoming to one another, that we would help each other and that we would manage to show our humanity in this difficult time.	
	D4: Roste počet nakažených koronavirem, roste počet hospitalizovaných, roste počet těžce nemocných a co horšího, roste počet mrtvých.	D4: The number of infected by the coronavirus is growing, the number of hospitalized is growing, the number of the seriously ill is growing and what is worse, the number of dead is growing.	
Neologisms	D1: Lepšolidé, špionománie	D1: The Better-People, spymania	President employs neologisms in a pejorative sense, mostly to characterize “the other”, and thus to further divide the society.
	D2: Klimatičtí proroci	D2: The Climate Prophets	
	D4: Antirouškaři	D4: The Anti-Mask People	
Intertextuality, references	D1: Já bych jen chtěl připomenout dva Masarykovy citáty. První, tož demokracii již máme, teď ještě nějaké ty demokraty. (...) Druhý citát zní, rozčilení není program.	D1: I would just like to recall two Masaryk’s quotes. First, we already have democracy; now we need some democrats. (...) The second quote goes, being upset is not a program.	The President takes advantage of intertextuality to show off his intelligence, humour, and adopt the identities of others, like the first President of Czechoslovakia Masaryk, but also the famous Czech entrepreneur Tomáš Baťa.
	D2: Takovou bolest, o které mluvil Tomáš Masaryk, když řekl, myšlení bolí.	D2: That type of pain, which Tomáš Masaryk spoke of when he said, thinking is painful.	
	D4: Dovolte mi, abych vám připomněl krásnou větu z Talmudu, ten, kdo zachránil jeden lidský život, zachránil celé lidstvo.	D4: Allow me to remind you of a beautiful phrase from Talmud, the one who saved one human life, saved the entire humankind.	
Rhetorical tropes: metaphors, similes etc.	D1: jak říkají mafiáni, předložit nabídku, která se neodmítá; skočila blbá nálada	D1: as the Mafia puts it, a proposition which cannot be refused; the “bad mood” was over	Similarly, as intertextuality, Zeman uses various rhetorical tropes to make his speeches more compelling, literary sounding and even popular (employing proverbs to demonstrate his knowledge of the Czech language and approximate the audience). Sometimes he used metaphors to abstract details.
	D2: Víte, co to jsou v tomto smyslu parašutisti? To jsou lidé, kteří jsou na kandidátku shozeni shora; prosím, abychom nezůstávali v bublinách svých názorů; myšlení bolí	D2: Do you know who the parachutists are in this sense? They are people, who are thrown on the candidate list from the top; please, let’s not remain inside the bubble of our ideas; thinking is painful	
	D3: když teče do lodi voda, musí všichni k pumpám	D3: when the boat is leaking, all hands to the pumps	
	D4: Máme k dispozici jenom jednu jedinou zbraň, protože vakcína ještě neexistuje. Touto zbraní je malý kousek látky. (...) Povolali jsme do zbraně vítěze nad první vlnou koronaviru. (...) až usedne prach na bojišti, budeme počítat	D4: We have only one weapon at our disposal since the vaccine does not yet exist. A small piece of fabric is that weapon. (...) We called up to arms the victor over the first wave of coronavirus. (...) When the dust settles, we will count our gains	

	zisky a ztráty	and losses.	
Individualisation (honorifics) vs collectivisation (anonymisation)	D1: předsedům tří politických stran, kteří našli odvahu k vytvoření a podpoře takové vlády, Andreji Babišovi, Janu Hamáčkovi a Vojtěch Filipovi vs ti, kdo nás neustále varují před špióny, z nás tak trochu dělají nesvéprávné a manipulovatelné bytosti, které se nedokáží samy ubránit	D1: the leaders of the three political parties - Andrej Babiš, Jan Hamáček and Vojtěch Filip, who found the courage to create and support such a government vs those who constantly warn us of spies, try to make us incapable beings, easy to manipulate and lacking the capacity to protect ourselves	The President makes use of these figures of speech in the subtle construction of social antagonism, as the individuals responding to the will of “the people” (Zeman’s sympathizers, the Government) are referred to by names and titles, while the bad elite and the others (Opposition, Media, Civil Society, GAL and more) are collectivized, often anonymized.
	D2: paní ministryně místního rozvoje Klára Dostálová předloží návrh nového stavebního zákona, který stavební řízení urychlí, a je-li kritizována, tak je někdy kritizována právě těmi, kdo přispěli k jeho pomalosti	D2: Ms. Minister of Regional Development Klára Dostálová presents a proposal of a new construction law, which will speed up the construction proceedings, and if she is criticized, then she is sometimes criticized by those who contributed to its slowness	
	D3: podpořil vládu České republiky vs jakýsi divadelní principál	D3: supported the Government of the Czech Republic vs some theatre manager	
	D4: Nenechte se svést lidmi, kteří sice o epidemii vůbec nic nevědí, ale kvůli mediální pozornosti jsou ochotni říkat věci, které poškozují naši společnost vs vítěze nad první vlnou koronaviru, pana profesora Prymulu	D4: Do not let yourselves be misled by people who know nothing of the epidemy, but are willing to say things that harm our society for the media’s attention vs the victor over the first wave of coronavirus, Mr. Professor Prymula	
Modality - I would like to, believe, allow me to, I think we should, I am not sure if - Let’s	D1: Chtěl bych ze srdce poděkovat všem občanům, kteří mi dali svůj hlas. (...) Chtěl bych poděkovat předsedům tří politických stran (...) Nyní mi dovoďte, abych přešel k ekonomické situaci.	D1: I would like to thank cordially to all the citizens who gave me their vote. (...) I would like to thank the leaders of the three political parties (...) Now allow me to move on to the economic situation.	Throughout his discourses, the President uses lowered modality most often, to assert his authority in a sincere and educated way. His last discourse is more assertive, but still polite sounding, as he uses first person plural imperative considering himself part of the audience.
	D2: Myslím si, že nad těmito úspěchy bychom se měli společně radovat (...) Domnívám se, že z diskuzí o klimatických změnách se stává nové náboženství, a dovoďte mi proto, abych byl kacířem Nejsm si jist, zda rozhodujícím faktorem globálního oteplení je právě lidská činnost	D2: I think that we should rejoice together at these successes (...) I believe that the discussions about climate change are becoming a new religion and allow me then to be a heretic. (...) I am not sure whether human activity is a decisive the factor of global warming, or rather natural laws, the movement of the Earth’s axis and other cosmic effects.	
	D3: Chtěl bych vás proto vyzvat, abyste se vyhnuli dvěma extrémům. (...) Chtěl bych rovněž naši opozici vyzvat k tomu, aby podporovala opatření vlády.	D3: I would like to invite you to avoid two extremes. (...) I would also like to invite our opposition to support the Government’s measures.	
	D4: Ale nemluvmě teď jenom o vládních opatřeních.	D4: But let us not only talk of the Government’s measures	

	Mluvme o tom, co můžeme udělat my sami. (...) Dělejme vše pro to, abychom touto zkouškou vyšli se ctí.	now. Let us talk of what we alone can do. (...) Let us do everything we can to pass this test with honor.	
Hedging	D1: Zaprvé, v době první republiky se nakonec ustálila prezidentská tradice vánočních poselství, a tuto tradici zastavil až Klement Gottwald, který pronesl 1. ledna 1949 právě novoroční projev.	D1: First, in the era of the First Republic, the presidents traditionally gave a Christmas Message and this tradition had not been broken until the 1st January 1949 when Klement Gottwald delivered his first New Year Speech.	The President uses hedging to structure his discourse to appear detailed and more credible (listing examples and offering extra historical and statistical information). He also employs the technique to avoid directness and to tone down the intensity of the message (ex. during the pandemic).
	D2: Řekl jsem jim, vítejte v úspěšné zemi, zemi, která má nejnižší míru nezaměstnanosti v Evropské unii, která má stabilní ekonomický růst, která má relativně klesající a poměrně nízký státní dluh, zemi, kde roste jak průměrná mzda, tak starobní důchody.	D2: I told them, welcome to a successful country, country, which has the lowest unemployment rate in the European Union, which has a stable economic growth, which a relatively decreasing and quite low state debt, country where the average wage as well as retirement income are growing.	
	D3: Pokud jsem správně informován, první dodávka testovacích přípravků již dorazila do České republiky a k dispozici je i letadlo Ruslan, velkokapacitní letadlo, které tuto pomoc bude zajišťovat v budoucnosti.	D3: If I am correctly informed, the first supply of the testing resources has already arrived to the Czech Republic and also the airplane Ruslan is at disposal, a high capacity aircraft, , which will secure this help in the future.	
	D4: Kdysi, když počet mrtvých byl na velmi nízké úrovni, jsme se mohli utěšovat tím, že covid se dá vyléčit, ale úmrtí se samozřejmě vyléčit nedá a je to nesmírná ztráta pro naši společnost, pro rodiny těch, kdo zemřeli, pro všechny z nás.	D4: Once, when the number of the dead was at a very low level, we could have comforted ourselves that covid can be cured, but death of course cannot be cured and it is a great loss for our society, for the families of those who died, for all of us.	

Figure 13. Discourse analysis of the President's rhetorical strategies (own table)

President Zeman: Social Antagonism		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - structural oppositions - “ideological squaring” - “us” and “them” division - individualisation (honorifics) vs collectivisation (anonymisation), e.g. <i>Rhetorical Strategies</i> table - cultural war against Havel's “Truth and Love” philosophy - Zeman's critics, clueless, unsuccessful, jealous 		
The Other	Quotation (CZ)	Translation (EN)
Civil Society	D1: ti, kdo hází květiny do odpadkových košů, jsou podle mého mínění primitivní hlupáci D2: povšiml jsem si demonstrací středoškoláků proti klimatické změně, nic proti tomu, byl bych pouze rád, aby demonstrovali v sobotu a v pátek se učili	D1: those who throw flowers into litter bins are, in my opinion, primitive fools D2: I noticed a demonstration of high school students against climate change, nothing against it, I would only be glad if they would demonstrate on Saturday and study on Friday
Media, NGOs,	D1: Lepšolidé jsou ti, kteří se považují za	D1: The Better-People are those who

Intelligence	<p>něco lepšího než my ostatní a kteří nám neustále radí, co máme dělat, a kteří své názory považují za nadřazené názorům těch druhých. (...) ignorujte radíčky, kteří sami v životě nedokázali nic.</p> <p>D2: Chtěl bych vám všem popřát, abyste i nadále byli svobodnými osobnostmi, které si vytvářejí svůj vlastní názor a nenechají se nikým manipulovat.</p> <p>D3: Nevšímejte si příliš poštěkávání a vřeštění našich novinářských komentátorů, kteří jako obvykle píší o všem a nerozumí ničemu.</p>	<p>consider themselves better than the rest of us, who keep mentoring us on what to do and who regard their views superior to those of others. (...) ignore the smart alecks who have yet to prove themselves.</p> <p>D2: I would like to wish everyone, to keep on being free people, which form their own opinion and do not let themselves be manipulated by anyone.</p> <p>D3: Do not mind too much the barking and screeching of our news commentators, who, as usual, write about everything and understand nothing.</p>
GAL = Green, Alternative, Libertarian	<p>D2: Klimatičtí proroci mají ovšem i důsledky, které už nejsou naivní, nejsou idealistické, ale jsou velmi a velmi přízemní. (...) Věřím, že nedojde k tomu, aby úvahy o zelené Evropě dosáhly té míry, že se zde objeví například i zelené bankovnictví, to znamená, že úvěry nebudou poskytovány podle bonity investičních projektů, ale podle zelené ideologie.</p> <p>D3: Dokonce i herci, z nichž někteří si stěžovali, že nemají kšefty, by udělali lépe, kdyby například navštívili domovy důchodců a přinesli tam trochu radosti.</p> <p>D4: jakýsi divadelní principál zcela nedávno prohlásil, že koronavirus je jenom lehká chřipka, a kritizoval opatření vlády. (...) Mám tím samozřejmě na mysli takzvané antirouškaře, ale i další, zubaře, kardiology, zpěváky.</p>	<p>D2: However the climate profets have also effects, which are not naive nor idealistic anymore, but they are very and very earthbound. (...) I believe that the reflections on green Europe will not achieve such a degree that for example green banking will appear here, that credits will not be given based on the quality of an investment project but according to the green ideology.</p> <p>D3: Even actors, some of whom complained they didn't have gigs, would do better if they would for example visit a retirement home and bring some happiness there.</p> <p>D4: some theatre manager quite recently proclaimed, that coronavirus is just a light flu and criticized Government's measures. (...) Of course, I mean the so-called Anti-Mask people, but also others, dentists, cardiologists, singers.</p>
Opposition/Political adversaries/the Establishment (also the Security Information Service, the EU)	<p>D1: ti, kdo nás neustále varují před špióny, z nás tak trochu dělají nesvéprávné a manipulovatelné bytosti, které se nedokáží samy ubránit (...) A tito lidé nám chtějí radit. A totéž se samozřejmě týká i neúspěšných politiků.</p> <p>D2: kritizována právě těmi, kdo přispěli k jeho pomalosti. (...) Víte, co to jsou v tomto smyslu parašutisté? To jsou lidé, kteří jsou na kandidátku shozeni shora. Buď jsou to straničtí funkcionáři nebo lidé, kteří nemají žádnou zkušenost s řízením velkých společenských celků.</p> <p>D3: Chtěl bych rovněž naši opozici vyzvat k tomu, aby podporovala opatření vlády, a pokud toho není schopna, tak aby alespoň po dobu karantény mlčela.</p>	<p>D1: those who constantly warn us of spies, try to make us incapable beings, easy to manipulate and lacking the capacity to protect ourselves (...) And these people want to advise us. The same applies to unsuccessful politicians, of course.</p> <p>D2: criticized by those who contributed to its slowness (...) Do you know who the parachutists are in this sense? They are people, who are thrown on the candidate list from the top. Either party members or people who have no experience with the management of large social collectives.</p> <p>D3: I would also like to ask the opposition to support the Government's measures, and if it is unable to do so, to be at least quiet during the quarantine.</p>

Figure 14. Discourse Analysis of the President's construction of social antagonism (own table)

7.2 Discourse Analysis of the Prime Minister Andrej Babiš

In order to characterize the Prime Minister's agenda and rhetorical strategies, with a special focus on the construction of social antagonism, and thus uncover the changes in the official Czech discourse and its impact on democracy, the following four discourses were analyzed:

D5: "Preamble and Key Government Priorities" in the Policy Statement of the Government of the Czech Republic (27/06/2018), *original Czech title: Programové prohlášení vlády - Preambule a zásadní priority vlády*

D6: Prime Minister's New Year's Speech (01/01/2020), *original Czech title: Novoroční projev předsedy vlády*

D7: Prime Minister's Address to all Citizens (23/03/2020), *original Czech title: Projev předsedy vlády k občanům*

D8: Prime Minister's Extraordinary Speech (21/09/2020), *original Czech title: Mimořádný projev předsedy vlády*

Prime Minister Babiš: Agenda			
Message	Quotation (CZ)	Translation (EN)	Interpretation
We particularly think of our children and seniors.	D5: „naši potomci nám neodpustí, že jsme neudělali všechno, co jsme měli a mohli udělat. (...) slevy z jízdného ve vlacích a autobusech pro seniory nad 65 let, žáky a studenty do dovršení věku 26 let. (...) rychlejší realizaci výstavby dostupného bydlení pro seniory a také pro mladé rodiny“	D5: “our offsprings will not forgive us if we do not do everything that we should and could have done.(...) discounted train and bus fares for seniors over the age of 65, school pupils, and students up to the age of 26. (...) faster construction of affordable housing for seniors and young families”	The elderly have life experience and children are our future. Hence, pension reform, discounted train and bus fares, construction of affordable housing for seniors and young families are priorities .
	D6: „Naše budoucnost závisí na našich dětech. (...) Nejdůležitější věc v životě je rodina a děti. Mít děti. Čím víc dětí budeme mít, tím líp se budeme mít.“	D6: “Our future depends on our children. (...) The most important thing in life is family and children. Having children. The more children we have, the better off we will be.”	
	D7: „Děkuju všem seniorům. (...) Potřebujeme vás, ani nevíte jak. Děti potřebují babičky a dědečky a staří lidé mají životní zkušenost, která je pro nás a vždy byla nesmírně důležitá. Dědečkové a babičky, jste naši, potřebujeme vás, dávejte na sebe pozor, prosím.“	D7: “I thank all our senior citizens (...) We need you, more than you can know. Children need their grandmothers and grandfathers; old people have life experience that is, and has always been, extremely important to us. So grandfathers and grandmothers, you are ours, we need you, do please take care of yourselves.”	
	D8: „Právě starší a nemocné lidi musíme ochránit.“	D8: “And it is older people and the sick we have to protect. ”	

We support digitalization including centralized governmental services.	D5: „dostupnost vysokorychlostního internetu všude (...) jednotné služby. Vytvoříme centrální portál státu, kde si občan bude moci vše vyřídit, a k tomu využijeme služeb České pošty pro ty občany, kteří internet nemají. Elektronizace musí být všude, kde je to možné.“	D5: “high-speed internet to be available everywhere. (...) We will create a centralized government portal where citizens can sort out all of their needs, and we will draw on Czech Post’s services for those who do not have internet. Computerization must be in place wherever possible.”	Like the President, the PM promotes the digitalization .
	D6: „Jeden úřad. Jedno razítko. To je to hlavní zaklínadlo. Zjednodušení do života přinese i digitalizace.“	D6: “One office. One stamp. That is the magic formula. Digitization will also simplify lives.”	
We offer a new long-term vision for a prosperous future of the Czech Republic.	D5: „Prostě myslíme na budoucnost a nežijeme jen dneškem. (...) Chceme jím posunout hospodářství a celou společnost novým směrem, který by měl zaručit, aby naše země obstála v evropské ekonomice a v měnícím se světě.“	D5: “let’s think about the future instead of only living for today. (...) we would like to guide the economy and society at large in a new direction guaranteeing that our country can hold its own in the European economy and in a changing world.”	Questionable, short-term populist policies taking advantage of the favorable economic situation in Europe to increase government-spending and debt. No profound moral appeal, only materialist vision.
	D6: „kompletní investiční potenciál naší země na příštích 30 let“	D6: “the complete investment potential of our country for the next 30 years”	
We do not just talk about goals like other politicians, but we work hard to achieve them.	D5: „Nechceme o tom, co nás v budoucnu čeká, vést pouze diskuse, ale chceme udělat vše pro to, abychom se měli lépe. (...) Chceme konkrétní kroky bez zdlouhavých a neplodných diskusí.“	D5: “Rather than just debating what the future holds for us, we want to move beyond words and do everything we can to improve our lot. (...) We want to engage in specific action without lengthy and futile debate.”	The Prime Minister’s populist appeal is constructed on his identity of an outsider with a non-political background , despite his past involvement with top politicians. Being a successful businessman, Andrej Babiš promised to <i>run the state like a business and work hard – unlike politicians</i> , as the slogans of his ANO movement declare.
	D6: „Vím, opozice říká, že je celý ten náš národní plán nereálný. Zase ta skepse, ten negativismus za každou cenu. Budu na ministry naléhat, aby s plánem aktivně pracovali a realizovali ho podle připravenosti jednotlivých projektů.“	D6: “I know the opposition says that our national plan is unrealistic. Once again: the same scepticism, the negativism at all costs. I will impress upon the ministers to actively work with this plan and implement it in line with the readiness of individual projects.”	
	D7: „Děláme pro to s kolegy a se všemi institucemi státu to nejlepší, co jde. (...) Celá vláda pracuje nonstop, jak se to jen dá.“	D7: “We are doing the very best we can with our colleagues and with all institutions of state. (...) The whole government is working non-stop in every possible way,”	
	D8: „Od března jedeme sedm dní v týdnu a bojujeme s touto ojedinělou situací.“	D8: “Since March we’ve been working round the clock to tackle this unparalleled situation.”	
National security and the rejection of the migration quotas are our top priorities.	D5: „Vláda ve svém úsilí zajistit bezpečnost a ochránit zemi před nejrůznějšími útoky zvenčí nepoleví (...) spolu se zeměmi V4 a jinými	D5: “The Government will not relent in its efforts to safeguard security and protect the country from all manner of external incursions (...) together with	Although the Czech Republic is one the safest countries in the world, the politization of migration and

	evropskými spojenci bude navrhovat jiný systém řešení vyvolané migrace založený na bázi zajištění bezpečnosti vnějších hranic, práva výběru uprchlíků na území před vnějšími hranicemi Evropské unie“	the V4 countries and other European allies, will put forward an alternative system to deal with the migration issue that relies on the security of external borders, and the freedom to select refugees before they cross the European Union’s external borders”	terrorism issues are on top of the political agenda.
	D6: „Tam, kde jsme odmítli povinné kvóty ilegálních migrantů a jejich přerozdělování, protože bezpečnost našich občanů je pro nás absolutní prioritou. (...) Tam, kde aktivně prezentujeme naše vize pro silnou jednotnou a bezpečnou Evropu.“	D6: “It is there that we refused the mandatory quotas for illegal migrants and the redistribution thereof, because the safety of our citizens is an absolute priority for us. (...) It is where I actively present our vision for a strong, united and safe Europe.”	
We fight actively for national interests abroad, in the European Union.	D5: „Jedním z hlavních cílů této vlády je boj za zájmy českých občanů v Evropské unii (...) Česká republika se aktivně zapojuje do zásadních politických jednání v rámci EU. (...) Chceme být v Evropě vidět. Musíme důrazněji hájit své zájmy ve sjednocující se Evropě. (...) Nechceme jen přikyvovat Bruselu, ale chceme jeho politiku měnit.“	D5: “One of this Government’s headline objectives is to fight for Czech citizens’ interests within the European Union (...)The Czech Republic will actively engage in key political negotiations within the EU (...)We want to be seen in Europe. We must be more assertive in defending our interests in a unifying Europe. (...) We do not simply want to nod to Brussels, we want to change its policies.”	Although the PM presents himself as more pro-European than the President, he opposes further integration. Instead, together with the V4, he stresses national sovereignty wanting only membership benefits, but no responsibility-sharing or solidarity.
	D6: „Naše vláda sebevědomě prezentuje naši zemi v zahraničí. Na půdě OSN i v Bruselu (...) kde tvrdě prosazujeme české zájmy.“	D6: “Our government confidently represents our country abroad. At the UN and in Brussels at the European Council (...) where I fight hard for Czech interests.”	
We build a lot and reconstruct.	D5: „Naším záměrem je stavět dálnice, obchvaty měst. Začít s přípravou trasy pro vysokorychlostní železnice a s rekonstrukcemi nádraží (...) výstavbu nových bloků pro jaderné elektrárny (...) začít s rekonstrukcemi památkových objektů ve všech regionech.“	D5: “We plan to build motorways and bypasses. To start preparing a route for high-speed rail and the renovation of stations (...) the construction of new units at nuclear power stations (...) start renovating monuments in all regions in order to attract tourists away from the beaten track.”	Contrary to the Prime Minister’s claims, his Government has not in fact advanced much in the area of construction. He lies about the number of kilometers of highways constructed.
	D6: „Od mého vstupu do vlády jsme zatím otevřeli 91 kilometrů nových dálnic a zahájili stavbu dalších 163 kilometrů.“	D6: “Since I entered the cabinet, we have opened 91 kilometres of new motorways and started construction on a further 163 kilometres.”	
We promote ecological policies.	D5: „Prioritou je pro nás zajištění energetické bezpečnosti a soběstačnosti ve výrobě elektrické energie. (...) Budeme chránit půdu...“	D5: “We will prioritize energy security and self-sufficiency in the generation of electricity. (...) We will protect the soil...”	Unlike the President, the PM claims to promote ecological policies. He openly supports them

	D6: „mně i mým kolegům záleží na naší planetě, přijali jsme jasná opatření. Výrazně snižujeme emise skleníkových plynů. Investujeme do obnovitelných zdrojů. A připravujeme se na konec doby uhelné. (...) Jsem rád, že jsme v Bruselu nedávno jádro prosadili jako čistý zdroj.“	D6: “our planet is important to me and my colleagues, we have adopted clear measures. We are markedly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are investing in renewable resources. And we are preparing for the end of the coal age. (...) I am glad that we recently managed to push this through in Brussels as a clean energy source.”	abroad (in the EU) but is more skeptical about their implementation in front of the citizens.
ANO party/Government is for everyone. I am the ANO party/Government.	D5: „Ve snaze nalézt maximální možný konsenzus je vláda připravena do plnění priorit vlády a programového prohlášení zapojit i odborníky opozice, zástupce sociálních partnerů, profesní a zájmová sdružení a organizace i územní samosprávy.“	D5: “The Government stands ready to involve the opposition’s experts, social partners’ representatives, professional associations, interest groupings, other similar organisations, and local government in the implementation of government priorities and the Policy Statement in a bid to find the maximum possible consensus.”	This populist appeal reflects the wide electoral base of ANO, defined neither by ideology nor policy attitudes nor a specific social class, but rather by economic competence. It opposes the multiparty conception of democracy.
	D6: „Ale chceme zapojit i vás, všechny občany naší země. Do diskuse. Do národních konzultací. Podívejte se, co v plánu podle vás chybí, nebo co naopak nechcete. Pojďme o tom diskutovat. Napište mi na mailovou adresu narodnikonzultace@vlada.cz.“	D6: “But I also want to involve you, all the citizens of our country. In the discussion. In national consultations. Look and see what you think the plan is missing or, on the other hand, what you don't want in it. Let's discuss this. Write me at the e-mail address narodnikonzultace@vlada.cz.”	
	D7: „Ale nebojte se. Jsme v tom společně a já jsem tu pro každého z vás kdykoliv.“	D7: “But please do not worry. We are in this together and I am here for each of you at any time.”	
	D8: „Naše vláda se snaží myslet na všechny skupiny obyvatel.“	D8: “Our government tries to think of all groups of the population. ”	
We invest in people.	D5: „Potřebujeme podpořit produktivní investice pro malé a střední firmy (...) pro mladé rodiny i seniory.“	D5: “We need to support productive investments for small and medium-sized enterprises (...) for young families and seniors alike.”	As PM Babiš represents the will of the people, his government’s goal is concentrated on short-term populist policies. Overall, he has kept this promise, incurring however the future generation.
	D6: „Protože hlavně do vás se naše vláda rozhodla investovat a vy nám to vracíte svou důvěrou a spotřebou. Nebudu říkat čísla, kolik přidáváme důchodcům, učitelům, lékařům, sestřičkám, policistům, hasičům vojákům a pracovníkům v sociálních službách.“	D6: “Because it is mainly in you that our government has decided to invest, and you will return it to us with your confidence and consumption. I won't quote the numbers of how much we are tacking on for retirees, teachers, doctors, nurses, police officers, firefighters, soldiers and social service workers.”	
I am open and honest; we keep our promises.	D5: „Víme, že v té době vše nevyřešíme, ale chceme nastoupit tuto cestu.“	D5: “While we realise that not everything will be resolved in that time, it is our ambition to	In contrast to the inept corrupt politicians, the PM claims to offer

		break ground here.”	transparency and action, which he documents in his regular social media posts.
	D6: „Prostě jen plníme, co jsme vám slíbili a budeme v tom pokračovat.“	D6: “We are simply fulfilling what we promised, and we will continue to do so.”	
	D7: „Říkám to otevřeně. Takhle to je.“	D7: “I say this quite openly. Because that is how it is.”	
	D8: „Budou k vám jako vždycky upřímný a otevřený.“	D8: “As always, I will be honest and candid with you.”	
The country is doing extremely well, and it will be doing even better.	D5: „Chceme (...) udělat vše pro to, abychom se měli lépe“	D5: “We want to (...) do everything we can to improve our lot”	Throughout his speeches, the PM reiterates the main ANO slogan , “YES, it will get better”, taking credit for most of the country’s achievements, not presenting other factors such as the positive economic situation in Europe.
	D6: „Nemyslíte si, že se nám daří? Já ano! A řeknu vám, proč. A taky vám povím, co plánujeme dělat, aby tohle podle mě velmi dobré období jen tak neskončilo. (...) Čeká nás skvělé období. Jsme Česká republika, země pro budoucnost. (...) Máme výhled na rok 2021 a rozpočet bude jednoznačně prorůstový.“	D6: “Don't think we are doing well? I do! I'll tell you why. And I'll also tell you what we are planning to do so that this era, in my opinion a good one, doesn't end. (...) We have an amazing time before us. We are the Czech Republic, a country for the future. (...) We have an outlook for 2021 and the budget will be decidedly pro-growth.”	
	D7: „Vedeme si velice dobře. A nepochybuji, že to zvládneme. (...) A vyjdeme z téhle krize ještě silnější a lepší jako lidé, i jako národ.“	D7: “We are doing very well. And I am sure we will see this through. (...) And we will come out of this crisis even stronger and better, both as people and as a nation.”	
	D8: „Zachránili jsme tím tisíce životů. Proto jsme první vlnu zvládli tak dobře.“	D8: “we saved thousands of lives. That’s why we coped with the first wave so well.”	
We are doing better than other countries of the EU.	D5: „Naši občané žijí v bezpečné zemi a to je dnes hodnota, kterou se nemůže mnoho okolních zemí pochlubit.“	D5: “Our citizens live in a safe country, a blessing bestowed on few of the nations around us.”	To further convince the citizens of progress achieved under his Government, he constantly compares the Czech Republic to other countries .
	D6: „Rosteme. Bohatneme. Víc než většina zemí eurozóny a Evropské unie. (...) Máme stále dvojnásobný růst, než je průměr zemí Evropské unie, a velmi nízkou zadluženost. “	D6: “We are growing. We are getting richer. More than most eurozone and European Union countries. (...) We still have twice the growth of the European Union average, and a very low debt rate.”	
	D7: „Jsme jedna z mála zemí, která nepromeškala ten správný čas na zavedení přísných opatření, která zamezí živelnému šíření nákazy. (...) Dokazuje to i mezinárodní srovnání, že jedna z nejpřísnějších a nejčasnějších opatření zavedla právě naše vláda.“	D7: “We are one of the few countries that did not miss the right moment to put in place strict measures to prevent the unrestrained spread of the disease. (...) International comparisons also show that some of the most stringent and earliest measures were in fact introduced by our government.”	
	D8: „Bylo to poté, co jsme zarazili šíření nemoci jako jedni z prvních v Evropě. (...)“	D8: “That was after we became one of the first countries in Europe to stop the spread of the	

	Švédsko šlo cestou promožení, což vyústilo v to, že tam zemřelo celkově 5 865 lidí s covidem. Jedenáctkrát více než u nás.“	disease. (...) Sweden went down a herd immunity path that resulted in a total of 5,865 people dying with Covid there. Eleven times more than here.”	
We are a small nation but with great talent and values.	D6: „Jak už bylo řečeno – nejsme velký národ. Ale obrazy našich mistrů, literatura, architektura, divadlo, film a samozřejmě česká filharmonie jsou tím, co ve světě zanechává významné povědomí o českém národě – o jeho talentech a hodnotách.“	D6: “As has already been said – we are not a large nation. But the paintings of our masters, our literature, architecture, theatre, film and of course the Czech Philharmonic are what leave behind an important awareness of the Czech nation in the world – of its talents and values.”	To indicate that the Czech Republic is a talented nation , but governed by the inept, and thus needs his effective government, he emphasizes the traditional notion of “Czech golden hands”,
	D7: „Když se podívám zpět na zásadní okamžiky v historii naší země, tak jsme je vždy překonali odvahou, ohleduplností a vzájemnou pomocí.“	D7: “When I look back at the key moments in the history of our country, we have always overcome them with courage, consideration and by helping each other. In spite of all the pain, the suffering and the injustices.”	
We will get through the coronavirus pandemic if we work together and follow the Government’s measures.	D7: „koronavirus společnými silami zastavíme (...) Rád bych vás proto všechny požádal o trpělivost. (...) když k sobě budeme všichni ohleduplní a budeme dodržovat nová opatření.“	D7: “we will stop the coronavirus through our joint efforts (...) I would therefore like to ask all of you for your patience. (...) if we are all considerate towards each other and keep to the new measures.”	Lack of a concrete plan , mostly thanking, calming and praising.
	D8: „Zvládneme to, ale jen společně, stejně jako na jaře. Právě proto zase musíme být zodpovědní, ohleduplní a důslední v dodržování pravidel.“	D8: “We can cope, but only if we come together like we did in spring. And that is why we have to be responsible, considerate and consistent in complying with the rules.”	
During the coronavirus crisis, we made <i>some</i> mistakes because we could not be ready for this.	D7: „Nikdo z nás nebyl na něco takového připravený. (...) Proto nám, prosím vás, odpusťte dílčí chyby nebo problémy. Je jich spousta. (...) Já jako premiér země samozřejmě osobně odpovídám za všechna krizová opatření. A beru na sebe plnou politickou odpovědnost.“	D7: “None of us were prepared for anything like this. (...) So please forgive us any mistakes or problems along the way. There are many of them. (...) Of course, as Prime Minister of the country, I take personal responsibility for all these crisis measures. And I take on full political responsibility.”	Unclear communication with the public, delayed response to the second wave due to elections, loss of trust.
	D8: „I já jsem se nechal unést nastupujícím létem a atmosférou ve společnosti. To byla chyba, kterou nechci zopakovat. Od března jedeme sedm dní v týdnu a bojujeme s touto ojedinělou situací, na kterou <i>nemohl být nikdo připraven</i> .“	D8: “I, too, let myself get carried away by the start of summer and the atmosphere in society. That was a mistake I don’t want to repeat. Since March we’ve been working round the clock to tackle this unparalleled situation that nobody could have been prepared for.”	

Figure 15. Discourse analysis of the Prime Minister’s agenda (own table)

Prime Minister Babiš: Rhetorical Strategies			
Figures of speech	Quotation (CZ)	Translation (EN)	Interpretation
Lexical choices and genre of communication	D5: neboť takto koncipované řešení není efektivní; realizaci šesti hlavních strategických směrů rozvoje naší země; nechceme jen přikyvovat Bruselu, ale chceme jeho politiku měnit.	D5: The solution designed in such a way is ineffective; the pursuit of six core strategic tenets for the development of our country; we do not simply want to nod to Brussels, we want to change its policies	Combining informal and formal lexicons, business rhetoric: vague performance related expressions, English words in Czech, statistics.
	D6: Moody's zvedla rating nejvyšší v historii; podle žebříčku od Deloitte; z šestařiceti 36 hodnocených zemí OECD jsme desátí nejlepší; kde tvrdě prosazuju české zájmy	D6: Moody's raised our rating to the highest point in history; according to the Deloitte Index; of the thirty-six countries evaluated by the OECD, we are the tenth best; where I fight hard for Czech interests	
	D7: Celá vláda pracuje nonstop; Frajírci, co mají být v karanténě a klidně si dají společně pivo u dveří hospod, to fakt nejsou žádní hrdinové. Spíš zbabělci	D7: The whole government is working non-stop; These show-offs who are supposed to be in quarantine and instead are having a beer together at the pub door are not really heroes. They are cowards really	
	D8: všichni jsme se chtěli volně nadechnout a užít si léto; je to otravné a ne moc příjemné; tam zemřelo celkově 5 865 lidí	D8: we all wanted to breathe freely and enjoy summer; it is annoying and not very comfortable; 5 865 people overall died there	
Overlexicalisation: epistrophe, epizeuxis	D5: Chceme i větší podporu pro boj s daňovými ráji, daňovými úniky. Chceme i podporu pro naše záměry v rozvoji jaderné energetiky. Nechceme jen přikyvovat Bruselu, ale chceme jeho politiku měnit.	D5: We want also like greater support to combat tax havens and tax evasion. We also want backing for our plans to develop nuclear energy. We do not simply want to nod to Brussels, we want to change its policies.	Repetition transmits decidedness and urgency of message: convincing the public of progress, trying to regain support and control during the coronavirus pandemic.
	D6: Dokážeme se radovat z toho, že se nám tak daří? Nemyslíte si, že se nám daří? Já ano! (...) Ano, České republice se daří. Opravdu daří. (...) Každý člověk se chce mít dobře. Neznám snad nikoho, kdo by se nechtěl mít dobře. Tak vám přeju, ať VY, právě vy se dobře máte!	D6: Can we take joy in the fact that we are so well off? Don't think we are doing well? I do! (...) Yes, the Czech Republic is doing well. Very well. (...) Everyone wants to be well off. I don't know anyone who doesn't want to be well off. So I wish for YOU, for you to be well off!	
	D7: Děkuju všem, kteří nám pomáháte a podporujete nás. Děkuji všem zdravotníkům (...) Děkuju všem rodičům (...) Děkuju všem seniorům.	D7: Thanks to all those who are helping and supporting us. Thanks to all our healthcare workers (...) Thanks to all parents (...) Thanks to all seniors.	
	D8: ty roušky nenosíte kvůli Babišovi, Vojtěchovi, Prymulovi, ale kvůli vašim rodičům a prarodičům, kvůli	D8: you're not wearing facemasks for the sake of Babiš, Vojtěch or Prymula, but for the sake of your parents and	

	vaším blízkým, kvůli vašim kamarádům a známým (...) Koronavirus jsme porazili jednou, porazíme ho i podruhé	grandparents, for the sake of your nearest and dearest, your friends and acquaintances (...) We beat coronavirus once, we'll beat it again	
Intertextuality, references	D6: „Milí spoluobčané, už delší dobu si kladu tuto základní otázku: proč v době, kdy nás neohrožuje, ani do našich věcí nezasahuje žádná cizí moc a my máme – jako stát i jako občané – svůj osud poprvé po staletích skutečně ve vlastních rukách, máme tak málo důvodů k radostné spokojenosti.“ Tato slova zazněla přesně před osmadvaceti lety, v roce 1992 v novoročním projevu tehdejšího prezidenta Václava Havla.; Jak říkal Alois Rašín, jsme malý národ, a proto musíme usilovat o to, abychom měli co nejvíce vzdělaných lidí.	D6: “Dear fellow citizens, For some time now I have been asking myself a fundamental question: why, at a time when nothing threatens us, nor is any foreign power interfering in our affairs, and when we have – as a country and as citizens – our fate truly in our own hands after centuries, do we have so few reasons for cheerful satisfaction?” These words were spoken exactly twenty-eight years ago, in the year 1992 in the New Year's speech of the President at the time, Václav Havel .; As Alois Rašín said, we are a small nation and thus we must endeavour to have as many educated people as possible.	Assuming the authority of Václav Havel, but misinterpreting his message.
Rhetorical tropes: metaphors, similes etc.	D5: Chceme být v Evropě vidět. (...) Nechceme jen přikyvovat Bruselu D6: Představte si, že bych byl Harry Potter, měl kouzelnou hůlku a proměnil ty projekty hned teď ve skutečnost. Stali bychom se okamžitě druhým Švýcarskem D7: včetně těch, kdo fakt nemají na růžích ustláno D8: I já jsem se nechal unést nastupujícím létem a atmosférou ve společnosti. (...) Koronavirus jsme porazili jednou, porazíme ho i podruhé.	D5: We want to be seen in Europe. (...) D6: Imagine I was Harry Potter and had a magic wand and could transform these projects into reality right now. We would immediately become a second Switzerland. D7: including those for whom life is no bed of roses a D8: I, too, let myself get carried away by the start of summer and the atmosphere in society. (...) We beat coronavirus once, we'll beat it again.	Simpler expressions, more popular and modern choices than Zeman.
Modality	D5: Chceme konkrétní kroky bez zdlouhavých a neplodných diskusí. (...) Musíme důrazněji hájit své zájmy ve sjednocující se Evropě. D6: Ale chceme zapojit i vás, všechny občany naší země. (...) musíme investovat do energetické bezpečnosti. D7: Chci proto všechny znovu vyzvat, abychom byli zodpovědní. (...) A	D5: We want to engage in specific action without lengthy and futile debate. (...) We must be more assertive in defending our interests in a unifying Europe. D6: But I also want to involve you, all the citizens of our country. (...) we must invest in energy security. D7: That is why I want to call on everyone once more to act responsibly. (...) I am sure we	High (deontic) modality expressing certainty, confidence, and decisiveness. To further compel the audience, the PM speaks in the first-person plural.

	nepochybuji, že to zvládneme.	will see this through.	
	D8: A to nikdo nechceme. (...) Právě proto zase musíme být zodpovědní, ohleduplní a důslední v dodržování pravidel.	D8: None of us want that. (...) And that is why we have to be responsible, considerate and consistent in complying with the rules.	
Hedging	D5: To znamená vyrovnaný státní rozpočet a nový zákon o příjmových daních. Důslednou kontrolu regulovaných cen, především vodného a stočného. Lépe spravovat majetek státu. Bojovat s lichvou.	D5: This means having a balanced central government budget and passing a new Income Tax Act. Rigorous regulated price controls, especially for water and sewerage rates. Improvements in the management of state assets. Fighting usury.	Almost lack of hedging, short, even nominal sentences to express action, resoluteness, and results. Padding used when giving unpleasant news or supporting an argument, e.g. statistics.
	D6: Ale chceme zapojit i vás, všechny občany naší země. Do diskuse. Do národních konzultací. Podívejte se, co v plánu podle vás chybí, nebo co naopak nechcete. Pojd'me o tom diskutovat. Napište mi na mailovou adresu narodnikonzultace@vlada.cz.	D6: But I also want to involve you, all the citizens of our country. In the discussion. In national consultations. Look and see what you think the plan is missing or what you don't want in it. Let's discuss this. Write me at the e-mail address narodnikonzultace@vlada.cz.	
	D7: Ale jedna věc je jasná. Teď už všem. Vedeme si velice dobře.	D7: But one thing is clear. To everyone by now. We're doing very well.	
	D8: Epidemie je zpět. Bohužel. Čísla nákazy závratně rostou.	D8: The epidemic is back. Unfortunately. Infection numbers are soaring.	

Figure 16. Discourse analysis of the Prime Minister's rhetorical strategies (own table)

Prime Minister Babiš: Social Antagonism (critique but at the same time wants to be a party for everyone)		
The Other	Quotation (CZ)	Translation (EN)
Politicians/the Establishment/Opposition	<p>D5: Tato vláda nebude do státní správy dosazovat politické nominanty, naopak státní správu otevře a odpolitizuje.“</p> <p>D6: opozice říká, že je celý ten náš národní plán nereálný. Zase ta skepse, ten negativismus za každou cenu. (...) Za naší vlády se nikdy nebude opakovat děsivá situace z roku 2009, kdy vláda právě v době ekonomického ochlazení zaškrtila veřejné rozpočty, vzala lidem peníze a tím ekonomické problémy ještě umocnila a neúměrně prodloužila</p>	<p>D5: This Government will not parachute political appointees into state administration. On the contrary, it will open up and depoliticise state administration.</p> <p>D6: the opposition says that our national plan is unrealistic. Once again: the same scepticism, the negativism at all costs. (...) Our government will never repeat the frightening situation of 2009, when during an economic cooling down the government cut back public budgets, took people's money and thus augmented the economic problems further and prolonged them disproportionately.</p>
Migrants	D5: odmítnutí existující úpravy uprchlických kvót (...) práva výběru uprchlíků na území před vnějšími	D5: rejection the existing refugee quota arrangements (...) freedom to select refugees before they cross the European

	<p>hranicemi Evropské unie (...) imigrantské kvóty, které odmítáme</p> <p>D6: Tam, kde jsme odmítli povinné kvóty ilegálních migrantů.</p>	<p>Union's external borders (...) immigrant quotas that we reject</p> <p>D6: It is there that we refused the mandatory quotas for illegal migrants.</p>
<p>Media (not always, as an owner of a large part of media)</p>	<p>D6: Často slyšíte v médiích, že, se ochlazuje světová ekonomika, že přijdou horší časy. Že všechny ty plány nezvládneme. Pořád se tím někdo snaží strašit.</p> <p><i>D7: Děkuju taky našim všem veřejnoprávním médiim, která byla připravená a zareagovala na situaci spuštěním nových pořadů, výukou dětí, ale i informačním kanálem pro seniory. Děkuji také všem dalším médiim za uklidňování našich občanů.</i></p>	<p>D6: You often hear in the media that the global economy is cooling down and harder times are coming. That we can't manage all these plans. Someone is always trying to drum up fear with this.</p> <p><i>D7: I also thank our public broadcast media, which were ready and responded to the situation by launching new programmes, by teaching children, and also with an information channel for our senior citizens. I also thank all other media for helping to maintain calm among our citizens.</i></p>

Figure 17. Discourse analysis of the Prime Minister's construction of social antagonism (own table)