

# CZECH JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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## Politologický časopis

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**Michael Drašar**

Really Independent? Biographies and Typology of Non-Partisan Presidential Candidates in Europe

# Divided by Crisis: Spatial Analysis of the First Round of the Czech Presidential Election 2023 in the Context of the War in Ukraine<sup>1</sup>

Michael Drašar<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This article presents the results of a geographical analysis of the first round of the presidential election 2023 in Czechia, focusing on the two most successful candidates: Petr Pavel and Andrej Babiš. The results are analysed in the context of cleavage theory, namely in the context of Ukrainian refugees, whom Czechia has accepted the most in Europe. After the worst phase of the COVID-19 pandemic subsided, the country entered another crisis that fuelled populist sentiment. Using geographically weighted regression and the OLS model, the analysis shows a significant spatial non-stationarity of this variable. In accordance with previous research, significantly diverse patterns and an unstable direction of action of this variable in relation to ideologically heterogeneous candidates were also revealed. In addition, the overlap of electoral support for candidates with the electoral results of supporting political parties was also confirmed, as well as the influence of traditional socioeconomic factors. On the contrary, except for the entrepreneur variable, these are rather spatially stationary, and their influence does not change significantly across the country.

Keywords: cleavages; Czechia; electoral geography; migration; presidential election; Ukrainian refugees

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## 1. Introduction

In the last few years, the world has faced a number of crises that are shaking not only international relations but are also undoubtedly affecting electoral results. Czechia is no exception to this, even though it can be said that some of them have affected it more than other European countries. While the country weathered the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 without a significant problem, the situation changed radically in the following months. The number of infected and dead began to rise rapidly, and Czechia became one of the most affected countries (ČTK, 2021; Willoughby, 2021). Immediately after the pandemic situation partially calmed down, Russian president Vladimir Putin unleashed war in Europe when he attacked Ukraine in February 2022. At this point, a massive refugee wave set in motion. Czechia became the country that received the largest share of Ukrainian refugees (Dobiašovský, 2022). It is logical that this crisis was discussed not only before the election.

The Czech presidential election in January 2023 was completely unique, giving rise to a significant discussion about crises. This was mainly because in the second round were Petr Pavel, the former chairman of the NATO Military Committee with experience in international crises, and Andrej Babiš, the leader of populist *Action of Dissatisfied Citizens* (ANO), former prime minister from the pandemic era, often criticised for his chaotic approach to dealing with this crisis (Kaniok, 2023). He made several purely populist statements during the campaign. First, he consistently described his opponent as a supporter of war and himself as the one who would ensure peace. Furthermore, in one of the debates, he rejected the possibility that he would come to the aid of Poland in case of a hypothetical attack (Fodor, 2023). Of course, the war in Ukraine was not the only aspect that had an influence on electoral results. The problem of the economic and energy crisis was also widely discussed. The question of the candidates' communist membership also resonated in the public space, because both Pavel and Babiš were members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia before 1989. Party support undoubtedly played a role, as all the then-governing parties clearly supported Pavel before the second round. While the far-right *Freedom and Direct Democracy* (SPD), which was the same as ANO in opposition, did not directly support Babiš (Stuchlíková, 2023).

The aim of this paper is to provide spatial patterns of two major presidential candidates in the context of the Ukrainian war. The analysis uses a combination of statistical and geographical approaches, which provide a unique opportunity for researching the problem of migration not only on the global level, but mainly Czech regions. As will be illustrated, the effect of migration on electoral support can manifest itself in various ways.

## 2. Theoretical background

Cleavage theory was chosen as a theoretical approach. Different voting patterns relate to sociology when we analyse socioeconomic and demographic factors, or history when analysing the continuity of voting patterns. It is important to mention that these cleavages are not static. Their changes influence the form of party systems (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Ford & Jennings, 2020; Hooghe & Marks, 2018). Geographical overhang relates to the spatial distribution of electoral results and their display on maps. The problem of differences between voters' preferences in towns and villages connects all these approaches. The research on the cleavage phenomenon starts with the approach of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), with four cleavages constructed during the processes of national and industrial revolution. This approach was followed by other authors who reflected changes in party systems in the context of the rise of the relevance of postmaterial values (Inglehart, 1977) and transnational cleavage *Green-Alternative-Libertarian/Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist* (GAL/TAN) in connection to the European integration process and international migration (Hooghe, Marks, & Wilson, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2018). GAL/TAN cleavage can represent the difference in electoral support in relation to Ukrainian refugees.

Comparing very well-mapped Western Europe (e.g. Thomassen, 2005), the origins of political parties and cleavages foundations are different in Central and Eastern Europe (Kitschelt, 1995). Still, the communist regimes were not able to resolve conflicts, and any party systems are very similar to democracies in Central Europe, which were not behind the 'iron curtain' (Redžić & Everett, 2020; Whitefield, 2002). As a result, some historical, religious, national, economic, or social conflict lines are still visible in Central and Eastern European countries (e.g. Barlai, 2022; Blahož, Brokl, & Mansfeldová, 1999; Clem & Craumer, 2008; Dolenc, 2012; Grabowski, 2019; Kovalcsik & Bódi, 2023; Madleňák, 2012; Matiuta, 2018; Mikuš & Gurňák, 2019; Plešivčák, 2017; Zarycki & Nowak, 2000).

Czechia is no exception. In connection with the strong tradition of the first Czechoslovak Republic, we can also find here a series of divisions that persisted despite more than 40 years of the communist regime. Some characters of the cleavage structure were identified. The Czech society and its electoral behaviour are highly connected with socioeconomic cleavages and regional differences (Kostelecký, 2009; Maškarinec, 2019). Cleavage based on the conflict between urban and rural areas is weak (Hloušek & Kopeček, 2008, p. 528). The agricultural party, which succeeded in the 1990s, could not maintain stable electoral support, although there were attempts to generalise electoral support in this way (see Svoboda, 2023). It is important to say that Czechia has one of the most fragmented municipal structures in Europe (Balík, 2009, pp. 18–19), which might be very heterogeneous (Musil & Müller, 2008). Babiš's statements positioned him in many ways as a populist candidate, adopting the rhetoric of the far-right in connection

with the Ukrainian war. At the same time, the significant effect of this variable on the result of radical political streams (Gordon, 2018) was shown, similar to the factor of immigration (Dustmann, Vasiljeva, & Damm, 2019; Suchánek & Michal, 2024). Petr Voda (2015) compared patterns of electoral support of political parties in Czechia and Austria in the context of the different evolutions of both countries in the 20th century. It confirmed the effect of any factors of socioeconomic and postmaterial cleavages in Czechia, especially in cases of conservative parties, partly also by social democratic and liberal parties. Christian Democrats (KDU–ČSL) is a classical representative of religious cleavage. Since the fall of communism, areas with historical overlaps or cleavages are still visible (Bakke & Sitter, 2013; Bernard & Kostelecký, 2014; Koubek, 2007; Lysek & Macků, 2022; Voda, 2012).

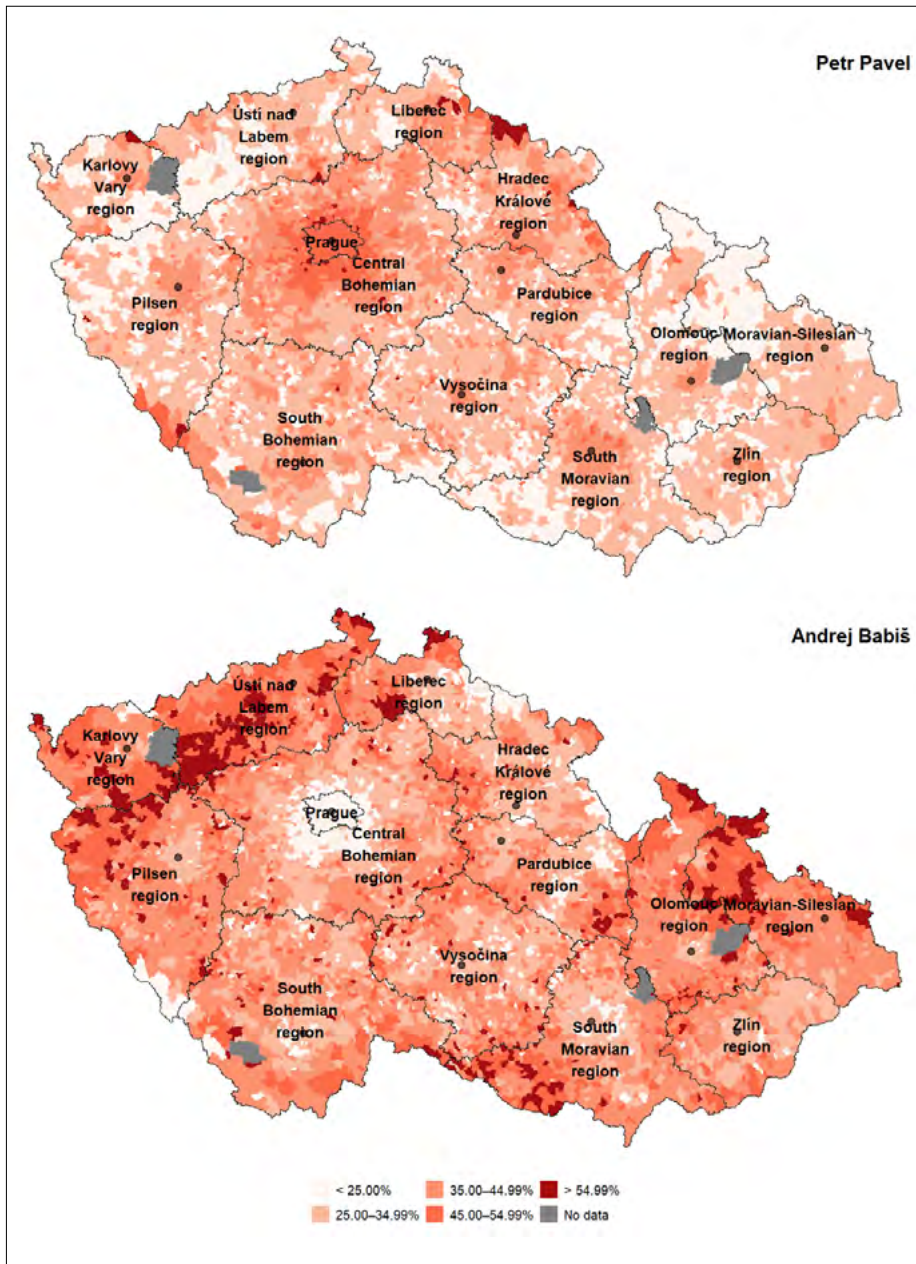
According to the Constitution of the Czech Republic (CCR), the head of state might be elected for a maximum of two terms in a row (Art. 57 CCR), so the president Miloš Zeman could not run again. Nine candidates wanted to succeed him. One of whom, the leader of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions, Josef Středula, withdrew a few days before the first round (ČTK, 2023). As was mentioned, Pavel and Babiš advanced to the second round with an almost identical electoral result of around 35%. The first of them then dominated the second round two weeks later. Table 1 presents the complete electoral results. The second column shows the support by political parties represented in the Czech parliament, which will be important for the analysis in the context of the support for these subjects. Parties in parentheses mark unofficial support, which is based on the statements of party representatives and partisan polls (e.g. Mach, 2023). Figure 1 shows the spatial support of both candidates.

**Table 1:**  
**Results of the Czech presidential election in 2023**

Candidate	Partisan support	Profession	1st round	2nd round
Petr Pavel	SPOLU (PirSTAN)	Former NATO Military Committee chairman	35.40	58.32
Andrej Babiš	ANO	Former prime minister, deputy (leader of ANO)	34.99	41.67
Danuše Nerudová	SPOLU (PirSTAN)	Former rector of Mendel University in Brno	13.92	–
Pavel Fischer	SPOLU	Senator (non-partisan)	6.75	–
Jaroslav Bašta	SPD	Deputy (member of SPD)	4.45	–
Marek Hilšer	(PirSTAN)	Senator (leader of MHS)	2.56	–
Karel Diviš	None	Businessman	1.35	–
Tomáš Zima	None	Former rector of Charles University	0.55	–

Source: The Author based on data from CSO 2023.

Figure 1:  
Support for Pavel and Babiš at the municipal level



Source: The author based on data from CSO 2023.

Note: Points in maps highlight regional capitals.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the distribution of electoral support of both candidates is not the same and shows a certain indication of division between regions with different levels of development. Electoral support for Pavel is concentrated in Prague and its immediate surroundings, with Prague satellites in Central Bohemia. In these places, the support for Pavel was the highest. Very similar small localities with above-average support can also be found in the border areas of mountains, which are dependent on the tertiary sector of the economy. At the same time, the composition of voters in these areas is also influenced by the winter season, when many tourists spend their holidays there (Šimon, 2015, pp. 144–145). This effect is also visible in the voter turnout (Pospíšilová, 2023). The support for Babiš had its core in the border areas with a lower standard of living and higher unemployment. They are usually characterised by high electoral support for radical and populist parties and candidates (Cigánková, 2023; Lysek, Pánek, & Lebeda, 2021; Suchánek & Hasman, 2024), as well as ANO (Pink & Voda, 2014; Voda, 2019). As can be seen, the electoral support for both participants is very different.

Regarding the above postulates, research hypotheses will now be formulated. The first of them will be connected to the crisis, which certainly influenced the situation before the presidential election. As was mentioned above, Babiš profiled himself as a populist candidate following growing sentiment against Ukrainian refugees and the continuation of the war conflict. Literature focused on the relationship between electoral support for populist candidates or parties and the issue of migration is not consistent in its conclusions. Research on this topic, particularly relevant in the context of the migration crisis starting in 2014/2015, shows two opposing tendencies. First, there is a clearly positive relationship between the influx of migrants and support for right-wing populist parties (Vasilakis, 2018), possibly depending on the size of the municipality (Dustmann et al., 2019). Many studies suggest that the effect of the share of refugees may be related to distance and previous experience with foreigners and migrants. The authors argue that distance from the place where refugees are located, which has increasing value, also brings an increase in electoral gains for right-wing populists. Given the fact that migrants are usually placed in refugee camps, where residents are used to and have experience with them, support for anti-immigration parties weakens in these areas (Achard, Albrecht, Ghidoni, Cettolin, & Suetens, 2025; Rickardsson, 2025; Steinmayr, 2021).

Following this, we can formulate the first hypothesis, which will consist of two sub-hypotheses. The first of them will verify the influence of crises on election results. The second will be a control and will concern the influence of cleavages typical of Czech elections.

**H1a:** The results of the Czech presidential election 2023 were spatially influenced by the consequences of the refugee wave from Ukraine.

**H1b:** The results of the Czech presidential election 2023 were spatially influenced by the long-term influence of cleavages on Czech elections.

The second hypothesis is linked to the first and will concern the overlap of electoral support with the political party of which the candidate is a member or the party that supported him. Cleavages are usually associated with the electoral support of parties in parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, if any political party nominates its presidential candidate, his result highly correlates with the electoral results of his political party (Pink & Voda, 2013; Sax, 2018). This fact is confirmed by papers focused on other European states (Czešník, 2014; Zvada, Petlach, & Ondruška, 2020). Thanks to this, we can verify the influence of fragmentation and identify hot spots and cold spots of electoral support. Babiš is the chairman of ANO. Pavel was supported by political parties of the government – *Together* (SPOLU) coalition, which consists of three centre-right parties, *Civic Democratic Party* (ODS), *TOP 09* and *KDU-ČSL*. He was also indirectly supported by the *Pir-STAN* coalition, composed of centrist *Mayors and Independents* (STAN) and the *Czech Pirate Party* (Piráti).

**H2:** Pavel and Babiš have better electoral results in areas with a significant electoral result of the political party of which they are members or which supported them.

### 3. Methodology and data

The article is focused on the spatial analysis of electoral support in the Czech presidential election in 2023. Analysis uses mainly approaches which are usual in electoral geography, but it will be supplemented by statistical analysis in case of verification of the influence of a variable if the spatial effect is not proven. First, we will map the spatial distribution of electoral results. In this step, clusters of high and low electoral support of the presidential candidate and the supporting political party will be compared. This approach can explain the support of presidential candidates in the geographical aspects of the election (Derek, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009, p. 187). Here, the spatial autocorrelation through the local indicator of spatial association (LISA) will be used for visualising patterns of spatial clustering on the map (Anselin, 1995, p. 94), in this case of higher and lower electoral support in the concrete area.

After that, the basic method used in this article is geographically weighted regression (GWR), which is an approach that supplements traditional regression analysis with the spatial variable of the geographical distribution of the variable. Thanks to that, it is possible to identify areas with a different influence of the factor (Brundson, Fotheringham, & Charlton, 1996). GWR will also be supplemented by a classical linear regression in the form of an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model. This approach will help us to verify the influence of variables in case GWR does not find spatial patterns. After that, the results of the GWR will be visualised on maps for identifying concrete areas and spatial patterns (Matthews & Yang, 2012). The visualisation will be provided based on the evaluation

of spatial non-stationarity, which marks the heterogeneity of the presence of the phenomenon in the area. For this purpose, we will use two approaches that together provide a comprehensive picture of spatial heterogeneity and determine which variables are appropriate to visualise. The first one is based on comparing the OLS and GWR coefficients. The suitability of using GWR will also be assessed in terms of global indicators that determine the quality of the model. Not only the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$ ) will be evaluated, but also the corrected Akaike Information Criterion (AICc). Map template was provided by CÚZK (n.d.). The author declares using ChatGPT to create a basic code skeleton for map visualisation in RStudio, as well as to solve potential problems and errors.

The dependent variable will be defined as the electoral result of each candidate in the municipality. As a source of data, the electoral website of the Czech Statistical Office (CSO) summarises the results of all Czechoslovak and Czech elections after 1989 in a very detailed form from the national level to the level of the electoral district in each municipality. The electoral results of candidates will be analysed in the context of a few independent variables that will represent the demographic, socioeconomic, or party-political structure of Czechia. The data for analysing independent variables will be gained from the public database on the CSO's unique website and the CSO's electoral website. Data will cover monthly statistical reports and the official Census in 2021. Other data will be gained from official ministerial statistics. The following table presents the list of analysed variables.

**Table 2:**  
**Independent variables for OLS and GWR models**

Variable	Explanation
<b>Population</b>	Total number of inhabitants in the municipality. Due to the very uneven size of the municipalities, these data will be logarithmically transformed so that the factor has a better explanatory value. It will be used for analysing the urban/rural cleavage. Based on the 2021 Census of the CSO.
<b>Unemployment</b>	The share of unemployed inhabitants in the municipality. It is a classical variable used in electoral analyses. Its main goal is to explain the effect of socioeconomic structure on electoral results and right-left structure. Based on the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in December 2022.
<b>Tertiary education</b>	Share of inhabitants of the municipality with completed college education. It is one of the most essential variables illustrating the urban/rural cleavage. Based on the 2021 Census of the CSO.
<b>Roman Catholics</b>	Share of people professing to be Roman Catholic in the municipality. The variable will help us to reveal the influence of the religious cleavage (state/church). Based on the 2021 Census of the CSO.
<b>Entrepreneurs</b>	Entrepreneurs per 10 inhabitants in the municipality. The variable will help us to map the influence of the owners/workers cleavage. Based on the 2021 Census of the CSO.

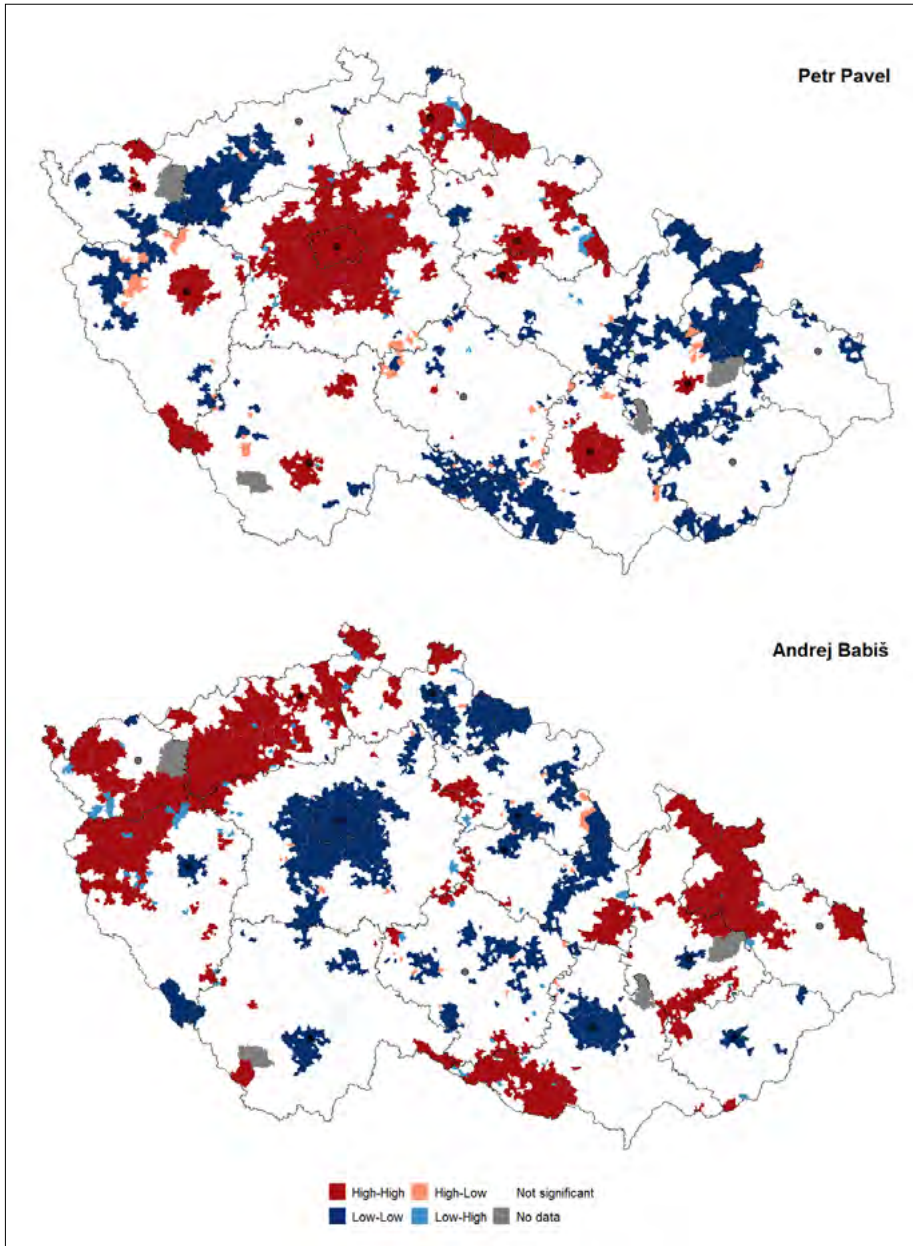
Variable	Explanation
<b>Turnout</b>	The share of voters who participated in the first round of the election. Based on the CSO.
<b>Ukrainian refugees</b>	Number of Ukrainian refugees per 10 inhabitants in the municipality at the time of the first round of the election. Based on the data of the Ministry of Interior. Czechia was the target of a large share of Ukrainian refugees, so this is a factor that very well represents the GAL/TAN cleavage.
<b>SPOLU ANO</b>	Electoral results of political subjects in the parliamentary election 2021, which directly supported these two presidential candidates. This variable will be analysed for the needs of the second hypothesis, which will focus on the relationship between presidential and parliamentary elections. Based on the CSO.

Source: The author.

## 4. Results of the analysis

This part of the article will introduce the results of the geographical analysis of electoral support. Here, the results of the LISA analysis will be summarised, which will allow us to reveal municipalities with high or low electoral support in regions of Czechia. We will compare the support for both presidential candidates and try to identify the most significant regions of high and low electoral support. It will help us to analyse the influence of independent variables in the next part of this chapter. The following figure illustrates the distribution of electoral support. In the next paragraph, the results will be analysed in more detail.

Figure 2:  
LISA analysis of support for Pavel and Babiš at the municipal level



Source: The Author based on data from CSO 2023.

Note: Points in maps highlight regional capitals.

As can be seen in Figure 2, areas of electoral support for both candidates show different clusters in the Czech regions. This fact confirms that the support is conditioned spatially in general, and it indicates strong polarisation of regions as well. In the case of Pavel, it can be seen that support for him is concentrated especially in the central part of the country. These clusters are visible in Prague and the neighbouring parts of the Central Bohemia region. At the same time, the high support can be visible in areas of other regional centres, except the northern and eastern part of Moravia, and northwestern Bohemia. This fact may indicate an unusual division between urban and rural parts of the country. Nevertheless, it will only be confirmed with certainty by a deeper analysis and the next part of this chapter. High support is concentrated only exceptionally in border areas. These exceptions will be discussed below. On the contrary, in these areas can be identified clusters with relatively low support, which can be linked to the general behaviour of Czech voters. In the case of Babiš, there can be seen an almost mirror effect, with areas showing extreme swings in electoral support being far more common. The significant places of support can be visible in border areas, especially in northwestern Bohemia and the northern and the southwestern parts of Moravia. These regions, which have long struggled with socioeconomic problems, are in direct contrast to the developed areas around the biggest cities, which confirms the polarisation of the Czech regions in the presidential election. In these areas, on the contrary, support for the former prime minister is low. Babiš also enjoyed a significantly high support in some areas of South Moravia. On the other hand, in which Pavel, on the other hand, did not score. We will further interpret and contextualise these basic findings and results after a more detailed analysis in the following section of this analytical chapter.

In the following, we will provide a regression analysis of the electoral support of presidential candidates. In the first step, the summarising regression table for candidates for the first round will be created. The following table summarises the results of the GWR in relation to defined independent variables. The second two columns for each presidential candidate present the results of the OLS regression, which is a supportive approach for revealing global trends in the electoral support, in case GWR does not find any spatial pattern. This part is followed by visualisation on maps based on the spatial non-stationarity.

Table 3:  
OLS and GWR models of support for Pavel

	OLS		GWR		
	Beta	p-value	b <sub>min</sub>	b <sub>median</sub>	b <sub>max</sub>
Ukrainian refugees	0.581	0.000	-5.049	0.274	4.158
Population	1.523	0.000	-1.461	1.387	4.711
Unemployment	-0.182	0.000	-0.791	-0.110	0.871
Tertiary education	0.418	0.000	-0.026	0.411	0.876
Roman Catholics	-0.275	0.000	-0.645	-0.130	0.941
Entrepreneurs	2.512	0.000	-3.533	1.718	6.376
Turnout	0.116	0.000	-0.328	0.065	0.578
SPOLU	0.255	0.000	-0.125	0.222	0.574
ANO	-0.243	0.000	-0.475	-0.223	0.075
N	6,254		6,254		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.568		0.704		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.567		0.658		
AICc	39,297		38,209		

Source: The author based on data from CSO 2023, CSO (n.d.); Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, & Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic.

Table 4:  
OLS and GWR models of support for Babiš

	OLS		GWR		
	Beta	p-value	b <sub>min</sub>	b <sub>median</sub>	b <sub>max</sub>
Ukrainian refugees	-0.464	0.001	-5.107	-0.155	4.424
Population	-0.728	0.000	-4.266	-0.471	3.070
Unemployment	0.352	0.000	-0.975	0.192	1.580
Tertiary education	-0.265	0.000	-0.911	-0.347	0.150
Roman Catholics	0.034	0.000	-0.898	-0.027	0.670
Entrepreneurs	-2.024	0.000	-8.606	-1.483	3.400
Turnout	-0.215	0.000	-0.423	-0.137	0.367
SPOLU	-0.275	0.000	-0.551	-0.256	0.288
ANO	0.649	0.000	0.281	0.597	0.982
N	6,254		6,254		
R <sup>2</sup>	0.715		0.801		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.714		0.768		
AICc	39,114		38,231		

Source: The author based on data from CSO 2023, CSO (n.d.); Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, & Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic

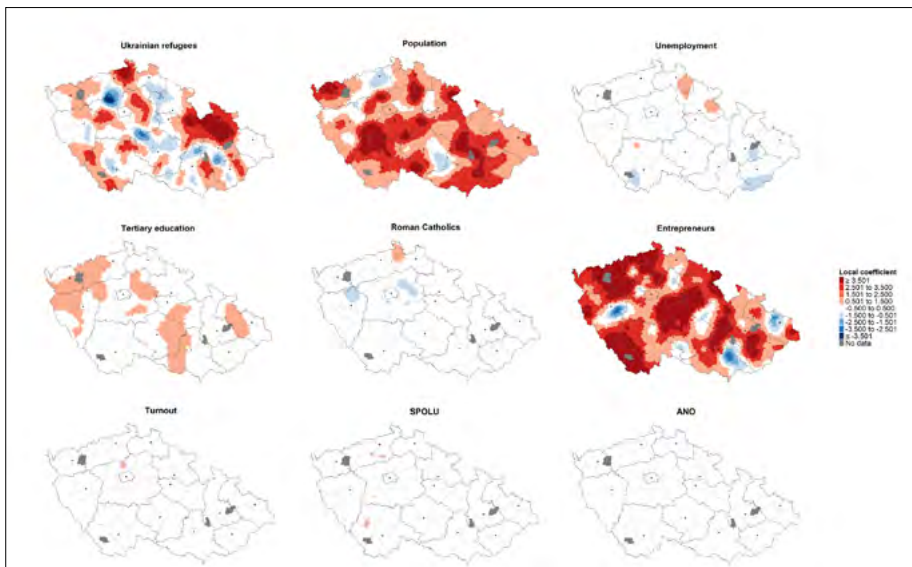
If we first look at a comprehensive evaluation of the models for both presidential candidates, we can see one common feature. From a global perspective, the suitability of using a spatial regression model is obvious. This phenomenon is visible both in the increase in the coefficient of determination, both in the basic form and in the adjusted index. At the same time, in both cases, the AICc decreases, which confirms the trend visible in the coefficient of determination. These phenomena suggest that the electoral support for both presidential candidates was spatially conditioned, and we can detect spatial variability here. Before analysing spatial non-stationarity, let's briefly discuss the individual variables and their influence on electoral support.

The first candidate is the later winner of the elections, Petr Pavel. In the global regression model, it can be seen that all variables are statistically significant. Among the factors that increased Pavel's electoral support according to the OLS model, in addition to the share of Ukrainian refugees, are also the size of the municipality in terms of population, the increasing share of tertiary educated population and especially the number of entrepreneurs, which comes out as the strongest predictor. The positive effect of the variable in the form of an overlap with the electoral gains of the SPOLU coalition can also be described as expected. Looking at the results of the global OLS model in the case of its opponent, we can see the exact opposite effect in most variables. Like Petr Pavel, there can be seen a very strong influence of the variable of the number of entrepreneurs, but in the case of Babiš, it is negatively related to electoral support. Substantially the same effect occurs in the case of the presence of Ukrainian refugees. Unsurprisingly, we can see a large overlap of support with the electoral gains of the ANO movement, which Babiš chairs. As in the first model, a positive relationship was detected with the population in the municipality variable, which is the only variable that is not in contrast with support for Pavel. According to the OLS model, Babiš succeeded in regions with higher unemployment. In case of the representation of Roman Catholics, there is also a positive effect, but statistically insignificant. At the same time, we can detect a difference in the electoral support of both candidates in terms of the statistical significance of the variables. At the same time, we can see a difference in the electoral support of both candidates in terms of the statistical significance of the variables. In the case of the electoral support of Babiš, one statistically insignificant variable was identified at a significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , namely the share of Roman Catholics in the population of the municipality.

In the case of geographical non-stationarity, there is a difference in the behaviour of variables in GWR models. In the case of Pavel, the median trends that were indicated in the global model for all variables were confirmed, but the spatial differentiation is heterogeneous. On the one hand, we can see a relatively stable spatial distribution of support in relation to the electoral results of the SPOLU, as well as in inverse relation to the gains of the ANO. For both variables, the relationship appears to be evenly distributed across the country. On the other

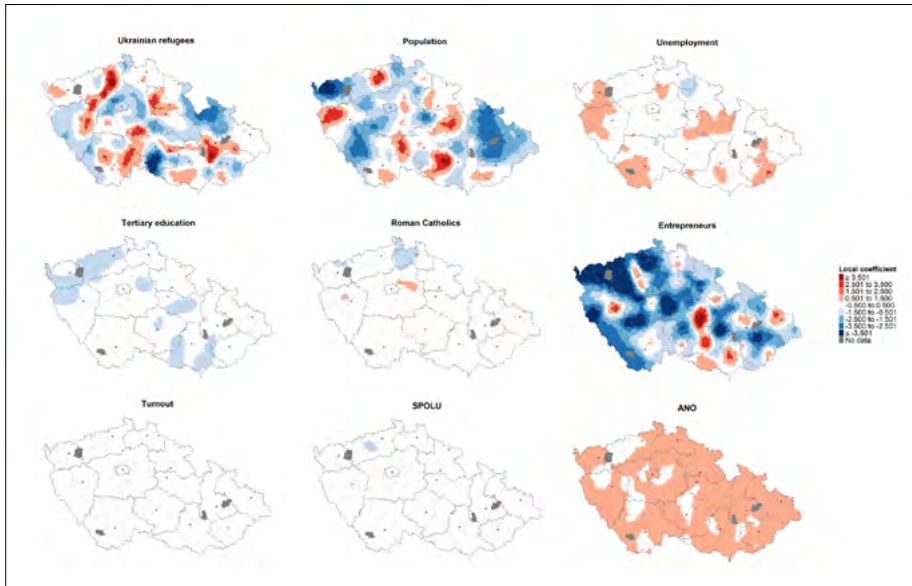
hand, extreme fluctuations are visible in the case of Ukrainian refugees, where the GWR model detects significant spatial differences. The global trend was also confirmed, among other things, in the case of the variable of entrepreneurs, where areas of stronger influence of this variable on electoral results were detected. As with Pavel, a clear connection between Babiš and the supporting political party and spatial stability within the entire Czechia was confirmed. Extreme spatial variability appeared, in addition to the variable of Ukrainian refugees, also in the case of entrepreneurs, where the GWR model shows areas with a significant positive and negative relationship to election results. In the case of the Roman Catholic variable, a negative median value was detected in the geographically weighted regression compared to the OLS model. However, this may be related to the declared statistical non-significance of this variable in the global model. For a closer analysis of areas with different behaviour and spatial non-stationarity, we will visualise the GWR results on a map in the next part of the article.

**Figure 3:**  
**GWR coefficients of the relationship between support for Pavel and independent variables**



Source: Author based on data from CSO 2023, CSO (n.d.); Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, and Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic. Note: Points in maps highlight regional capitals.

**Figure 4:**  
**GWR coefficients of the relationship between support for Babiš and independent variables**



Source: The author based on data from CSO 2023, CSO (n.d.); Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, and Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic. Note: Points in maps highlight regional capitals.

If we look at both map figures, two types of effect between variables and electoral support can be identified. On one hand, there are factors which have minimal or no influence on the results for presidential candidates. Alternatively, a situation occurs where the effect is unified, and there is no significant spatial variability in the nature of the relationship between the variables. In our case, it is mainly the variable of electoral support for political parties, which is stable in the whole area, and does not reveal significant spatial fluctuations. This effect is already indicated by the global regression model, which shows a significant connection between the candidate's results and the supporting political party. A slight deviation from this trend can be seen in the case of the relationship between support for ANO in 2021 and Andrej Babiš, where a positive relationship is consistently seen in most parts of the country. In the case of the unemployment variable, there can be seen several clusters in which the nature of the relationship fluctuates but is consistent with global trends in electoral support for candidates in individual regions. The same situation can be seen in the case of the share of the population with tertiary education, or the share of Roman Catholics. The electoral turnout had almost no spatial effect on the electoral support.

The second group of variables are where one can see a significant spatial differentiation and non-stationarity of the spatial effect of a concrete variable.

The situation is most visible in the case of the variable of entrepreneurs, where significant spatial non-stationarity can be observed for both candidates, which nevertheless largely copies global trends. We will try to interpret visible deviations in the following section. The situation is similar in the case of the size of the municipality. Finally, spatial non-stationarity was also identified in the case of the key object of our interest, which is the occurrence of Ukrainian refugees. In the context of this variable, there can be found clearly crystallised areas that were determined by this variable. However, in many cases, there is the opposite. This phenomenon proves the significant spatial influence of the variable of the number of migrants in accordance with the previously defined hypothesis. We will try to explain the contextual reasons in the following part of the article.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The influence of the variable of Ukrainian refugees has been proven, taking into account the characteristics of the concrete area. In the case of electoral support for both candidates, the nature of the relationship across the country is highly variable. If we look at the clusters of positive relations with Babiš, who profiled himself as a populist candidate in his public statements in these elections, we can identify areas with a strongly negative relationship on the map. As was indicated above, it is not surprising that this is especially the case in areas that have some experience with migrants. Although this phenomenon is not nearly as strong in Czechia as in Western Europe, many areas with dark blue clusters are areas where refugee facilities can be found. The significant area where this phenomenon is identified is clearly North Moravia and Silesia (Olomouc and Moravian-Silesian regions). Although these areas are not directly centres of refugee shelters, they are geographically not too far from the facilities in Havířov or Vyšní Lhoty. This strip of significance also extends into the region of East Bohemia (Pardubice and Hradec Králové regions), including Kostelec nad Orlicí, another significant place with a refugee facility. Given that Northern Moravia was one of those marked by the massive displacement of the German population after World War II, this phenomenon may also be caused by historical connections. In this context, it is certainly necessary to mention the arrival of a strong Greek minority, which concentrated in this area after the arrival of the refugee wave at the end of the 1940s (Otčenášek, 1998, p. 150). It is therefore possible that the inhabitants of this area, although the witnesses of this event will form only a very small part of the electorate, may have a more conciliatory attitude towards members of other nations, in accordance with the literature focused on migration (Achard et al., 2025; Rickardsson, 2025; Steinmayr, 2021). The second significant part of the country in the negative relationship to this variable is South Moravia. In this case, we cannot speak about any important area with refugee facilities. However, we

could perhaps talk about the global effect of the variable, because in this area, we find municipalities where support for Babiš was significantly high (see Figure 1).

Nevertheless, there are some areas which identify the opposite effect of the variable of Ukrainian refugees, when the effect is positive for Babiš. In this case, events are indicated that may indicate a more negative attitude towards foreigners, which may be reflected in electoral support for a populist candidate. These are areas in northwestern Bohemia, which in some regions are characterised by a higher proportion of members of the Roma community. In the area on the border of Central Bohemia and West Bohemia, there is the Balková refugee facility, which became publicly known for some incidents in the period before (Paseková, 2017), but also shortly after (Kinšt, 2023) the presidential election. The significant positive effect on the border of the South Moravian and Olomouc regions may be to some extent related to the resistance of local politicians against the accommodation of Roma refugees from Ukraine, in Boskovice or Vyškov, for example (Šťastný & Benáčková, 2022). In general, it can be stated that hypothesis H1a was confirmed. However, the empirical conclusions correspond to the existing literature even in the context of their heterogeneity. On the one hand, we can see a clear overlap between electoral support for the populist candidate and the occurrence of refugee facilities (Vasilakis, 2018), but in many cases, it is the other way around (Achard et al., 2025; Rickardsson, 2025; Steinmayr, 2021). The reasons for this situation may be the historical experience with migration described above, the occurrence of security incidents, and the fact that Czechia has not been affected by refugee waves in the past anywhere near as significantly as Western Europe.

The size of the municipality is the second factor which has a significant variability. The situation with Pavel is completely clear. Here, except for a few small areas, we can identify mainly positive local coefficients. This effect is most noticeable in the border areas of Central Bohemia. These areas are gradually becoming metropolitan areas due to urbanisation. This is mainly due to good transport services and the short distance to Prague, where many residents of these regions commute for work or school. In the case of Babiš, we can find areas with a positive relationship between these variables. Most of them are areas with generally high support for this candidate. The southern part of Czechia is also an important area, which has a rather agricultural character, which is a factor that also indicates this type of candidate. In case of Pavel, the orange areas in the northeast are not so surprising. These mountainous border areas are composed of many relatively small settlement units with a significantly different population structure. Due to the ski season in January, some residents from other parts of the country voted here using a voter card. The settlements in the metropolitan area east of Prague can also be named similarly, where we can find lower support for Babiš. The dark blue area in the western corner may seem a bit surprising because, according to LISA analysis, this is one of the hotspots of support for

Babiš. However, even here, we encounter a somewhat atypical character of the area in the form of highly developed tourism and spas.

The influence of the number of entrepreneurs is then profiled very clearly. The visualisation confirms the results of the global OLS model, where this variable is one of the strongest predictors. In areas of significant deviation of electoral support, the influence of this variable is even more profound. However, even here we can find a few exceptions, which again have a certain connection with the economic structure. Areas that deviate from the global trend are largely connected to agriculture, which may be reflected in the structure of entrepreneurs. Agriculture was one of the key issues for Babiš as prime minister, also because his business was significantly focused on the primary sector. Many of these areas are traditionally connected to the higher support for social democracy, whose support was gradually taken over by populist parties, including ANO and its chairman Babiš (Lysek et al., 2021; Suchánek & Hasman, 2024). Thanks to this, he can then receive more significant support from entrepreneurs in winemaking in South Moravia, hop growing in the Pilsen region, or, for example, potato growing in the central part of the country.

In connection with socioeconomic variables, it is very interesting to look at the spatial influence of the Roman Catholic population. In case of Babiš, there can be seen small clusters of positive impact of this variable in the western part of the country. Surprisingly, these areas are around the municipalities near the bishoprics in Pilsen. In the case of Pavel, there can be seen a negative relationship in a small area around the bishoprics in Litoměřice, in the Ústí and Labem region. It underlines the global influence of this variable on electoral support. There is no such church centre in the area east of Prague, which is probably due to another socioeconomic variable. On the contrary, the effect was not evident in South Moravia, the most religious part of the country. Here, this can be attributed to the relatively strong support for Pavel Fischer, a conservative presidential candidate, profiled by many Christian Democratic positions (Cigánková, 2023).

From a general point of view, it can be stated that all the hypotheses defined above were confirmed. In the case of H1a, significant spatial variability in relation to Ukrainian refugees was confirmed, while the ambiguous direction of action was also confirmed. As the literature shows, the effect towards populist candidates can have both positive and negative effects in relation to the distance from refugee facilities (Achard et al., 2025; Rickardsson, 2025). We can also observe this effect in the Czech presidential elections in 2023, while the influence of a longer historical experience with the arrival of migrants is also shown. H1b was partially confirmed. While the global OLS model shows a very high significance of socioeconomic factors, the GWR model revealed significant spatial non-stationarity only in the variable of entrepreneurs, which is also the strongest predictor in the OLS regression. H2 was also confirmed unambiguously within the OLS model, thus confirming previous findings regarding the overlap of the candidate's

electoral support with the home or supporting political party (Pink & Voda, 2013; Sax, 2018). The high correlation was confirmed by previous statistical analysis as well (Cigánková, 2023). At the same time, it turns out that the local variability of this variable is almost negligible. Support is almost homogeneous across the territory, which is especially true for the electoral support for Pavel. Generally, it can be said that the influence of classical and GAL/TAN cleavages is still visible in the Czech elections.

This article analysed the electoral support of two presidential candidates in the first round of the presidential election in Czechia in 2023, who subsequently advanced to the second round. In addition to the influence of classic socioeconomic variables that traditionally influence electoral support in Czechia, other cleavages were revealed. The contradictory influence of the presence of migrants on electoral support, which depends on the specific territory, was shown. Therefore, it can be stated that the use of GWR is significantly more suitable compared to OLS regression. The topic certainly has much greater potential, both in terms of focusing on specific areas in Czechia and in other countries where the number of Ukrainian refugees is significantly smaller. For example, an analysis of the second round of the election, which was discarded due to the chosen methodology and its logic, would be offered. This could clarify the spillover of voters from unsuccessful candidates from the first round, or a comparison with the support for ANO in the parliamentary election in 2025, in which Babiš triumphed as the leader of this party.

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# Czechoslovak Social Democracy Between Revolution and Evolution: Party Daily Press *Právo lidu* 1918–1935<sup>1</sup>

František Chalupa<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This article deals with the ideological and strategic crossroads of the social-democratic movement. Despite the choice of the environment of interwar Czechoslovakia, the article's conclusion is intended to provide a new conceptualisation of the topic of socialism when the author uses a specific Central European case. Using discursive analysis, this pilot study follows the revolutionary discourse, represented press by articles in the official daily newspaper of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Labour Party – *Právo lidu*. The discursive strategies emerging from the articles in the newspaper *Právo lidu* correspond to a revolutionary-socialist discourse that stretches from early Marx to the present. Some aspects of revolutionary thinking change, but the fundamental pillars remain the same. The reduction of social problems to a class scheme, the division between us and them, the division between exploiters and exploited. All this is set in a linear scheme that ends in redemption in the form of an egalitarian society. Based on the observed discourse and a reflection on the literature, the article concludes by offering starting points for an analysis of the position of social democracy at the ideological and strategic crossroads.

Keywords: revolution; socialism; social democracy; Marxism; critical discourse analysis; Czechoslovakia

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## 1. Introduction

This article focuses on the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party's newspaper *Právo lidu*. Its primary aim is to examine the nature of socialist ideology as reflected in party press – an expression that significantly differs from its manifestation in high politics. The findings of this pilot study aim to contribute to the discourse on whether interwar social democracy represents continuity or discontinuity with its present-day counterpart. The analysis of articles is conducted using critical discourse analysis (CDA), grounded in a social constructivist framework. The objective is to challenge the entrenched interpretive schemas, which will be discussed below.

The Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (ČSDSD) is the historical predecessor of today's Czech party Social Democracy (SOCDEM), formerly known as the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) until June 2023. Founded as early as 1878 (Kořalka, 1999, p. 283), it is the oldest Czech political party that continues to operate. In this spirit, the contemporary SOCDEM invokes its historical lineage on its official website, emphasising consistent continuity with the present (SOCDEM, n.d.). Since the 1990s, ČSSD has faced challenges similar to those of 1920–1938 and 1945–1948. Then, as of now, social democracy has had to contend with the existence of another left-wing party that also emphasises the issue of social equality. The question thus remains: what distinguished these two parties in the past, and what distinguishes them today?

In the context of the 1990s and the early decades of the 21st century, the answer to this question may appear relatively straightforward. Social democracy advocates for greater economic regulation and progressive taxation (similar to the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, KSČM), but through democratic means, whereas the communists ruled for nearly 41 years under a totalitarian, or at least authoritarian, regime. KSČM, successor to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), ideologically maintains continuity with the revolutionary path to socialism, despite formally distancing itself from violence and despotism (KSČM, 1992). Even after years of functioning in a democratic political regime, the highest representatives of KSČM have legitimised the events of 1948, 1968, etc. (e.g. Malát, 2018; Horák, 2018), while speaking out against the West and capitalism (Stačilo!, 2025a). The dividing line drawn between the ČSSD and the KSČM thus appears unmistakable and unquestionable. One belongs to the old European family of social democratic parties, the other follows the tradition of the Third International and continues to take anti-Western and revolutionary positions. This changed completely before the 2025 parliamentary elections, when the Social Democrats decided to run together with the Communists on the same electoral lists (Stačilo!, 2025b). Candidacy on the same electoral list with the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM) deputies is, however, in conflict with the Bohumín Resolution. (Charvát, 2013, p. 699–701). This decision

by the Social Democratic Party leadership is indicative of the presence of revolutionary thinking within an otherwise evolutionary socialist party not even today.

The communist regime, the communist party and the ideology of revolutionary socialism were the target of delegitimising interpretations in the Czech environment, especially during the 1990s. In 2012, the historian Jakub Rákosník (2012) commented on these interpretations in his article *Three Paths of Contemporary Czech Historiography of Communism*. The author speaks of the so-called delegitimation current, which views the communist regime in a purely critical light and allegedly overestimates the role of politics in everyday life (Rákosník, 2012, p. 13–15). One does not have to agree with this critical characteristic of the delegitimation current to accept the premise that communism, with all that characterises it, has been undergoing delegitimation in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic since the 1990s, whether justified or not.

However, the concept of central planning and socialism in general is also undergoing a certain degree of delegitimation. The electoral success of the neo-liberal Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the early 1990s can be explained this way. We were soon convinced otherwise by the renewed ČSSD, which would quickly become the main rival of ODS. However, it also has to deal with delegitimising some aspects of socialism. It does so by distancing itself from revolutionary rhetoric, from traditional Marxism, but above all from the vocabulary that can be associated with the previous regime. In retrospect, we would have expected a similar distancing from 1920 to 1938, when the two parties in question also sought a similar electorate, albeit in different realities. This assumption is only reinforced by the thesis of historian Zdeněk Kárník, who writes about social democracy as a stabilising element of interwar politics. I am convinced this view is primarily influenced by the author's ties to ČSSD (Schejbal, 2021, p. 156–158). This is not the only reason why a revision is necessary. The fact that the continuity of the current SOCDEM with ČSDSD and with the party from 1878 - the Social Democratic Czech-Slavic Party - is essential for the current SOCDEM leadership is illustrated by the History of Social Democracy section on the SOCDEM website. The authors of the section try to define themselves in particular against mixing the terms socialism and communism:

It is becoming an unfortunate tradition that the terms socialism, communism and Stalinism are conflated and that the struggle for the social and political rights of the workers is, perhaps purposefully, identified by many with the effort to establish the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. However, the workers' movement in Western and Central European countries began to develop within the framework of democratic national movements in connection with the development of large-scale factory industry. (SOCDEM, n.d.)

Has the line between communism and democratic socialism always been as sharp as the authors of this column portray it? To understand the development of the Social Democratic Party, it is necessary to reopen this discussion. Some authors have done so before me. For example, Jakub Rákosník, already cited above, refers to the contradiction between democratic high politics and revolutionary rhetoric in his work *Capitalism on its Knees* (Rákosník & Noha, 2012, p. 241) about the interwar ČSDSD. However, such a claim also deserves support from empirical data. This article serves, among other things, as evidence for similar claims. The object of the investigation is the party press of the ČSDSD in the period from the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 to the establishment of the so-called Popular Front against Fascism in 1935.

The structure of the paper is divided into theoretical conceptualisations, including a review of the literature, methodological framing, and analysis itself. The analytical part is further divided according to the images of the revolution that emerge from the articles in the pages of the party newspaper *Právo lidu*. The article is conceived as a pilot study of critical discourse analysis in line with the methodological principles of this approach. As such, it serves as a basis for comprehensive research that could answer the question of whether it is really possible to speak of revolutionary rhetoric within the Social Democratic Party during the period in question.

The research aims to present the discourse on revolution (revolutionary discourse) in the daily *Právo lidu* articles. These objectives lead me to formulate the following research questions:

- Q1: Are elements of revolutionary socialism present in the daily *Právo lidu* as part of the media discourse of Czechoslovak interwar social democracy?
- Q2: How may the analysis results change the interpretation of the social democratic position in the party system of interwar Czechoslovakia?

For this paper, it is necessary to operationalise the dichotomy of terminology between revolution and evolution. From this point of view, it is exceptionally functional to follow the original premises of Marx and Engels, who stand behind the idea of an inevitable proletarian revolution. I present the traditional interpretation of the division between evolutionary and revolutionary socialism in the sections below.

## 2. Evolutionary socialism and social democracy

Socialism as an ideology is defined by the principle of equality and by the aspiration to establish a new society founded upon this principle (Heywood, 2005, pp. 111–113). From the very beginning of socialist thought, perspectives have differed on how such a society might be achieved. The so-called utopian socialists

are regarded as the first generation of socialists; they sought to set an example for others by establishing communities based on the principle of equality, expecting that more and more people would eventually join them until socialism came to encompass society as a whole (Newman, 2005, p. 7). A fundamental re-evaluation of this strategy occurred around the mid-nineteenth century. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels formulated the foundations of the socialist revolution, which they understood as the inevitable outcome of history in its final stage of bourgeois capitalism (Marx & Engels, 1970). The cornerstone of Marxism was the so-called materialist dialectic, which is, by its very nature, based on the conflict between material thesis and antithesis (Engels, 1949). The so-called class struggle is grounded in the division between 'us' and 'them'. The essence of the revolution lies in the replacement of one form of rule by another, brought about through violent social upheaval (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 60). I consider this dichotomy to represent the fundamental dividing line between revolutionary and evolutionary socialism.

Evolutionary socialism is founded upon the principle of state intervention aimed at equalizing the material conditions of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Instead of revolution, change is to be achieved through an evolutionary, democratic process within the system (Newman, 2005, p. 32). Social legislation and the establishment of state enterprises guaranteeing equal conditions for workers represent typical instruments of evolutionary socialism. Within this model, the state is to be governed democratically, and reforms are to be implemented through parliamentary and governmental positions. The success of this project is predicated upon the numerous working class, endowed with universal and equal suffrage.

A detailed analysis of this current was provided by Eduard Bernstein, the keeper of Engels' legacy and a prominent figure in German social democracy, in his work *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (1899), later published in English as *Evolutionary Socialism* (1907).

Bernstein positioned himself in opposition to traditional Marxism. By drawing on specific macroeconomic indicators, he demonstrated the inaccuracy of Marx's thesis that capitalism necessarily leads to increasing exploitation. According to Bernstein, when capitalist production is accompanied by regulation and social measures, it gives rise to a middle class and fosters a degree of prosperity even among the most disadvantaged. Elements of evolutionary socialism were already evident in the debates surrounding the Gotha Program of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), which Marx criticized for its reactionary tendencies (Carver, 2012, pp. 208–226).

In this context, the distinction between revolutionary and evolutionary socialism is adopted chiefly to ensure analytical clarity. Various authors use analogous terms to designate the same distinction. Evolutionary socialism, for example, is also referred to as reformist or democratic socialism. The editors

of *The Cambridge History of Socialism* differentiate between ‘state-negating’ and ‘state-transforming’ movements (2022). Bernstein’s work constitutes a pivotal milestone in the history of socialism, which is why the term evolutionary socialism is retained here. The dichotomy of revolutionary versus evolutionary socialism is likewise employed by other scholars (see Lebowitz, 2015; Heywood, 2004; Enyeart, 2003; Dietrich, 2017).

The most prominent representative of the evolutionary current in Central Europe has traditionally been social democracy. Originating in Germany in the 1860s, it was followed by national counterparts across Central Europe. One such movement was the Czech (later Czechoslovak) Social Democracy, which was developed as part of the pan-Austrian Social Democratic Party in the 1870s and emerged as an established party with a long tradition on the Czechoslovak political scene after World War I.

It is worth mentioning that the pre-war Czech Social Democracy possessed significant political strength. It was the most prominent representative among the emerging mass parties and mobilised previously unrepresented social groups to demonstrate in favour of universal and equal suffrage in 1905. After its implementation, the Czech Social Democracy repeatedly secured a substantial share of the seats in the Reichsrat, the Austrian Parliament. Following the 1907 elections, Czech Social Democracy became the most potent political party in the Czech lands and the most successful social democratic party in Austria. Outside Scandinavia, it would be difficult to find a social democratic party that engaged to such an extent on an international scale while also gaining a significant share of votes in domestic elections (Kořalka, 1996, p. 263).

Czechoslovak Social Democracy aimed for an international approach to socialist thought, yet it was aware of Czech and Central European specificities. Paradoxically, as noted by historian Jiří Kořalka, it ‘achieved the greatest international recognition in terms of the distinctiveness of Czech national society’ (Kořalka, 2005, pp. 234–235).

The industrialised Czech lands offered a substantial potential electorate in the form of Czech workers. In the pre-war and interwar periods, the Czech lands undoubtedly belonged to the industrialised countries of the West. German ‘unifiers’ included the region in their plans for the establishment of a democratic (or even social democratic) Greater Germany (Kořalka, 1996, p. 250). Through the prism of Marx’s dialectics of history, the environment of the Czech lands would probably fulfil the necessary conditions for the outbreak of a proletarian revolution. Czech and Czechoslovak Social Democracy built upon the experience gained within the Habsburg monarchy through collaboration with Austrian social democrats, which must have reinforced their belief that the Central European environment would be at least specific in implementing socialism. The Czech lands were inevitably influenced by German and Austrian political culture, although the political representatives of the First Republic (not to mention the post-war period) were not always willing to admit it.

Historian Zdeněk Kárník, who specialises in Czechoslovak Social Democracy, refers to the period from 1918 to 1938 as 'its golden twenty years' (Kárník, 2006, p. 46). It cannot be denied that the party achieved a resounding victory in the first parliamentary elections, surpassing any other party's result in Czechoslovakia before World War II. After Karel Kramář, Vlastimil Tusar, a social democrat, became the prime minister, making him one of the first social democratic prime ministers in the world (Kárník, 2006, pp. 46-52).

During the republic's early years, the party had to contend with a radical faction, which later became the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). However, the personal and programmatic discrepancies were merely reflections of more profound ideological contradictions that could not be resolved through the separation of the communists. Social Democracy could not completely relinquish revolutionary thinking, even though it was compelled to operate within the democratic institutions of the Czechoslovak state. Revolution remained a part of the party's rhetoric, as evidenced in the interwar party press.

### 3. State-building narrative

Czechoslovak Social Democracy underwent a dynamic development from its inception to the present day. Respected Czech historians Zdeněk Kárník and Antonín Klimek conceptualize Social Democracy within closed chronological periods. In the case of the role of Social Democracy in the history of the First Republic (1918-1938), these authors describe it as a state-building party (Klimek, 1996, pp. 152-155, Kárník, 2006, p. 46-59). Their attention is focused on high politics and on specific actions within parliament and governmental offices. Less attention is devoted to rhetoric and the analysis of narratives disseminated by Social Democratic representatives, primarily through the party press.

The role of Czechoslovak Social Democracy in modern Czechoslovak history cannot be examined within closed periods. A broader perspective is necessary. Social Democracy can be analysed in the context of the struggle for universal suffrage before the First World War, in the context of the threat of fascism in the 1930s, and subsequently in relation to its role around February 1948<sup>1</sup>, and so forth. Such a narrow perspective would invariably lead the researcher to different conclusions in each case. It is, however, essential to also trace longer-term tendencies and trends. February 1948 was not solely the result of the activities of the Communist Party. It was the outcome of a general mood within society, shaped by many factors. On the one hand, trust in democratic institutions had been discredited by the acceptance of the results of the Munich Conference (Kokoška, 2004, p. 41-55). Communism gained popularity also due to the role of the Red Army and the Soviet Union in the liberation of Czechoslovak territory (Rychlík, 2020, p. 43). Yet one must not overlook the revolutionary culture that had been nurtured since the very emergence of the workers' movement.

According to some authors, the narrative of the exploiting bourgeoisie was disseminated exclusively by the Communist Party, which, from 1921 onward, thereby distinguished itself from Social Democracy. Such a view, however, is incomplete or even inaccurate. As I demonstrate below, revolutionary culture was also cultivated in the pages of the Social Democratic party daily. This was the case despite the genuinely state-building statements and actions of the party's top representatives. This ambivalent situation was typical of Social Democracy. Emphasizing only one dimension of the party's activity, I regard as a weakness of the state-building narrative represented by mainstream historians (see Kárník, 2000; Klimek, 1996; Kuklík, 2005).

Other authors also cast doubt on the democratic and evolutionary character of Social Democracy. Some of them take a critical stance toward the state-building narrative. In the Czechoslovak case, the historian of economic and social history Jakub Rákosník points to the ambivalent situation of Social Democracy (Rákosník & Noha, 2012, p. 241). This pilot study supports his statements with specific data.

#### 4. Social democracy and its party press

The party press in the Czechoslovak Social Democracy already had a long tradition at the time in the interwar period. *Právo lidu*, the party's daily, was first published under this name in 1897 but followed several earlier party periodicals (Bednařík, Jirák, & Köpplová, p. 144). *Právo lidu* did not hide its support for the party; it was printed in Hybernská Street, where the *Večerník Práva lidu* (evening newspaper) was also published. The party papers included, for example, *Duch času* in Ostrava, *Nová doba* in Pilsen, *Svoboda* in Kladno, and the essential *Rovnost* in Brno (Kárník, 2000, p. 330). Authors standing for the social democratic doctrine contributed to *Naše Doba*, *Přítomnost*, and the topic of social policy received attention in the *Social Review*. Academic discussions took place in the pages of Masaryk's *Sociologická revue*, and Marxist youth discussed in *Studentská revue* (Polášek, 2011, p. 103).

The main daily newspaper, *Právo lidu*, was published daily throughout the First Republic. Josef Stivín, a leading party representative, was its editor-in-chief during this period. The publicist Jaroslav Koudelka, the deputy editor, compensated for its radical form and wrote several reflective articles. Vincenc Charvát was the editor in charge of *Večerník*. Among the regular contributors were the highest-ranking party functionaries such as Rudolf Bechyně, Antonín Němec, Antonín Srba, František Soukup, etc. Gustav Winter, for example, contributed from abroad, Theodoros Pitorius commented on economic issues, and the cultural section contains articles by Emil Vachek, A. M. Píša, F. V. Krejčí and A. M. Tilsch. Josefa Severýnová headed the women's section (Kárník, 2000, p. 330).

The split in the party in 1920 marked a turning point for the party press. Many newspapers switched to the left, conflicts over future orientation arose,

and the whole system of party journalism was irrevocably damaged. The Social Democratic periodicals lost many contributors (Bohumír Šmeral, Emanuel Škatula, Jan Skála, Josef Skalák, etc.). The Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia after the Fifth Congress (1929), however, marked a certain turning point, with some authors, such as Jaroslav Seifert, turning back to Social Democracy (Kárník, 2000, p. 330).

## 5. Methodology

Methodologically, this study is grounded in critical discourse analysis (CDA), specifically in the discourse-historical approach (DHA). The method is applied primarily in research on populism and right-wing extremism (see Wodak & Krzyżanowski, 2017; Wodak, KhosraviNik, & Mral, 2013; Krzyżanowski, 2018). At its core lies the Foucauldian concept of discourse. Discourse is regulated by its own rules and manifests itself in various sites within the public space (Foucault, 1994, pp. 7–37). Its manifestations converge in so-called nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The approaches within CDA are united by a scholarly interest in the relationship between discourse and power or hegemony. The focus of interest is typically on subjects that construct particular narratives through so-called discursive strategies. Thus, if within revolutionary-socialist discourse the call for an egalitarian society constitutes a discursive event, the formulation of the so-called dialectics of history represents a discursive formation, while the concrete presentation of the bourgeoisie as a class enemy constitutes part of the discursive strategy.

Ruth Wodak distinguishes the following discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivisation, mitigation or intensification, and legitimisation (see. Reisigl & Wodak, 2015, p. 33, Wodak, 2017). Within the strategy of nomination, the author of the utterance characterises and represents reality or directly the actor. The predication strategy evaluates the actor or reality, and typically adjectives are employed within this strategy. The represented actor is no longer merely described, but explicitly evaluated, praised, or, conversely, rejected. Argumentation constructs reasoning that supports the premises of the author's utterance or the overall perspective. Perspectivisation presents the given reality or actor within the social environment from a particular perspective chosen by the author of the utterance. Within mitigation and intensification, certain facts and contexts are downplayed or, on the contrary, accentuated (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015, p. 33). The legitimisation strategy serves the function of defending the author of the utterance or another actor. What links the individual discursive strategies is precisely the discourse itself. They are regulated and determined by a specific mode of reasoning about reality within the given discourse.

Revolutionary socialism is built on certain conceptions of reality. The system is framed as capitalist and bourgeois, and is presented as the outcome of dialectical

transformations of society through recurring revolutions from ancient times to the modern era (Marx & Engels, 1970, pp. 30–32). The confrontation of classes is characterised as class struggle, and specific attributes and evaluative markers are ascribed to the actors of this struggle. Argumentation is carried out through the selection of particular data, which, within intensification, are exaggerated, while data that contradict the stated thesis are, within mitigation, downplayed. Revolutionary socialism views society through the lens of means of production (Heywood, 2005, pp. 130–131). Revolution is conceived as the path to a classless society, and the violence it entails is legitimised by the desired outcome of an egalitarian society. This constitutes a distinct intellectual world, which may at certain points intersect with evolutionary socialism, but in its entirety stands in opposition to it. The state and trade unions, the fundamental pillars of evolutionary socialism, have no place in the dialectics of history. Any improvement in workers' living conditions within the system contradicts the thesis of the necessary intensification of class struggle leading to revolution. This set of ideas, governed by its own rules, forms the revolutionary (revolutionary socialist) discourse. Its fundamental characteristic is the division into 'us' and 'them', and a linear schema of the course of history through recurrent revolutions culminating in the final state – communism. By its very nature, it is anti-state and undemocratic. And, as it states below, it is not the exclusive domain of communists, but is also present within the social democratic movement.

Discourse analysis possesses distinctive characteristics that are most clearly articulated in contrast to content analysis. Both approaches are employed for the examination of texts, yet they rest on different epistemological premises and pursue divergent objectives. Whereas content analysis is confined to the level of *what is explicitly stated*, discourse analysis moves beyond the text in order to uncover the underlying rules and regularities that structure discursive practice.

This distinction has direct implications for the selection of material. Within content analysis, the corpus must be delineated precisely in terms of theme, temporal frame, and scope. The sample is expected to be representative and determined according to firmly established rules, steps, and procedures. Discourse analysis, by contrast, presupposes greater flexibility. The discourse itself delineates which texts or statements are analytically relevant and which are not. Moreover, the corpus remains open, allowing for the inclusion of additional material insofar as it can be situated within the discursive formation under investigation.

In the case of revolutionary discourse, for example, the relevant corpus consists of texts embedded within the intellectual framework of revolutionary socialism. Within such texts, society is discursively constructed in dichotomous terms (*us vs. them*), teleological closure is promised through the articulation of a final goal, and specific discursive strategies are deployed. Leading contributors to critical discourse analysis consistently underscore that there is no standardized procedure for data collection (Meyer & Wodak, 2015, p. 21). Rather, CDA requires

an organic and reflexive engagement with discourse. Within discourse analysis, it is not even desirable to place greater emphasis on the role of the author. It is necessary to detach from the individuality of the author and examine the text within its contexts (Foucault, 1994, pp. 41–73). Roland Barthes is even more strict and refers to this as the ‘death of the author’ (Schubertová, 2021, p. 17–26). In the case of newspaper articles, authorship is often unclear (see Fairclough, 1992, p. 78) and not necessary to understand the discourse practise.

## 6. The image of revolution in the party's daily newspaper, *Právo lidu*

The idea of revolution is a cornerstone of socialist rhetoric, but as we shall see, it has various meanings. There is not one kind of revolution. Clinging to the literal interpretation of a text always runs into the social constructivist objection that we only create images of reality through language, so it is impossible to substitute words for reality. Therefore, the possibility of sorting out these meanings is offered, a route that dictionary, handbook or encyclopaedia authors take when defining meanings. In case of socialism, they write primarily about political revolution (see Heywood, 2005; Miller, 1995). Sometimes, revolution is a sudden reversal, sometimes a complex process; some writers frame it in purely practical terms, while in the conception of others, revolution occurs primarily on the ideological plane (Miller, 1995, pp. 420–425). If we accept, at least in part, the ideological conception of revolution, for example, we must abandon the categorisations mentioned above, as they would probably be a challenge even for a powerful supercomputer.

So, in this study, I am not just looking for meaning. I am trying to trace the formation process of a shared image, that communication between reality, social structures and the text under study. Such a qualitative analysis will not provide us with definitions or categories. But it will give us an outline of the process by which the shared image of revolution is formed.

The question of the extent to which social democracy employed revolutionary rhetoric cannot be fully answered on the basis of a single pilot analysis. Nevertheless, such a pilot study constitutes a crucial foundation for future research on this topic. Revolutionary discourse is manifest in numerous instances within the articles published in *Právo lidu*. The procedure applied within the chosen methodological framework involves the selection of keywords derived from so-called nodal points. This set of keywords is subject to modification and, above all, expansion throughout the course of the research. All keywords are derived from the conceptual categories of revolutionary socialism, such as class struggle, capitalism, the enemy, socialism, revolution, and others.

## 6.1 The road to a socially just world

The understanding of revolution among socialists will always be more or less influenced by Marx's materialist dialectic from which the dialectic of history flows. The constant alternation of opposites shapes history. However, the socialists do not think in cycles. The Marxist theory that constitutes the thinking of social democrats is linear. The idea of the end of history in the form of a classless society is present in the everyday efforts to improve the worker's life and adds to its pomposity. The simple demand to cut a 'bigger slice' out of the capitalist 'pie' is typical of the American trade union movement. Still, for Central European socialists, it lacks a higher dimension. The factory owner is, therefore, not just a factory owner or 'boss'. The socialist, though democratic, lends him a historical role, that of an enemy who stands between the proletariat and a just society. The 'capitalist' (*kapitalista*) (Ejhle kapitalistickou morálku, 1930, p. 5), 'the big landlord' (*velkostatkář*) (Půda národu a lidu, 1918, p. 1), 'the bourgeois' (*buržoazie*) (*Buržoazie a proletariat*, 1918, p. 1) and, in short, 'the owner of the means of production' (*vlastník výrobních prostředků*) (*Konfiskace a expropriate*, 1918, p. 1) are not seen as partners in the discussion to which social democracy subscribes within its democracy. They are still the same class enemies that Marx had in mind when he formulated his justification for violent revolution. The owner of the means of production will play his role to fulfil that 'moment of history':

The financial means for this can only be procured by a pervasive transformation of property relations, even though the Czech Republic would not fulfil the great ideas of the age if it continued to suffer the exploitation of man by man, as is carried out today on large estates, and in large factories and enterprises. (*Konfiskace a expropriate* 1918, p. 1)

However, the revolution is not meant to be violent; the class enemy is not meant to be overthrown and replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the communists demand. This is the view derived from the many factors that arise from the social democratic experience of the pre-war period, but also from the environment of the new Czechoslovak state and the reaction to the radicalisation and independence of the left wing of the party, and hence of the communists. Despite this, words like 'struggle' (*boj, zápas*) are still used here. In the early days, even the idea of following the Russian way had not been wholly discarded yet: 'Should we remain on our current path, i.e., the path of democracy, or should we take up the methods of Russian Bolshevism, i.e., the dictatorship of the revolutionary proletariat?' (Bechyně, 1918, p. 1). Such questions fade with time, and the ever-militant vocabulary must do without specific formulas. Even when Rudolf Bechyně 'advises the workers to remain on the path of democracy' (Bechyně, 1918, p. 1), he still speaks of 'the struggle between capital and labour, between capitalism and socialism' (Bechyně, 1918, p. 1).

From the article's point of view, the metalworkers' (*kovodělníci*) strike is not simply a method of pushing for better treatment; the metalworkers are fighting 'together against the aggressive capitalists' (Němec, 1919, p. 2). The 'crimes of the capitalists' are to be eliminated. Revolution is at the forefront of associations with such statements, but it is not referred to directly. But how else to deal with the 'robbery and murderous capitalist culture' than to put down the system altogether? Capitalism, however, 'lost the moment it dealt a death blow to socialism' (Němec, 1919, p. 2). It is, therefore, necessary to find out how 'the capitalists are organising themselves' (*Jak se kapitalisté organisují*, 1919, p. 5) to be able to 'knock down the class bastions of the bourgeoisie' (*Dnes všichni k volbě*, 1919, p. 1), with *Právo lidu* calling out, 'To the struggle!' (*Dnes všichni k volbě*, 1919, p. 1). These last words are used in the context of municipal elections, not in the context of a violent coup. Even trade union activity in the form of strikes is said to have its limits. The state should intervene by expropriation because there is no hope of 'miners negotiating with coal tycoons' (*Žádná naděje na vyjednávání*, 1923, p. 5).

The ordinary consciousness of socialists understands the world order as capitalism, where means of production play a significant role in determining history. The idea that any area is outside this conception is not accepted even by social democrats. Capitalism is primarily about factories. Yet, based on the premise above, socialists include agriculture, where land tenure is seen either as a relic of feudalism, which constituted one of the chapters of the dialectic of history or as a 'victim of capitalism' (*Zemědělství jako oběť*, 1930, p. 1), where the same theories are applied to agricultural output as to factory production. People who work on farms are then not the peasantry, which does not fulfil that historical role, but 'agricultural workers' (*zemědělské dělnictvo*) (*Útok agrárníků na mzdy*, 1930, p. 1).

The political practice of the First Republic is already built on the clash of interests and opinions that bind the unifying element of democracy and partly of the nation. Negotiations in parliamentary circles or within the Five<sup>2</sup>, which involve a series of compromises, are also in this spirit. Readers of one article are said to be living in 'an age of rugged individualism' (Veselý, 1930, p. 3) that is disrupting society. Yet it does not aspire, as socialism does, to 'create a higher social order' (Veselý, 1930, p. 3). The way to such an order is not through individualism but through a collective economy. The text admits that the working man, within a collectivist system, (Veselý, 1930, p. 3) 'stands at the lowest rung of the economic ladder', but 'under the educational influence of socialism and its heralds, he creates his own collective, cooperative enterprises on the broad base of democracy...'. The individual is thus not ownership, but the consciousness of participation in something that transcends us.

The image of the revolution as a path to a *socially just world* is constructed in relation to embedding social democracy in the democratic structures of the state and in opposition to the alternative of communist radicalism. Revolution is

therefore not mentioned directly, but many of the statements give the impression of a revolutionary narrative in which everything fits; only the word revolution is missing. The figure of the enemy is present, and the fundamental transformation of the existing order, even the end of capitalism, is written about. The old order is based on inequality and unfriendly; its representatives are exploiters of the workers. Social democracy aspires to overthrow the old system and replace the collective way of production, life, and thinking. The word revolution is absent; the words *struggle* (*boj*), *crimes* (*zločiny*), or *victims* are frequent tools of the *Právo lidu* in the period under review.

## 6.2 The reactionary

As ambivalent as social democracy's relationship to revolution, its relationship with those who intend to stand in the way of progress is intensely hostile. The image of the enemy in the form of the so-called reaction, or reactionaries, arises again from the remnants of the Marxist language that social democracy would not abandon throughout the First Republic. Democracy presupposes a discussion with opponents, which the representatives of social democracy have with the representatives of other parties. However, in forums, party congresses, agitation leaflets and not least in the party press, they speak of a vile reaction which at one time wages a 'struggle against land reform' (*Boj proti reformě*, 1921, p. 1) and at another time attacks 'the most precious of the workers' post-war achievements' (*Nový útok*, 1930, p. 4) – the eight-hour working day.

The reactionary (*reakcionář*) is, first and foremost, a representative of a policy that opposes progress, often a politician from one of the major political parties. Members of the reactionary movement thus included agrarians. Before the land reform, there is even a reactionary agrarian who intends to stand 'against the expropriation of large estates' (*Úklady agrárníků*, 1918, p. 1) or otherwise defend landowners from the effects of land reform. At other times, the agrarian is likened to the Bolsheviks (*Agrárnický 'bolševismus'*, 1918, p. 3), with the peasant who '... plunders the property of the Czech Republic' (*Agrárnický 'bolševismus'* 1918, p. 3) being substituted for the owner of the means of production. The image of the agrarian reactionary also appears in articles such as *Struggle for Land in the Czechoslovak Republic* (*Boj o půdu v československé republice*, 1918, p. 1) and *To All Agricultural Workers* (*Veškerému dělnictvu zemědělskému*, 1930, p. 7).

However, reaction (*reakce*) is also the enemy of the proletariat: the bourgeoisie, which is trying to hold on to its positions and profits. It acts primarily on behalf of one of the parties, for example, as the mouthpiece of national democracy. It opposes 'unemployment benefits' (*Buržoasie proti podporám*, 1921, p. 2) and defends the interests of 'unscrupulous capitalists' (*Buržoasie proti podporám*, 1921, p. 2). The National Socialists, who, although ironically described as 'brothers', vote with the

Czech and German 'bourgeoisie', do not escape inclusion in this category. Their activities are thus labelled, for example, as 'sabotage of the unemployment law' (Sabotáž zákona o nezaměstnaných, 1921, p. 1).

Suppose one attacks the achievements of social democracy. In that case, one is branded a reactionary who stands 'against social progress' (Fronta proti pokroku, 1935, p. 1). In such a case, a 'communist reactionary' can stand alongside the representatives of the bourgeoisie and the National Socialists:

So, a Czechoslovak National Socialist, a Bolshevik and a National Democrat (or if you prefer, a 'National Unificationist') stand and fight on the same front, with the same weapons, against the same demand, which is of great importance to the workers. And this is what strikes us – for how can the workers be saved from impoverishment, from complete enslavement, from the devastating consequences of unemployment and rationalisation, if the most critical fundament of workers' protection – the reduction of working hours – is not provided? (Fronta proti pokroku, 1935, p. 1)

But a reactionary can also be a 'patriot' (*vlastenec*) who 'most abuses the words "fatherland" and "nation"' (Pusté žvanění, 1935, p. 1). Thus, against the social progress that is linked to the democratic state there stands a nationalist front that 'copies Hitler'. 'Henlein, Hlinka, Hodáč, Stříbrný' – all of them are 'phrasemongers' who 'work with labels' (Pusté žvanění, 1935, p. 1). But condemning them is not a condemnation of patriotism as such. On the contrary:

The socialist loves his country better and more sincerely because the working man does not abuse these great words in daily life to enrich himself using them. But the 'patriotic' Czech and German industrialists and bankers and the ushers paid by them want to prepare the working people for these insincere phrases so that the voters will also give these capitalists political power so that they can secure their capital permanently and even use it more effectively to enslave others. (Pusté žvanění, 1935, p. 1)

There is thus no use here for the contradiction between internationalism and nationalism, the emphasis of which, on a theoretical level, might be expected from the advocates of socialism. Nationalism is merely seen as a disingenuous way for the capitalist to maintain power over the means of production. The daily *Právo lidu*, on the other hand, fits the social democrat into the role of a true patriot, who is a patriot perhaps precisely because of his class consciousness, paradoxical as it may seem.

Nationalism is criticised primarily because of its fascist extreme, but the inclusion of this reaction in the continuity of class enemies is not overlooked. Hitler's policies in Germany are equated with earlier slavery, feudalism, serfdom and also wage labour in capitalism. The attack of reaction is thus not only to be repelled; the reactionaries must be 'defeated and trampled on' once and for all

(Porazíme reakci, 1935, p. 1). Social democracy, on the other hand, ‘protects the poor people’ and ‘marches at the head of the left’ as a ‘pillar of democracy and freedom’ (Porazíme reakci, 1935, p. 1).

The reaction, then – uncharacteristically in capitalism – is also a relic of feudalism: the old dynasties that want to seize power again, as depicted, for example, in one of the articles:

The European monarchist reaction has a double base: one is Germany, permeated to a dangerous degree by elements which, for nationalist and capitalist reasons, are deliberately preparing the ground for the Hohenzollerns. The other is Hungary, whose gentry, officers and partly the bourgeoisie, for the same reasons, do not cease to strive for the return of the Habsburgs. (Zmařené dílo maďarské reakce, 1921, p. 1)

Such efforts are seen as strongly reactionary, with the aristocrats and royalty standing alongside the bourgeoisie as class enemies of the workers.

The image of the reactionary is regularly based on similar principles. He is not concerned with the workers; on the contrary, he is interested in maintaining the old system. Whether the reaction is feudal, bourgeois, agrarian or even, in some cases, communist, it always sides with capital, either for strategic reasons or simply to defend its interest. It thus hinders social progress and must be ‘defeated and trampled on’ once and for all.

## 7. Conclusion

The images of revolution that arise from the analysis of *Právo lidu* speak of the uncertainty of the party’s value anchoring, even though the party appears confident and stable outwardly compared with other political entities of the time. A straightforward programme, firm adherence to defending democratic structures, loyalty to the republic and understandable communication with voters are undoubtedly reasons why social democracy emerges from the work of party historiographer Zdeněk Kárník as a stabilising point within the tumultuous and confusing interwar politics. However, a general view can be deceptive, and we often overlook the hidden and creeping factors that have shaped the overall picture by accentuating certain “main” variables. Although social democrats indeed opposed the Bolshevik path and its embodiment in the form of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, they retained the construct of the ‘historical enemy’ that should be removed by the historical dialectical process. Similarly, social democrats held onto the image of the reactionary who ‘puts sticks in the wheels’ of these historical processes.

Finally, it is necessary to distinguish between the position of social democracy concerning Czechoslovak democracy and the geopolitical situation. The

revolutionary discourse mentioned is primarily formulated in the context of production relations, which constitute the entire socialist doctrine. However, at certain moments, socialists found themselves in situations where purely economic disputes were pushed aside. This was especially the case when it came to defending the republic against the fascist threat. Fascism, at a certain point, forced social democracy to accept an alliance with the Soviet Union, which had previously been viewed negatively due to its incompatibility with democracy. The path of social democracy from a dialectical perception of the world to a realistic adaptation to political, economic and cultural circumstances would continue to collide with the transcendent revolutionary doctrine of the historical role of the proletariat.

Social democrats were divided between theory and practice. They were convinced that they were defending the interests of the workers against the bourgeoisie; the workers, therefore, placed their hopes in them for a tangible improvement in conditions. However, Marx and Engels never spoke about socialism this way.<sup>3</sup> Improving the conditions of workers is in direct contradiction to the alleged scientific prediction that class struggle will lead to revolution. In other words, to fulfil this theory, the impoverishment of workers is necessary. Anyone who would like to compromise with capitalism is to be “swept away” by the force of the production relations that define capitalism.

Social democrats must have been aware of this contradiction. However, the complete abandonment of Marxism, even if not consistently explicitly named as such, would have meant a shift towards mere trade unionism, that is, engaging in negotiations with the ‘enemies of the working class’. Social democrats fully participated in a system that a communist would consider hostile, one based on capitalist economics and individualistic rights. It is, of course, a matter of debate to what extent social democrats were aware of this contradiction and merely justified it with higher goals, as well as to what extent they identified with the value of a balanced combination of socialist, democratic and ‘Czechoslovak’ (Czech) identities.

Social democrats framed the system as capitalism, in which worker exploitation occurs. Although such labelling presents a simplified view of an otherwise much more complex economic system, a certain level of social inequality was characteristic of the First Republic, especially in the 1930s. Jakub Rákosník and Jiří Noha provide a comprehensive view of the economic and social impact of the 1929 crisis on Czechoslovak society in their work *Capitalism on Its Knees* (*Kapitalismus na kolenou*) (Rákosník & Noha 2012), within which the history of the labour movement in that period must be understood.

The economic problems of the First Republic are primarily associated with high unemployment, which was not resolved even after the end of the Great Depression. According to some, it was meant to remain a permanent part of the economic life of developed economies (Rákosník & Noha, 2012, p. 147). This was accompanied by inadequate care for the unemployed, a matter criticised daily by *Právo lidu* (*Fronta proti pokroku*, 1935, p. 4).

The Great Depression, from a socialist perspective, was a symbolic failure of the capitalist world. It immediately attracted the attention of revolutionary and evolutionary leftists, who, despite their disputes, united in interpreting the crisis as a result of the 'Marxist' historical process (Rákosník & Noha, 2012, p. 241). In response to the outbreak of the crisis, social democracy presented the Action Program of 1930, which declared relatively radical positions on capitalist production. Rákosník's commentary on the Action Program highlights a significant gap between rhetoric and practice:

However, this determined rhetoric of social democracy did not align well with its parliamentary practice. Within the framework of coalition cooperation, it was forced to make various compromises with other coalition partners. In this schizophrenic oscillation of socialist left-wing parties between radical revolutionary rhetoric and moderate political practice, we can see a more general regularity in the era of crisis rather than a specific feature of Czechoslovak social democracy. (Rákosník & Noha, 2012, p. 241)

The conclusions arising from the analysis of *Právo lidu* unquestionably confirm this thesis and open up space for comparative research.

Social democracy followed a path that was genuinely democratic in terms of form and its role in high politics. On the other hand, it also contributed to a specific revolutionary culture. The path of negotiating dignified conditions for workers without the socialist label was rejected, which opened the door to revolutionary sentiments that, in my opinion, would fundamentally influence post-war conditions in Czechoslovakia, among other things.

It is not possible to measure the truthfulness of the presented thesis perfectly, and it can undoubtedly be stated that a significant portion of social democrats approached politics pragmatically as a means to defend their interests or the interests of workers. However, I am convinced that a substantial part of the social democratic movement during the interwar years still leaned towards the idea that, behind all the hardships of the working-class reality, behind the meetings of party organisations and unions, and the calls for the overthrow of bourgeois capitalism, lay a socially just world of a classless society – the kind of world described by Karl Marx.

The concept of discourse works with shared social reality across different environments. The conclusions of the discourse analysis of the revolution speak to the straddling of social democrats between the Marxist narrative and political practice. If radical rhetoric served primarily to gain votes and did not translate to a greater extent into political practice, highlighting this disjunction may seem analytically redundant. However, this 'technical' approach fails to account for the influence of the discursive practice described on the long-term formation of shared social categories.

The communists' post-war path to power tends to be framed through the events of so-called great history. The liberation by the Red Army, the discrediting

of the right-wing parties during the Second Republic, Beneš's ties to Moscow, the Eastern foreign resistance, and the constant work of the Gottwald leadership to gain power are considered causal factors. (Rupnik, 2002) But that would be an incomplete picture of reality. The victory of the Communist Party in 1946, the mass joining of the party in 1947, and the subsequent pressure of the 'street' on the democratic ministers and President Benes need to be explained. This was not a putsch led by a few people, as it was in Russia in 1917. It was a mass movement sharing the ideology of revolutionary socialism (see Fasora, 2018). These masses shared an image of the enemy that had been built up over decades. Marx and Engels sketched out its basic contours.

However, it is also being built within the social democratic movement, even before its break with the radical wings of the parties. However, the building of the image of the enemy does not end there (see Nečasová, 2020). As we have seen above, the image of the enemy to be fought against is repeatedly portrayed in the pages of the social democratic press even after the split in 1921. The social democrats did not abandon the revolutionary narrative, and in doing so helped to legitimise the position of revolutionary socialism for the next decades. After the war, the communists had a legacy to build on.

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## Endnotes:

1 In February 1948, power in Czechoslovakia was seized by the Communist Party, which ruled in a totalitarian or later authoritarian manner until 1989.

2 An authority outside the constitutional framework, composed of representatives of the five most prominent political parties of the First Republic. During the 1920s, they effectively constituted the strongest political structure in the country (Klimek, 1996, pp. 152–155).

3 With the late exception of Engels' preface to *The Class Struggles in France* (1968).

# Emotional Impact of Pro-Russian Disinformation in the Czech Information Space: Analysis of Sentiments, Narratives and Manipulative Strategies (2016–2023)<sup>1</sup>

Bohdan Yuskiv, Nataliia Karpchuk<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The RF's disinformation campaigns targeting the Czech information space demonstrate a systematic use of emotional manipulation to destabilize public opinion and undermine democratic institutions. These campaigns are characterized by a deliberate interplay of fear, anger, and trust to amplify their manipulative impact. The study aims to analyse the emotional strategies and dominant sentiments in pro-Russian disinformation narratives and to uncover their role in framing public perception. The findings reveal that the RF's disinformation employs contrasting sentiments – negative (fear, anger) and positive (trust, hope) – to enhance credibility and emotional resonance; such dominant topics as internal politics, external threats, and economic crises are strategically utilized to align with the Czech socio-political context; the dynamics of sentiments over time indicate a shift from overtly negative narratives to more subtle and complex strategies aimed at increasing public trust in disinformation sources. The analysis highlights the dual function of emotional narratives in pro-Russian disinformation: creating societal tension while fostering selective trust to manipulate public opinion effectively. The empirical data are taken from the EUvsDisinfo database.

**Keywords:** disinformation; abstracts; sentiment analysis; emotional manipulation; narrative; Czech Republic; pro-Russian disinformation; public opinion

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## 1. Introduction

We perceive reality not only cognitively but also emotionally, as emotions shape our attitudes, interpretations of events, and perceptions of people and circumstances. Defined as internal responses to environmental stimuli (Panger, 2017), emotions also involve coordinated psychological, physiological, and behavioural reactions (Ekman, 1992, 1999). Neuroscience identifies six basic, universal emotions: fear, anger, disgust, sadness, happiness, and surprise (Ekman, 1992).

Emotions lay the grounds for the narrative construction of reality to employ history to explain contemporary problems and to learn lessons from the past; to perform causal analyses based on perceptions, values and moral principles; and to search for symbolic and performative solutions, instead of sustainable agreements or alliances (Price, 2015, p. 8). Emotions construct the friends and enemies of an undefined collective (a nation, people, front or vanguard) which enable it to single out adversaries (Gerbaudo, 2018).

Disinformation exploits this emotional dimension by disseminating misleading or false content to confuse public opinion and erode trust in institutions, experts, and the media. It favours emotional appeals (e.g., ‘us’, ‘the nation’) over rational argumentation, constructing a ‘truth’ rooted in feelings and moral interpretations (Arias-Maldonado, 2020). This emotional framing undermines expertise and factual accuracy, introducing cognitive biases (Manfredi, et al., 2022). In wartime, such manipulation is particularly dangerous, as it fosters fear and instability, making the previously unthinkable acceptable.

Russia has long constructed an alternative reality for domestic and foreign audiences, relying on belief in its narratives as a survival strategy (Zafesova, 2021). Unlike fact-based information operations, Russian disinformation often fabricates ‘facts’ to serve strategic goals (Allen & Moore, 2018). Its messaging varies in content, intensity, and emotional tone depending on the target audience, ranging from domestic populations to Ukraine, the EU, NATO, and the Global South.

In response, the European External Action Service launched EUvsDisinfo in 2015 to counteract Russian disinformation targeting the EU and its neighbours (EUvsDisinfo, 2024).

The analysis of scholarly works reveals three key gaps in existing research on this topic. First and foremost, there is a lack of methodical and structural examination of the emotional components in disinformation messages. Liu et al. (2024) claim that although some of the studies mention emotion information among other text-based features, they do not specifically focus on the importance of emotion for misinformation detection. Moreover, there is a gap in the study of temporal changes in the emotional structure of disinformation materials. Most previous works have focused primarily on static forms of analysis, although the emotional structure of disinformation materials may exhibit temporal shifts that

correlate with the evolution of topics and semantic motifs. With the exception of a few (not many) studies, for instance, Kamila et al. (2022) and Plepi et al. (2022), this aspect remains underexplored. Finally, the regional peculiarities of disinformation dissemination in the context of the heterogeneous political past of post-communist states have received insufficient scholarly attention.

This study intends to address the aforementioned shortcomings by offering a comprehensive examination of the emotional structure of pro-Russian<sup>1</sup> disinformation narratives in the Czech Republic during the period from 2016 to 2023. Hence, the article aims to identify emotional strategies in pro-Russian disinformation within the Czech information space using sentiment analysis. We hypothesize that such disinformation predominantly employs negative emotions to heighten societal anxiety and polarization. The interplay of negative and positive emotions likely enhances manipulative impact by aligning narratives with Czech socio-political contexts.

The dependent variable involves the emotional impact of disinformation on public opinion. Independent variables include emotional content (e.g., fear, anger, trust), narrative topics (e.g., domestic politics, external threats), manipulative techniques (e.g., framing, emotional contrast).

Using the EUvsDisinfo database (2016–2023), we apply sentiment analysis to trace patterns of emotional manipulation and shifts in disinformation dynamics in Czechia.<sup>2</sup> The research questions are as follows:

1. What emotional strategies dominate pro-Russian disinformation in Czechia?
2. How are sentiments (positive, negative, neutral) distributed, and which prevail?
3. Which emotions (e.g., fear, anger, hope) are most frequent, and how do they frame audience perception?
4. Do emotional tones vary by topic (e.g., politics, economy, social issues)?

The paper is structured as follows: Section 1 introduces the research; Section 2 explores Russian disinformation; Section 3 outlines the theoretical framework; Section 4 details the methodology; Section 5 presents findings; Section 6 offers concluding remarks.

## 2. The RF's disinformation

Shultz and Godson (1984, p. 41) defined disinformation as 'false, incomplete or misleading information that is passed, fed, or confirmed to a targeted individual, group, or country'. In 2018, the European Commission (European Commission, 2018, pp. 3–4) defined it as, 'verifiably false or misleading information created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public and may cause public harm'. Chatterjee & Krekó (2020) claim that disin-

formation is neither based on ideologies nor facts. What makes it powerful is the mingling of fact with fiction (lies, basically an untruth spoken as if it were truth). Disinformation, originating from official or unofficial agents, is basically false or misleading information that is intentionally disseminated and can cause chaos, confusion, public harm, as well as serious societal problems (Iosfidis, 2024). This emotional manipulation is particularly effective because it combines truth and lies in a way that evokes strong emotional reactions such as fear, anger, or hope, making the audience more receptive to the desired narrative.

Manfredi et al. (2022) claim that disinformation is not an isolated action, but a state policy, for it serves the following purposes: a) to give journalists professional credentials, even though they do not comply with the ethical standards of the profession and serve other purposes; b) to represent leaders and authorised people; c) to gather, produce and disseminate news, ideas, audio-visual or entertainment content by licit means for its cultural and news offerings, regardless of work quality or compliance with ethical standards; and d) to identify actors supporting the theses of disinformation (Manfredi, Amado & Gómez-Iniesta, 2022, p. 215).

Disinformation creates a combination of positive and negative emotions to influence the audience. This confirms the main argument of the study that pro-Russian disinformation systematically uses emotional strategies to manipulate public opinion, constructing narratives tailored to evoke certain emotional reactions and reinforce prejudices (among the Czech audience). This allows for the manipulation of the information perception and the formation of emotional reactions desired by the agent of influence. In particular,

- 1) the use of negative emotions (fear, hatred or anxiety) is often the basis of disinformation campaigns. They can create panic, e.g., messages about threats or dangers can cause people to act impulsively and demonize opponents, or the use of negative stereotypes or offensive characteristics can create hostility towards certain groups or individuals;
- 2) the use of positive emotions (hope or pride) can also be part of disinformation messages. They can inspire trust, e.g., creating the illusion of authenticity and truthfulness which makes disinformation more acceptable to the audience. Or they can encourage action, e.g., positive emotions can motivate people to support certain ideas or actions even based on false information;
- 3) the combination of positive and negative emotions creates complex emotional responses. This can include contrasting messages that evoke positive emotions and then move to negative ones which can shock and make the audience pay attention to certain aspects; mixing truth with lies, i.e., combining partially true information with manipulations, can increase the credibility of disinformation, as the audience may perceive it as more trustworthy (Romanenko, Bondar & Dukach, 2021).

However, no matter what emotions the disinformation appeals to, it always has a malicious intention. When it is guided by the state, it is strategically planned, rather than reactive, spontaneous, or amateurish; it is based on big resources, technology, personnel, and expertise; and it is hard to identify because it is closer to half-truths and disseminated by powerful and resourceful agents (Iosfidis, 2024). Disinformation follows state logic when it defends a political proposal, a form of social coexistence, a position in international relations or the recognition of authority, which includes political leadership and territorial sovereignty (Manfredi, Amado & Gómez-Iniesta, 2022, p. 215).

In this article, we claim that disinformation is thus not a spontaneous act but a calculated tool of influence, designed to manipulate public perception, destabilize societies, and advance strategic interests by intentionally misleading information. Therewith, manipulation is considered not only as a tool for deliberate distortion of information, but also as a strategy of emotional influence aimed at forming certain cognitive reactions in the recipient. In addition, emotions act not as a side effect of disinformation, but as its key mechanism, ensuring the effectiveness of the manipulative message. This approach allows us to analyse disinformation as a complex communicative phenomenon, in which the emotional component is no less important than the factual inaccuracy or distortion of the content.

For a couple of decades, the Russian leader has been employing digital disinformation tactics to disrupt liberal democracies of the Western world. It has been done due to the activity of the Russian troll factory – the Internet Research Agency, and a major disinformation hub – the General Staff Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU). In Europe, Russia's objectives include destabilising the region, preserving close ties with the Balkan States, and impeding Ukrainian and EU relations (Iosfidis, 2024, p. 31).

Russia's disinformation strategy operates on a trial-and-error basis and is carefully crafted for each country or group, focusing on narratives and bad news that work best in a given environment. This approach allows pro-Russian disinformation to identify and exploit the emotional vulnerabilities of specific audiences, undermine trust in democratic institutions and create a polarized social landscape. The main goal is to discredit politicians, experts, institutions and media of the target countries, to create a one-sided pro-Russian reality (Meister, 2018, p. 9–10). Such influence is provided by *RT*, *Sputnik*, *Ruptly*, *TASS* and other media. With the beginning of the RF's full-scale war against Ukraine, the EU immediately restricted the broadcasting of *RT*, *Sputnik*, *Ruptly*. Nevertheless, in 2024, their websites are accessible in a handful of languages (Tuhina, 2024). In the 21st century, social media and messaging apps become the main source of news (Kalathil et al., 2020), so the RF adapts these means for disinformation purposes due to their affordances, such as information abundance, anonymity, datafication, micro-targeting, or source impersonation (Echeverría, Santamaría & Hallin, 2024, p. 5).

In other words, Russia develops and conducts state-sponsored disinformation, i.e., ‘the systematic and coordinated effort by state actors and elite collaborators to intentionally spread false or misleading information on a large scale’ (Echeverría et al., 2024, p.3). The ultimate goal of state-sponsored disinformation is to gain political and economic dominance by controlling public discourse and opinions (Echeverría, et al., 2024, p. 3).

Herewith, we should emphasize (Table 1) the distinction between the Russian state-sponsored disinformation and pro-Russian disinformation:

**Table 1:**  
**Russian state-sponsored disinformation VS pro-Russian disinformation**

Criterion	Russian state-sponsored disinformation	pro-Russian disinformation
<b>Origin</b>	Directly created, coordinated, or funded by official Russian state structures (e.g. Kremlin, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GRU, RT, Sputnik, or affiliated agencies).	Not necessarily state-produced; can originate from independent actors (media, influencers, political groups, or foreign sympathizers) who support Russia’s narratives.
<b>Control</b>	Centralized, i.e., guided by state strategies, with specific goals tied to Russia’s foreign or domestic policy objectives.	Decentralized, i.e., actors may adopt and spread similar narratives voluntarily or opportunistically, without direct coordination.
<b>Intention</b>	To serve official strategic interests: destabilize opponents, justify policies, influence elections, etc.	May be driven by ideology, shared worldview, anti-Western sentiment, or financial/political gain rather than direct Kremlin orders.
<b>Narratives</b>	Consistent with Kremlin talking points; often tightly framed, repetitive, and strategically timed.	Overlaps with Kremlin narratives, but may include localized framing, hybrid interpretations, or emotional appeals shaped by local contexts.
<b>Legitimacy claim</b>	Poses as journalism or information operations.	Poses as independent commentary or activism.

Source: developed by the authors based on Smoleňová (2020); Meister (2018); Iosifidis (2024); Echeverría, García Santamaría, Hallin (2024); Arias-Maldonado (2020); Allen, Moore (2018).

Despite these differences, both forms reinforce Kremlin narratives either directly or indirectly by manipulating emotional responses and undermining trust in democratic institutions. Understanding this dual structure is essential for developing effective counter-disinformation strategies.

In Europe, Russia approaches the manipulation of media and information on a country-by-country basis, creating separate strategies for different regions and countries, while taking advantage of local problems and weaknesses. In the

Czech context, this involves an emphasis on emotionally charged narratives that highlight fear of external threats, such as EU over-enlargement, and anger towards Western-oriented politicians, while portraying Russia as a reliable and stabilizing force. In the Czech Republic, pro-Russian disinformation campaigns originate from multiple sources. The pro-Kremlin messages are amplified through extensive social media activity, and the organization of public events and gatherings. Smoleňová (2020) claims that their goal is to shift public opinion against democratic institutions and depict a world in which the United States intends to exert global leadership, every Western-leaning politician is corrupt, media outlets are biased, and the future is bleak, hopeless and full of conflict. In this world, Russia emerges as both the saviour and moral authority, the guarantor of political stability and peace.

Since the RF's full-scale war against Ukraine, the Czech Republic has fully supported Ukraine's right to self-defence and the restoration of its territorial integrity within its 1991 borders, including the Crimean Peninsula. In 2024, in its Statement on the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czechia claimed that 'Russia's attempts to change state borders by force, to weaken the West by spreading disinformation and mistrust in society, and to provoke hostility towards the West in third countries must be repelled in the interests of all democratic and free countries'. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2024).

Besides, for the past years, Czechia has made several steps prompt to 'infuriate' the RF:

- 2016 - the government established the Czech Cyber and Information Security Agency to combat cyber threats, including disinformation from Russia (National Cyber and Information Security Agency, 2024).
- 2018 - the Czech Republic expelled two Russian diplomats in solidarity with the UK over the poisoning of Sergei Skripal in Salisbury (Borger, Wintour & Stewart, 2018).
- 2020 - the Czech Republic faced a surge in disinformation related to COVID-19, with Russian sources promoting conspiracy theories about the virus's origin and the effectiveness of vaccines (Schwartz, 2020); the Czech Republic expelled two Russian diplomats in retaliation for the expulsion of two Czech diplomats from Russia (BBC News, 2021).
- 2021 - the Czech Republic designated Russia as an 'unfriendly state' and expelled 18 Russian diplomats over the 2014 Vrbětice ammunition depot explosions (The Moscow Times, 2021).
- 2022 - in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Czech Republic increased military support for Ukraine, prompting a wave of Russian disinformation that labelled Czech leaders as warmongers (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2022); the Czech Republic expelled 70 Russian diplomats and staff in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and announced plans to send military aid to Ukraine (Novinite.com, 2022).

- 2023 - the Czech Republic continued to support Ukraine militarily and diplomatically (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023), angering Russia.
- 2024 - the Czech government issued warnings about Russian attempts to influence the upcoming elections through disinformation, particularly targeting issues like immigration and EU humanitarian aid, drawing further ire from Russia (Bienvenu, Jacquéand & Stroobants, 2024).

Inevitably, such a stance of the Czech Republic irritates Russia and invigorates its disinformation campaigns against Czechia. Therefore, it is quite expected that Russian disinformation narratives in the Czech Republic use emotional appeals to increase distrust in Western institutions, while simultaneously creating a sense of hope and pride in Russia's role as 'a moral authority' and 'saviour'.

### 3. Theoretical frame of the research

Several theories lay the grounds for our research to describe the emotional impact of disinformation on audiences. This theoretical framework supports the key argument that the RF's disinformation campaigns in the Czech Republic systematically exploit such emotional triggers as fear, anger, and hope to manipulate public opinion and reinforce prejudice.

We can divide these theories into two groups: 1) those that describe the formation of public opinion under the influence of disinformation, 2) those that describe the formation of public emotions regarding the assessment of reality.

Consequently, the first group includes:

- political propaganda theory by H. Lasswell (1927) which indicates how public opinion can be influenced and perceptions of reality manipulated through false or distorted messages. In the Czech context, it helps dissect how Russian disinformation campaigns are constructed and why they are effective;

framing theory (Goffman, 1974) which defines a certain 'frame of interpretation' that enables people to find, perceive, identify and label life experiences. Framing news events and phenomena allows for a controlled emphasis on or rejection of certain aspects of reality. The 'correct' frame sets the context for the news, evoking a sense of threat or, conversely, trust. This directly supports the research focus on how pro-Russian disinformation strategically shapes narratives to arouse fear and distrust while simultaneously positioning Russia as a reliable and stabilizing force, especially in the Czech Republic.

The second group involves:

- affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al., 2019) which explores the role of emotions in political behaviour and explains how emotions become drivers of political behaviour, especially during crises situations or conflicts; the role of fear in stimulating increased attention to disinformation; the im-

portance of trust as a factor determining the extent to which an audience is inclined to accept information as true. In other words, fear stimulates attention to information, including disinformation, while trust determines the extent to which an audience will be willing to accept this information as true. These emotional dynamics may help explain how disinformation influences political attitudes in Czechia;

- dual-process theories (of emotions) (Barrouillet, 2011) which argue that emotional responses to messages go through two phases: 1) an immediate (impulsive) response that may be triggered by negative emotions (e.g., fear or anger), and 2) a more deliberate response which may involve positive emotions (e.g., hope or trust). In disinformation, it can be used to scare the audience or arouse anxiety, and then to offer a solution or alternative that evokes feelings of hope or trust in the source. The theories help us explain the strategy of pro-Russian disinformation in Czechia where fear-based narratives are often combined with messages of hope or trust in Russia's proposed solutions.

Thus, disinformation deliberately creates emotional contrast when the sequential combination of negative and positive emotions makes the message more memorable and emotionally rich. According to the afore theories, disinformation does not only provoke emotional reactions, rather it uses them to manipulate the perception of reality. Negative emotions (fear or anger) remain in the memory longer and reinforce false beliefs. Positive emotions (hope or trust) create contrast which increases the memorability and persuasiveness of disinformation. These dynamics make disinformation particularly effective in influencing the audience.

The mentioned theories are especially useful for sentiment analysis in disinformation messages because they 1) provide a sound explanation of the disinformation emotional impact and provide a theoretical basis for sentiment analysis, 2) help understand how emotionally coloured narratives are created through manipulation, 3) allow us to better identify emotional triggers in disinformation and more effectively analyse their impact on the audience, and 4) provide a deeper understanding of the emotional mechanisms of disinformation and thus strengthen the scientific weight of the study. Taken together, these theories may justify the research assumption: pro-Russian disinformation campaigns in the Czech Republic rely on the strategic use of emotional manipulation – a combination of fear, anger, and hope – to influence public opinion, destabilize trust, and promote pro-Russian narratives.

## 4. Research methodology

### 4.1. Sentiment analysis procedure

Emotions and feelings are the core of disinformation. Emotions may be analysed using sentiment analysis which is an approach to natural language processing that identifies the emotional tone behind a body of text. It is an important tool for revealing emotional strategies and assessing their impact on the Czech infospace. Sentiment analysis involves the use of data mining, machine learning, artificial intelligence and computational linguistics to mine text for sentiment and subjective information, e.g., whether it expresses positive, negative or neutral feelings (Gillis & Barney, 2024). This approach is used to analyse various parts of text, such as a full document or a paragraph, sentence or subsentence. 'Sentiment analysis' purpose is to determine the attitude of a speaker, writer, or other subjects concerning the overall contextual emotional reaction to a document or event' (Almohaimed, 2017, p. 17).

In English, the words 'emotion' and 'sentiment' are often used interchangeably but refer to different concepts. Understanding the difference between emotions and feelings is crucial to this study, as it focuses on how specific emotions (e.g., fear, anger or hope) are embedded in disinformation to elicit a targeted emotional response which is consistent with the study's focus on the emotional dynamics of pro-Russian disinformation in Czechia.

'Emotions' are the biologically rooted, instinctive reactions of our bodies to environmental stimuli (Damasio, 2004). There is no universally agreed list of basic emotions, however, a common model includes six: anger (or rage), joy, disgust (or revulsion), fear, sadness, and surprise. In the case of the automated system, 'anticipation' and 'trust' are also options for analysis (Isasi, 2024). 'Sentiment' is both the action of and effect of feeling an emotion. Within the context of sentiment analysis, sentiment may be explained as any feeling, emotion, attitude, or opinion (Hyvärinen & Beck, 2018). 'When an object, a person, a situation, or a thought brings us joy, it begins a process that can lead to the feeling of being joyful or happy' (Zazo, 2015). Sentiment analysis suggests that you can measure the intensity of this effect (either positive, negative, or neutral) on the manifestation of an emotion.

Hence, sentiment analysis is a process of extracting opinions that have different polarities, i.e., positive or negative. It is also known as opinion mining and polarity detection. With the help of sentiment analysis, we can find out the nature of opinions reflected in documents, websites, social media feeds, etc. Due to this analysis, the data are classified into different classes. These classes can be binary (positive or negative) or, they can have multiple classes (happy, sad, angry, etc.). Sentiment analysis can be useful to quickly summarize some qualities of text, especially if we have so much text that a human reader cannot analyse all of it (Shara, 2021).

There are two main methodological approaches to sentiment analysis: 1) lexicon-based method – to designate a sentiment score, it utilizes a dictionary of words and their sentiment values (positive–negative–neutral) (Esuli & Sebastiani, 2007); 2) sentiment classification using machine learning techniques. This method classifies documents into sentiment categories based on training data (Pang et al., 2002). The lexicological approach chosen for this study corresponds to the goal of identifying emotional patterns in disinformation narratives, in particular analysing how positive and negative emotions interact to enhance the manipulative impact of pro-Russian disinformation aimed at the Czech audience.

We use the lexicon-based method known as an unsupervised learning method. The lexicon method does not require any training data and only depends on the dictionary. This approach is calculated based on the occurrences of the terms in the text data with other positive or negative words in the predeveloped polarity lexicons (Zulfadzli & Haliyana, 2019). In this research, we applied the NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon (NRC, 2023) – a dictionary widely used in sentiment and emotion analysis. It can currently be used even with non-English texts. The use of the NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon directly supports the research's focus on mapping the prevalence and interaction of emotions such as fear, anger, trust, and hope in disinformation narratives. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the emotional mechanisms underlying the manipulative strategies of pro-Russian disinformation. Mohammad and Turney (2013) developed this lexicon which includes positive and negative sentiment values as well as eight emotional categories. The dataset that forms the lexicon has been manually annotated using the Maximum Difference Scaling technique, or MaxDiff, to determine the most negative or positive sets of words relative to other words – a sort of ranking of sentiment intensity of words. This particular lexicon has 14,182 unigrams (words) classified as either positive or negative. It also classifies a word's connection to various emotions: anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust. Using automatic translation which may lack linguistic nuance in unpredictable ways, it is available in more than one hundred languages (Isasi, 2024).

## 4.2. Sentiment network analysis

The research of the relations between words and documents is a powerful tool of sentiment analysis which helps create and study a text network based on the concept of graphs. A network is a structure of nodes (system elements) and links (interactions between nodes). In a text network, words, phrases, or documents are nodes, and the co-occurrence of words or their semantic similarity is links.

In this research, we applied Two-Mode Networks (Bail, 2016; Rule, Cointet & Bearman, 2015) – a type of graphical structure that contains two different types

of nodes and the connections between them. For example, in the context of our text analysis, sentiment words are the nodes of the first type, and the documents in which these words occur are the nodes of the second type. The connections between nodes indicate the interactions between categories, i.e., which words occur in which documents. Such networks enable us to analyse complex interdependencies, particularly, to study how narratives or elements of information spread across texts, authors, or platforms. In our study, we built and analysed two versions of two-mode networks: 'sentiment words' and 'emotion words'.

The two-mode networks peculiarity is that they can be transformed into single-mode networks to apply such standard analysis methods as clustering or determining word centrality. For example, word-document relations can be transformed into word-word relations, determining the co-occurrence of words within a single document. Such networks are widely used for text analysis, enabling identification of key topics, structures and relations between different elements which contributes to the understanding of manipulation strategies in the information space.

To analyse text networks, we have applied three key metrics and corresponding analysis methods to identify structures and interactions in the data: 1) Modularity and Modularity Class definition; 2) Closeness Centrality; 3) Betweenness Centrality.

Modularity Class (Newman, 2006) means classes or groups of nodes in a network that have a high density of internal connections and weak external connections to other groups. Clustering based on modularity allows us to identify thematically or functionally related elements in a network, e.g., groups of words that often occur together in texts. Modularity shows the quality of the network's division into classes: the higher the modularity, the more clearly the nodes are grouped within clusters, creating distinct groups or topics in the text network.

To determine the Modularity Class, the Louvain method (Blondel et al., 2008) was used which is an efficient algorithm that works on the principle of modularity optimization. The algorithm consists of two main steps: 1) each node is considered a separate cluster, and then nodes are moved between groups to maximize modularity; 2) nodes within one cluster are aggregated into super-nodes, and the process is repeated until the highest level of modularity is achieved. This method allows for automatic detection of the number of clusters and provides high analysis speed even for large networks which makes it popular in research on text data and information flows.

In this research, modularity classes are used to identify and analyse thematic groups (clusters) of words or phrases in text networks that form the basis of disinformation messages. These clusters help understand how text elements are interconnected, revealing key topics that are the basis of manipulative content. Modularity classes also let us assess the strategic distribution of information in texts. For instance, through modularity class analysis, we can determine how emo-

tionally charged words (fear, anger, trust) are integrated into different clusters to create a targeted manipulative effect. This helps us understand which aspects of the narrative are most influential and how they contribute to the formation of the desired perception by the audience.

Closeness Centrality (Rubio, 2023) measures how 'close' a node in a network is to other nodes, i.e., it determines its average distance to the rest of the elements. High closeness centrality indicates that the node has quick access to the entire network, playing a key role in the dissemination of information. In the context of text network analysis, nodes with high closeness centrality can include words or phrases that are often associated with many other words, ensuring the rapid dissemination of certain content or ideas through the text. For instance, the word 'impact' can have high closeness because it is used in different contexts, such as 'impact of sanctions' or 'impact on the economy'.

Betweenness Centrality (Bail, 2016; Rubio, 2022) determines how often a node lies on the shortest paths between other nodes, acting as a 'bridge' between different parts of the network. This metric shows which nodes are strategically important for connecting single clusters or topics. In text analysis, nodes with high betweenness centrality can be words that unite different narratives or topics. For instance, the word 'choice' can combine the topics of 'crisis' and 'alternatives', acting as an important element of manipulative content. Using these metrics helps identify key concepts in texts, understand their role in the formation of narratives and evaluate strategic approaches to information influence.

### 4.3. Research empirical data

For our analysis, we used the EUvsDisinfo disinformation database for 2016–2023. The data were collected on January 24, 2024. At that time, the dataset consisted of 15,978 messages. The EUvsDisinfo project continuously updates its database and methodology in the context of combating pro-Kremlin disinformation, taking into account current challenges and changes in the spread of disinformation. This dataset serves to examine the central argument of the study – in the Czech infospace, pro-Russian disinformation systematically uses emotional narratives adapted to the Czech context to manipulate public opinion and advance specific geopolitical goals.

From this database, we selected messages that were identified as circulating in the Czech information space. We analysed only abstracts, not full texts, i.e., brief main messages and their refutation provided by the EU East Stratcom Task Force. That was a necessary methodological step, driven by the fact that a significant portion of the original texts was no longer accessible at the time of the study. Nevertheless, analysing abstracts is a valid research approach, as confirmed by scholarly literature, namely, Kennedy et al. (2012) and Ahuir et al. (2024) demon-

strated that annotations serve as entry points to the original articles and may be strategically crafted to evoke specific emotions that capture readers' attention. Similarly, Yuskiv et al. (2021) examined the presence of intentions in leads.

Although the analysis of abstracts has certain limitations, this approach allows us to focus on the main emotional triggers embedded in disinformation narratives, and consequently, to reveal how these emotional strategies are used to manipulate the Czech audience. We see the following advantages of this approach:

resource savings – processing abstracts requires less computing power and time than analysing large volumes of original texts;

focus on key content – abstracts concentrate on the most important information and emotions, excluding details that may be irrelevant to the overall tone;

data availability – in cases where the original texts are unavailable or deleted, abstracts can be the only available source of content.

At the same time, we should point out some restrictions regarding the use of this approach:

- loss of context – abstracts often do not contain all the details and nuances that may be important for understanding the full emotional tone of the text;
- reduction of emotional diversity – original texts may contain a wider range of emotional shades that cannot always be captured in an abstract;
- subjective vision of abstract authors – the emotional tone of an abstract may reflect the subjective views and interpretations of the author, i.e., authors may unintentionally include or exclude information that affects the results of the analysis.

It should be emphasized that in this research we did not analyse headlines or pictures though we recognize them important factors for shaping public opinion and evoking emotions. This issue could be the focus of the next study.

Despite these limitations, the research methodology is consistent with its goal to reveal how pro-Russian disinformation uses emotional dynamics, e.g., the combination of fear and trust, to enhance the influence and credibility of its narratives.

#### 4.4. Research algorithm

1. Pre-processing data: disinformation abstracts are selected from the EUvs-Disinfo database in the Czech language for the studied period (2016–2023). Subsequent texts are cleaned (unnecessary symbols and service words are removed) and word lemmatization is used (all words are reduced to their basic forms). The collection for the analysis is composed.
2. Sentiment analysis: the NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon is used for all messages and words that are carriers of sentiment (positive, negative and neutral words). The corresponding emotions they express

are categorized: positive – trust, joy, anticipation; negative – fear, anger, disgust, sadness; ambivalent – surprise.

Based on the sentiments and emotions of words, the polarization of texts (positive, negative, neutral) and the dominant emotions in messages are determined.

3. Quantitative analysis: the number of messages for each year from 2016 to 2023 is calculated and analysed. Based on emotion frequency analysis, the most common emotions are determined in the general data set. Visualizing data showcases the dynamics of changes in the distribution of emotional colouring over time. To display the dynamics of sentiments, line graphs and diagrams were used indicating how the disinformation emotional impact changed during the studied period. The main attention was paid to the ratio of positive and negative emotions, and the dominance of certain emotions.
4. Network analysis of sentiment and emotionally coloured words: we built and analysed two versions of two-mode networks – ‘sentiment words’ and ‘emotion words’. Then, each of the networks was transformed into single-mode networks. Next, modularity classes were determined, and key nodes (the most frequently used words) were calculated in terms of closeness centrality and betweenness centrality. This allowed us to identify the main topics and groups of sentiment words that are often used together, and to determine the context of clusters in texts. Analysis of words with high closeness and betweenness centrality values made it possible to determine which sentiments and sentiment words play the main role in disinformation texts (e.g., to disseminate emotions or manipulative content), and to identify strategic insights, i.e., how keywords and topics affect the audience, what narratives are used for manipulation. Visualization of networks helps understand the results obtained.

All the described steps were implemented in the R programming language. The following functions and packages were used:

- text data manipulation – tidyverse, tidytext, textdata, stringr, quanteda, quanteda.sentiment packages,
- working with dates – lubridate, tsibble,
- performing statistical tests and comparisons – rstatix,
- text network analysis – textnets package,
- visualization of results – ggplot2, ggwordcloud, igraph packages.

## 5. Findings

We calculated the total number of Czech-language disinformation messages from 2016 to 2023, present in the EUvsDisinfo database (Table 2). This quantitative analysis provides the basis for understanding how pro-Russian disinformation campaigns in the Czech information space use emotional narratives over time.

Table 2:  
Number of disinformation messages in Czech (2016 – 2023, EUvsDisinfo)

Language	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Czech	385	210	42	23	35	48	4	11	758

Source: The Authors

The largest amount of detected disinformation in the Czech language occurred in 2016 and 2017 when the number of both negative and positive sentiments was the highest (Table 3).

Table 3:  
Sentiments in disinformation messages (2016 – 2023, EUvsDisinfo)

CZ NRC sentiment-year									
Sentiments/emotions	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	total
Sentiments									
Positive	510	274	91	54	105	152	15	22	1316
Negative	594	305	99	48	91	145	7	27	1414
Difference	-84	-31	-8	6	14	7	8	-5	-98
Emotions									
fear	440	222	65	28	64	110	11	18	1035
trust	391	217	77	37	60	79	10	14	939
anger	307	163	47	22	41	76	5	11	727
anticipation	199	91	36	14	40	56	3	5	477
sadness	176	91	28	17	43	43	3	5	450
joy	133	65	23	15	18	38	4	3	323
surprise	117	63	15	10	15	42	1	4	292
disgust	106	62	23	7	23	22	1	1	262

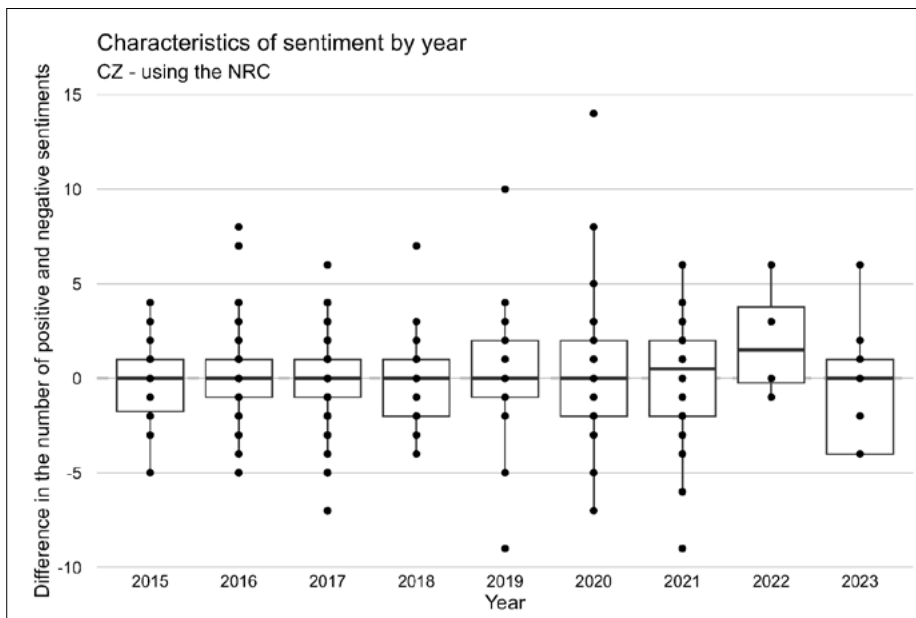
Source: The Authors.

The analysis of the EUvsDisinfo available disinformation database indicates that the most common emotions include fear (1,035 cases), trust (939) and anger (727), confirming their key role as independent variables that shape the dependent variable, i.e., the emotional impact of disinformation. This shows that the manipulative strategy of disinformation campaigns is aimed at provoking strong negative reactions in society while building trust in the source of information to enhance its effectiveness. The dominance of fear, trust and anger also supports the main thesis that pro-Russian disinformation strategically uses these emotions to destabilize trust in democratic institutions and to portray Russia as a reliable and stabilizing force.

Other emotions - anticipation (477), sadness (450), joy (323), surprise (292), and disgust (262) - occur less frequently. The likely goal is to increase the audience's emotional response and amplify the impact of disinformation amid intimidation. The overall trend indicates a decrease in both positive and negative sentiments and emotions in the news in recent years.

There is a general trend towards an increase in the spread of sentiment assessments over time. The graph (Fig. 1) shows a dynamic picture of sentiment analysis of pro-Russian disinformation in the Czech information space, with a tendency towards greater variability of assessments and a slight shift towards positive sentiments in recent years. This may reflect the increasing complexity and multifaceted nature of the discourse around pro-Russian disinformation in the Czech Republic.

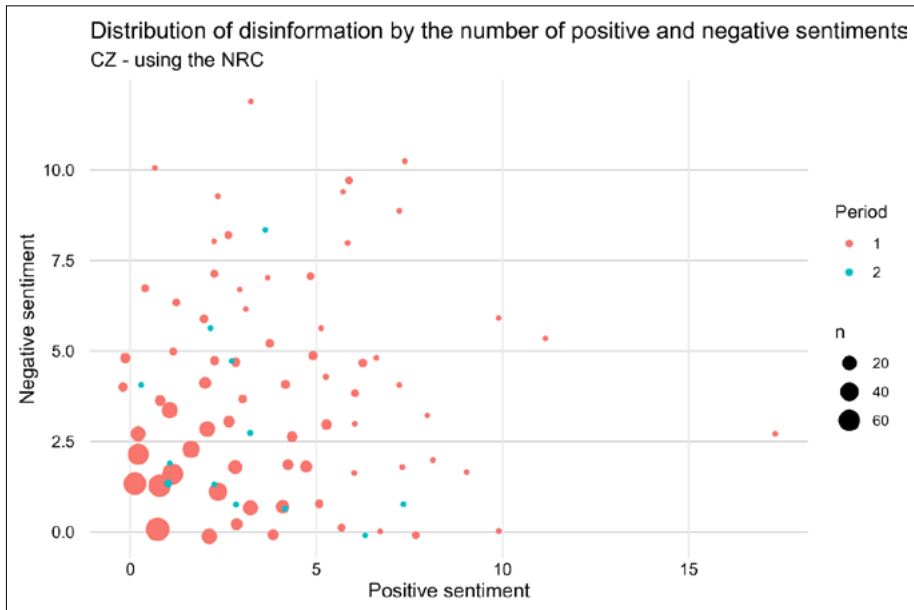
**Figure 1:**  
**Characteristics of sentiments by year (using NRC)**



Source: The Authors.

Disinformation in the Czech infospace shows a wide range of both positive and negative emotions, although most messages have a low level of emotionality (Fig. 2). This may indicate that most ‘news’ tries to be less emotionally charged, perhaps to appear more objective and reliable. The size of the dots on the graph shows that most disinformation messages have a small number of emotional components, and the largest dots are closer to the beginning of the axes. We can assume that certain socio-political events or changes in disinformation strategies have occurred that have affected the emotional content of disinformation.

**Figure 2:**  
**Distribution of disinformation by positive and negative sentiments (using NRC)**



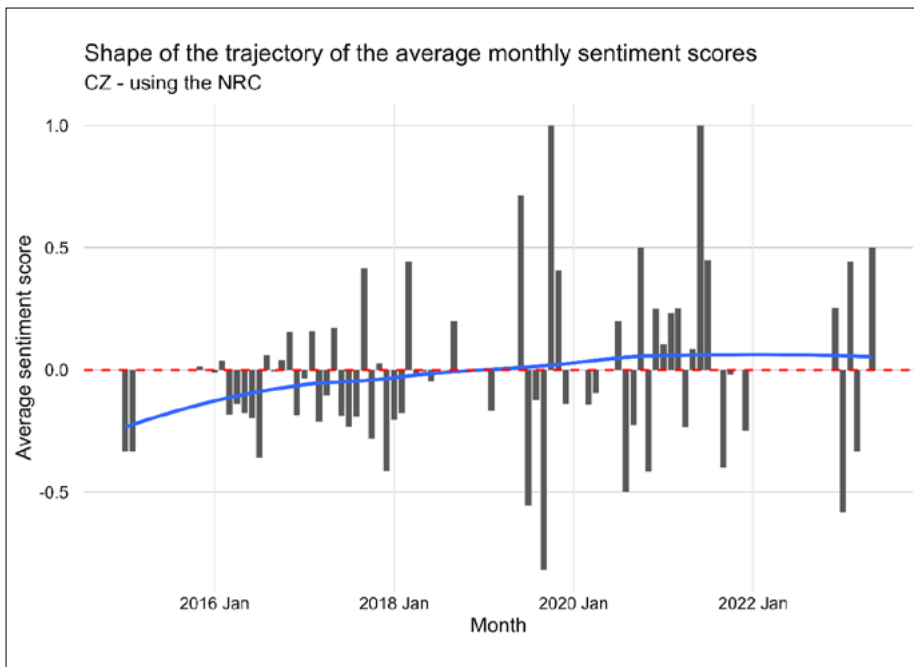
Source: The Authors.

There is a general trend to a gradual increase in the average tone from predominantly negative in early 2016 to more neutral or even slightly positive in 2022 (Fig. 3). This shift from overtly negative to more balanced or even positive tones reflects the increasing ‘sophistication’ of disinformation strategies. This is consistent with the research argument that the interaction of positive and negative sentiments enhances the manipulative impact of disinformation by stimulating a nuanced emotional response from the audience. This may indicate an evolution in the strategy of disinformation dissemination – from overtly negative narratives to more ‘refined’ and less obviously manipulative approaches. Such a change is potentially aimed at increasing the audience’s trust and the effectiveness of disinformation impact.

The above graph also demonstrates significant volatility in tone throughout the period, with particularly pronounced fluctuations in 2019–2021. These sharp changes may reflect reactions to specific geopolitical events, changes in relations between Russia and Czechia, or adaptation of disinformation tactics to the changing information environment. The peaks in positive tone in late 2019 and early 2021 may be associated with attempts to create a more attractive image of Russia or to divert attention from negative aspects of bilateral relations.

We should emphasize that the amplitude of sentiment fluctuations (the difference between positive and negative sentiments) remains significant throughout the period. This indicates the flexibility and adaptability of disinformation strategies which can quickly respond to changes in the information space and public opinion in the Czech Republic. This approach allows for maximizing the impact of disinformation by varying the emotional colouring depending on specific goals and the current context of Czech-Russian relations.

**Figure 3:**  
**Trajectory of the average monthly sentiment scores (using NRC)**

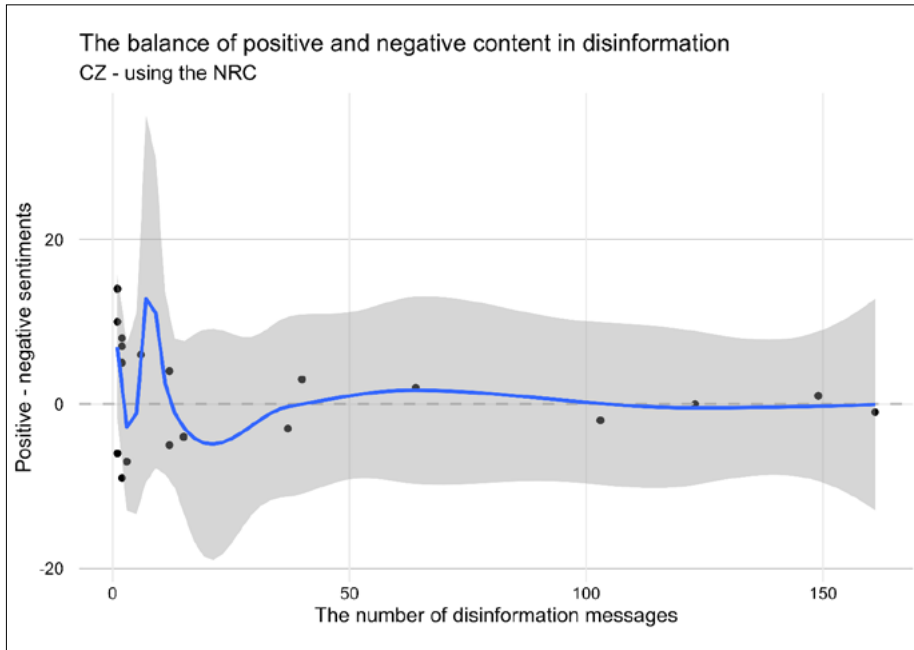


Source: The Authors.

The graph in Fig. 4 demonstrates the balance of positive and negative sentiments in disinformation in the Czech information space. Only a small number of these messages are characterized by significant deviations towards negative sentiments which may indicate a one-sided emotional colouring of these mes-

sages. Nevertheless, in the vast majority of ‘news’, there is an emotional balance when the difference between positive and negative sentiments is levelled and becomes insignificant. However, the general trend indicates a certain predominance of negative emotional colouring in the majority of messages which may show a tendency towards the dominance of negative sentiments in the Czech infospace.

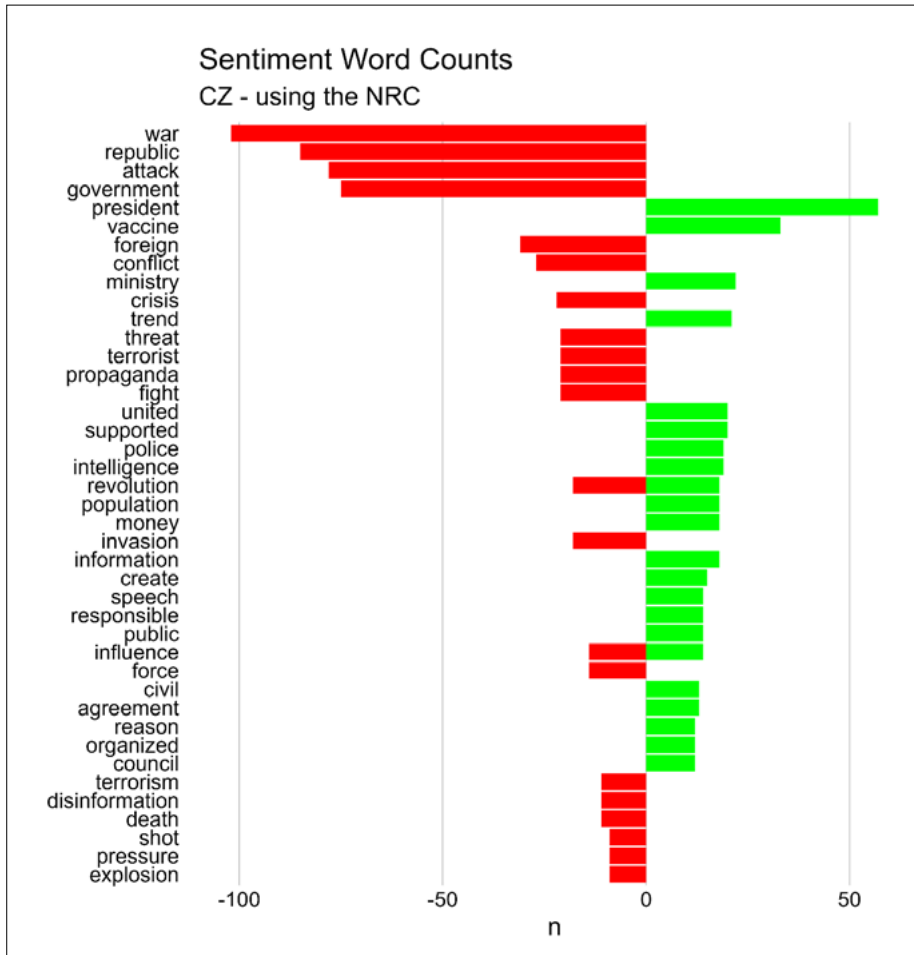
Figure 4:  
Balance of positive and negative content in disinformation messages



Source: The Authors.

Analysis of the sentiment lexicon in pro-Russian disinformation (Fig. 5) allows us to draw the following conclusions:

Figure 5:  
Sentiments in disinformation messages



Source: The Authors.

1. Sentiment frequency: negative sentiments predominate. The words with the highest frequency of use (war, republic, attack, government) have a predominantly negative connotation. However, there is also a significant number of positive sentiments, especially associated with the word 'president'.
2. Sentiment lexicon (words that occur frequently):
  - negative: war, attack, conflict, crisis, threat, terrorist, propaganda, fight, revolution, invasion, terrorism, disinformation, death, shot, pressure, explosion;
  - positive: president, vaccine, ministry, trend, united, supported, police, intelligence, population, money, information, create, speech, responsible, public, agreement, reason, organized, council.

3. The gist expressed by sentiments:
  - negative sentiments focus on topics of war, conflict, threat, and terrorism to create an atmosphere of danger and instability;
  - positive sentiments are associated with state institutions, governance, vaccination, and security.
4. Comparative frequency: while negative sentiments dominate in frequency, especially the words 'war' and 'attack', positive sentiments also have a significant presence, including 'president' (as effective governance) and 'vaccine' (which may reflect a focus on the topic of healthcare).

This analysis shows that pro-Russian disinformation in the Czech information space employs a complex strategy, combining strong negative sentiments (related to war and threats) with positive sentiments (focused on state institutions and topical social themes). This finding further strengthens the main thesis of the study: the judicious use of contrasting sentiments creates a persuasive narrative designed to manipulate public opinion, alternating fear-induced urgency with assurances that build trust. This may be aimed at creating a contrasting narrative where negative events oppose government activities, perhaps to raise doubts about the effectiveness of state governance in crises.

The analysis of emotions is a complement to the analysis of the sentiment lexicon of pro-Russian disinformation (Table 4).

**Table 4:**  
**Emotions in disinformation messages**

Words	Sentiments	Emotions	n
war	negative	Fear	102
attack	negative	anger, fear	78
government	negative	Fear	75
president	positive	Trust	57
conflict	negative	anger, fear, sadness	27
ministry	positive	joy, trust	22
fight	negative	anger, fear	21
terrorist	negative	anger, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise	21
threat	negative	anger, fear	21
united	positive	Trust	20
intelligence	positive	fear, joy, trust	19
police	positive	fear, trust	19
invasion	negative	Anger	18
money	positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	18
revolution	negative	anger, anticipation, fear, sadness, surprise	18
revolution	positive	anger, anticipation, fear, sadness, surprise	18
create	positive	Joy	15
force	negative	anger, fear	14
public	positive	Anticipation	14
responsible	positive	Trust	14

Source: The Authors.

The most common emotions include ‘fear’ (11 out of 20 words), ‘anger’ (associated with 10 words), ‘trust’ (7 words). Less common but significant emotions involve ‘joy’ (4), ‘sadness’ (4), ‘anticipation’ (4), ‘surprise’ (4); ‘disgust’ is even less common (1). Regarding combinations of emotions, the union of ‘fear’ and ‘anger’ is common; some words (e.g., ‘terrorist’ and ‘revolution’) evoke a complex set of emotions. The ratio of positive and negative sentiments is balanced: 10 words have negative intensity, and 10 words have positive intensity.

Clustering the text network of the RF’s disinformation against the Czech Republic by ‘sentiment’ indicates certain strategic manipulations aimed at undermining the internal political order and creating an atmosphere of fear and instability (Tables 5, 6, Fig. 6).

Table 5:  
**Clustering (modularity class) of sentiment words in a network built by the 'Sensitive' criterion**

Modularity classes / words	Sentiments	Emotions	Group variables	tf_idf	n
<b>Modularity class - 1 (Politics and public administration)</b>					
president	positive	Trust	positive	0,495	57
vaccine	positive		positive	0,495	33
ministry	positive	joy, trust	positive	0,495	22
trend	positive		positive	0,495	21
supported	positive		positive	0,495	20
united	positive	Trust	positive	0,495	20
intelligence	positive	fear, joy, trust	positive	0,495	19
police	positive	fear, trust	positive	0,495	19
information	positive		positive	0,495	18
money	positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	positive	0,495	18
<b>Modularity class - 2 (Conflicts and International Relations)</b>					
war	negative	Fear	negative	0,823	102
republic	negative		negative	0,823	85
attack	negative	anger, fear	negative	0,823	78
government	negative	Fear	negative	0,823	75
foreign	negative		negative	0,823	31
conflict	negative	anger, fear, sadness	negative	0,823	27
crisis	negative		negative	0,823	22
fight	negative	anger, fear	negative	0,823	21
propaganda	negative		negative	0,823	21
terrorist	negative	anger, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise	negative	0,823	21

Source: The Authors

**Table 6:**  
**Words with high centrality in sentiments**

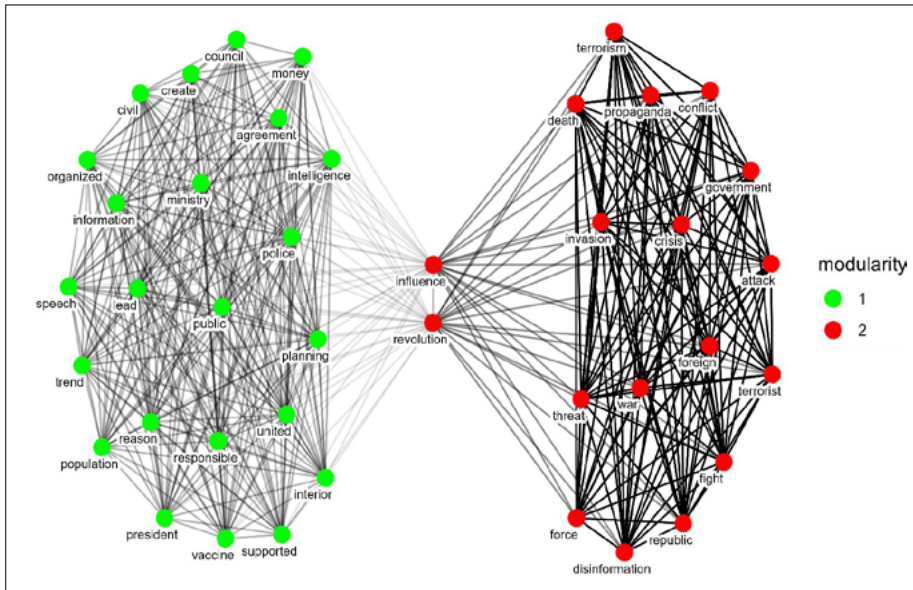
Words	Sentiments	Emotions	Betweenness centrality	Closeness centrality
influence	negative, positive		60,000	0,164
revolution	negative, positive	anger, anticipation, fear, sadness, surprise	60,000	0,164
attack	Negative	anger, fear	0,063	0,092
conflict	Negative	anger, fear, sadness	0,063	0,092
crisis	Negative		0,063	0,092
death	Negative	anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise	0,063	0,092
disinformation	Negative	anger, fear	0,063	0,092
fight	Negative	anger, fear	0,063	0,092
force	Negative	anger, fear	0,063	0,092
foreign	Negative		0,063	0,092
government	Negative	fear	0,063	0,092
invasion	Negative	anger	0,063	0,092
propaganda	Negative		0,063	0,092
republic	Negative		0,063	0,092
terrorism	Negative	anger, disgust, fear, sadness	0,063	0,092
terrorist	Negative	anger, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise	0,063	0,092
threat	Negative	anger, fear	0,063	0,092
war	Negative	fear	0,063	0,092

Source: The Authors

We constructed several sentiment networks of disinformation based on two criteria:

1) sentiments and 2) emotions. The clustering highlights how pro-Russian disinformation systematically integrates fear, anger, and trust into narratives. This supports the research thesis that emotional manipulations are not random but strategically designed to amplify specific social issues and maintain influence on public opinion in the Czech Republic. Figure 6 is a version of the sentiment-based network. The clustering results identify two main topics: internal political and administrative issues (cluster 1) and external conflicts and international relations (cluster 2). Such central words as 'influence' and 'revolution' have high values of betweenness and closeness centrality, indicating their important role in connecting these two clusters. The word 'influence' emphasizes the narrative of external influence on Czech domestic politics while 'revolution' can be used to link domestic political changes to external conflicts, creating an image of instability.

Figure 6:  
Clustering of topics in disinformation messages



Source: The Authors.

We believe that the juxtaposition of internal political processes with external threats is a typical strategy to increase the sense of danger and uncertainty in society. The word ‘revolution’ can reinforce the idea of possible political changes that can lead to internal instability which, in turn, is strengthened by external threats, such as war or terrorism, presented in the second cluster. A significant number of words in the second cluster are related to security and threats (e.g., ‘war’, ‘attack’, ‘conflict’, ‘terrorist’), indicating an attempt to create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. This may be part of a larger strategy to destabilize the political situation in Czechia by emphasizing external threats that require the government’s immediate response. The presence of such words as ‘information’ and ‘propaganda’ in different clusters indicates the importance of the information component in these narratives. This emphasizes the role of propaganda in shaping public opinion and influencing political processes in the country. The presence of the word ‘money’ in the first cluster may indicate attempts to link political processes with economic interests which creates additional opportunities for manipulation.

The data analysis indicates that the RF uses a complex information strategy to link internal political processes with external threats, thereby creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. These findings support the key argument of the study, i.e., Russian disinformation campaigns exploit emotional triggers to create

an overarching sense of insecurity and instability. By strategically combining emotions of fear, anger, and trust, these campaigns increase their manipulative effectiveness and adaptability to the Czech socio-political context. The concepts of 'influence' and 'revolution' play a key role in this strategy to manipulate public opinion and create the conditions for political destabilization.

The data analysis by 'emotion' criterion (Tables 7 and 8, Fig. 7, 8) shows a complex information strategy aimed at manipulating public opinion through the use of emotional triggers.

Table 7:

**Clustering (modularity class) of sentiment words in a network built by the 'Emotion' criterion**

Words	Sentiments	Emotions	Group variables	tf_idf	n
<b>Modularity class - 1 (National Policy and Governance Alliances)</b>					
interior	positive	disgust, trust	disgust	1,176	11
president	positive	trust	trust	0,793	57
policy		trust	trust	0,793	23
secret		trust	trust	0,793	21
united	positive	trust	trust	0,793	20
law		trust	trust	0,793	18
system		trust	trust	0,793	18
responsible	positive	trust	trust	0,793	14
agreement	positive	trust	trust	0,793	13
alliance		trust	trust	0,793	13
<b>Modularity class - 2 (Political Instability and Military Response)</b>					
trump		surprise	surprise	1,946	22
refugee		sadness	sadness	1,946	12
invasion	negative	anger	anger	1,173	18
coup		anger, surprise	surprise	0,973	23
war	negative	fear	fear	0,847	102
government	negative	fear	fear	0,847	75
military		fear	fear	0,847	50
change		fear	fear	0,847	12
prevent		fear	fear	0,847	12
conflict	negative	anger, fear, sadness	sadness	0,649	27

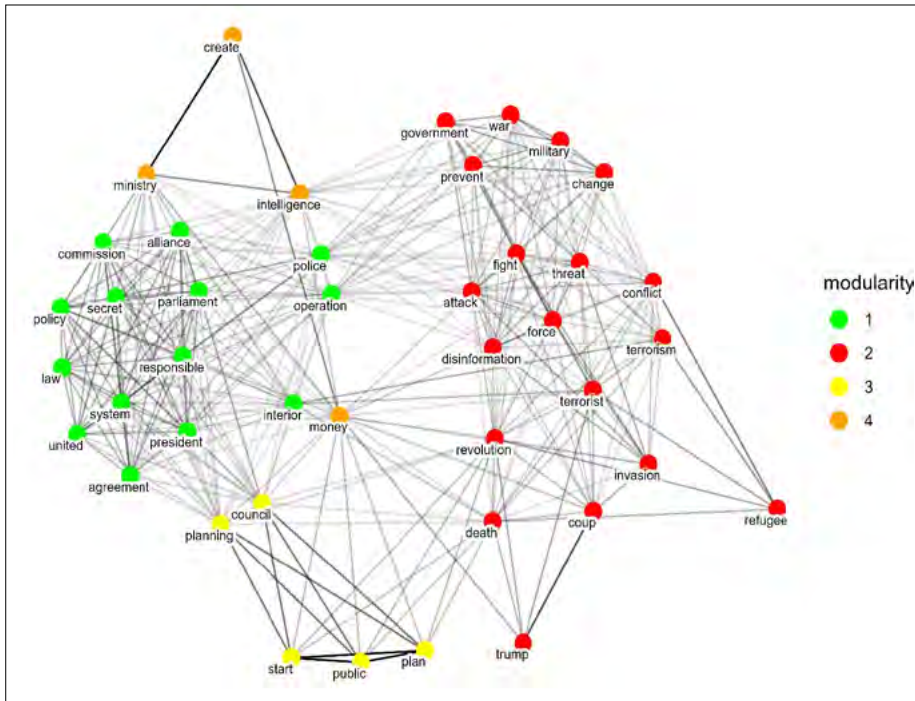
Words	Sentiments	Emotions	Group variables	tf_idf	n
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Modularity class - 3 (Public Planning and Council Initiatives)					
plan		anticipation	anticipation	1,658	26
start		anticipation	anticipation	1,658	17
public	positive	anticipation	anticipation	1,658	14
council	positive	anticipation, trust	anticipation	0,829	12
planning	positive	anticipation, trust	anticipation	0,829	11
council	positive	anticipation, trust	trust	0,397	12
planning	positive	anticipation, trust	trust	0,397	11

Modularity class - 4 (Financial Intelligence and Government Initiatives)					
create	positive	joy	Joy	2,351	15
ministry	positive	joy, trust	Joy	1,176	22
intelligence	positive	fear, joy, trust	Joy	0,784	19
money	positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	Joy	0,470	18
ministry	positive	joy, trust	trust	0,397	22
money	positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	surprise	0,389	18
money	positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	anticipation	0,332	18
intelligence	positive	fear, joy, trust	fear	0,282	19
intelligence	positive	fear, joy, trust	trust	0,264	19
money	positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	anger	0,235	18

Source: The Authors.

Figure 7:  
**Clustering (modularity class) of sentiment words in a network built by the 'Emotion' criterion**



Source: The Authors.

In this case, four main clusters emerge, each focusing on a different aspect of political and social life: 1) domestic politics and government alliances, 2) political instability and military response, 3) public initiatives, and 4) financial intelligence and government initiatives. In each cluster, emotions play a key role in shaping narratives that can evoke feelings of fear, anxiety, or hope.

**Table 8:**  
**Words with high centrality in emotions**

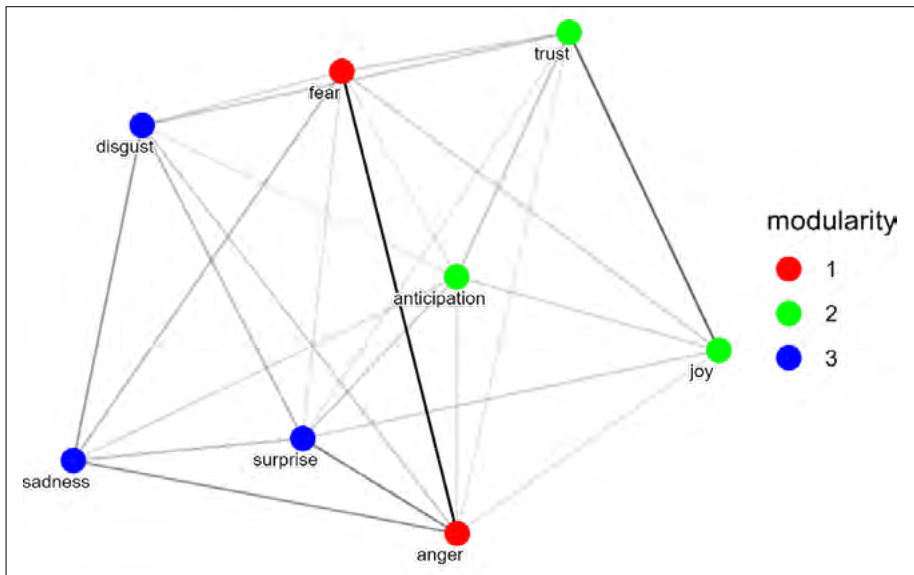
Words	Sentiments	Emotions	Betweenness centrality	Closeness centrality
death	Negative	anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise	68,0	0,065
money	Positive	anger, anticipation, joy, surprise, trust	44,5	0,055
coup	-	anger, surprise	28,0	0,055
terrorism	Negative	anger, disgust, fear, sadness	15,0	0,047
plan	-	anticipation	8,7	0,058
public	Positive	anticipation	8,7	0,058
start	-	anticipation	8,7	0,058
operation	-	fear, trust	3,3	0,469
police	Positive	fear, trust	3,3	0,469
attack	Negative	anger, fear	0,0	0,360
disinformation	Negative	anger, fear	0,0	0,360
fight	Negative	anger, fear	0,0	0,360
force	Negative	anger, fear	0,0	0,360
threat	Negative	anger, fear	0,0	0,360
invasion	Negative	anger	0,0	0,291
change	-	fear	0,0	0,279
government	Negative	fear	0,0	0,279
military	-	fear	0,0	0,279
prevent	-	fear	0,0	0,279
war	Negative	fear	0,0	0,279
revolution	negative, positive	anger, anticipation, fear, sadness, surprise	0,0	0,055
terrorist	Negative	anger, disgust, fear, sadness, surprise	0,0	0,051
trump	-	surprise	0,0	0,046
interior	Positive	disgust, trust	0,0	0,046
refugee	-	sadness	0,0	0,041
intelligence	Positive	fear, joy, trust	0,0	0,040
ministry	Positive	joy, trust	0,0	0,036
conflict	Negative	anger, fear, sadness	0,0	0,035
council	Positive	anticipation, trust	0,0	0,028
planning	Positive	anticipation, trust	0,0	0,028
create	Positive	joy	0,0	0,028

Source: The Authors.

There is a clear connection between domestic political processes, military operations, and financial intelligence, reinforcing narratives about the importance of national security and stability. These topics can be used to legitimize government actions or to justify harsh measures that affect civil liberties. This creates the basis for strategies that use emotional influence to manipulate public consciousness.

Figure 8 is a version of a network built based on emotions.

**Figure 8:**  
**Main emotions in disinformation and their relations**



Source: The Authors.

This network visualizes how emotions can influence each other, namely:

1) central emotions:

- 'fear' and 'anger' are the most connected emotions in the network. This suggests that fear is often associated with or can cause anger, and vice versa;
- 'anticipation', although located closer to the middle, has relatively weaker connections with other emotions which may indicate its indirect role in influencing other feelings;

2) negative emotions:

- 'sadness', 'disgust', 'anger', 'fear' have strong interconnections emphasizing the tendency of their mutual reinforcement;
- 'anger' is associated with 'fear' and 'disgust' which may stem from the nature of these emotions since negative feelings often cause a strong emotional reaction;

- 3) positive emotions:
  - ‘trust’ and ‘joy’ are closely related; both emotions can occur together. When people feel joy, they often trust their surroundings or situation more;
  - at the same time, these positive emotions have fewer connections with negative emotions. This may indicate that they function in the opposite context;
- 4) contrast of positive and negative emotions: ‘fear’, ‘sadness’ and ‘disgust’ are sharply contrasted with ‘trust’ and ‘joy’. There are fewer connections between them which means these groups have different emotional contexts;
- 5) ambiguous emotions: ‘surprise’ and ‘anticipation’ are located between positive and negative emotions which may indicate their ambivalent nature. Depending on the context, these emotions can be associated with both positive and negative experiences and enhance them. They are ‘bridges’ between positive and negative emotions.

Fig. 8 demonstrates that negative emotions have a greater number of interconnections and often reinforce each other. The interconnected positive emotions have fewer connections with negative feelings which indicates their different nature and impact.

## 6. Concluding remarks

A systematic analysis of 758 disinformation messages from the EUvsDisinfo database (2016–2023) revealed a structured emotional architecture of pro-Russian disinformation within the Czech information space. The application of sentiment analysis using the NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon, combined with textual network analytics, enabled the identification of the following.

Pro-Russian disinformation employs a strategy of emotional contrast, implemented through three mechanisms: (1) destabilization through fear and anger, i.e., creating an atmosphere of threat by emphasizing external conflicts and internal instability; (2) legitimization through trust, i.e., embedding elements of trust associated with state institutions, which gives the message the appearance of objectivity; (3) cognitive connection, i.e., using words with high network centrality (‘influence’, ‘revolution’) to unite different thematic clusters into an overarching narrative of instability.

There is a general trend towards an increase in the scatter of sentiment assessments over time. The evolution of the emotional structure is shown by three distinct phases: a period of highest intensity with the dominance of negative sentiments (2016–2017), a transitional period with diversification of emotional strategies (2018–2019), and a shift towards emotional balance with a peak of positive sentiments in 2022 (2020–2023). The peak of positive sentiment in

2022 – the year of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine – demonstrates the ‘sophistication’ of manipulative techniques: instead of escalating negativity, disinformation campaigns adapt to the information environment, creating the impression of objectivity. This temporal transformation confirms that pro-Russian disinformation dynamically adapts to the geopolitical context.

Emotional architecture of disinformation: the dominance of fear (1,035 cases), trust (939), and anger (727) confirms their role as strategic tools of manipulation. A critical insight is the ratio of fear to trust (1.10:1), which indicates a balanced strategy: for every 10 cases of fear induction, there are 9 cases of trust-building. This dual strategy aligns with the concept of ‘hybrid warfare’ (Hoffman, 2007), where information operations combine multiple mechanisms of influence.

The identification of four thematic clusters reveals a comprehensive approach: (1) domestic politics and government alliances – a balanced combination of trust and fear; (2) political instability and military response – dominance of fear and anger with high-frequency words ‘war’, ‘attack’, ‘conflict’; (3) civic initiatives – increasing trust and positive emotions; (4) financial intelligence and government initiatives – integrating economic narratives with security themes.

The central role of the words ‘influence’ and ‘revolution’ with high betweenness and closeness centrality indicators shows their function as ‘bridges’ between the clusters. The use of the word ‘revolution’ can be interpreted as an attempt to create an image of political instability – a tactic common in disinformation campaigns against Central and Eastern European countries (Krastev, 2018).

The results of the study confirm and extend theoretical concepts of manipulative influence. In particular, the theory of affective intelligence (Marcus et al., 2019) receives empirical confirmation: fear stimulates attention to information, and trust determines the willingness of the audience to perceive it as true. The data show that these emotional dynamics are systematically embedded in disinformation narratives to maximize their impact on political sentiment. Dual-process theories (Barrouillet, 2011) are supported by the revealed strategy of emotional contrast: negative emotions (fear, anger) provoke an impulsive reaction, while positive emotions (hope, trust) engage in reflective thinking. The consistent combination makes messages more memorable and persuasive. Framing theory (Goffman, 1974) demonstrates relevance through cluster analysis: pro-Russian disinformation actively uses fear and trust to create narratives that arouse distrust of Western-oriented institutions, positioning Russia as a stabilizing force. Political propaganda theory (Lasswell, 1927) has received empirical confirmation through the identified narratives aimed at undermining the domestic political order. The connection between internal processes and external threats demonstrates classic mechanisms of manipulation through the creation of an ‘image of the enemy’ (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2015). The revealed dominance of fear as the most prevalent emotion confirms Barker et al.’s (2019) findings on the critical role of emotions

in political decision-making. However, our study goes further, demonstrating specific mechanisms of combining fear with trust to enhance persuasion in the post-communist context of the Czech Republic.

Unlike most previous works that focused on static analysis, our study reveals temporal changes in emotional structure that correlate with geopolitical events. The evolution from openly negative narratives to ‘sophisticated’ manipulative approaches demonstrates the adaptability of disinformation strategies to changes in the information environment. The research fills an important gap in the study of regional features of the spread of disinformation in post-communist states. The identified mechanisms take into account the specific Czech socio-political context, in particular historical experience, geopolitical location, and current relations with Russia.

## Availability of data and materials

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available in the Open Science Framework (OSF) repository. The repository includes the raw data and processed datasets used for the analysis. All materials are publicly accessible at: [https://osf.io/h4q7z/overview?view\\_only=bdcacb62ca334510b9cd18ea-85618bef](https://osf.io/h4q7z/overview?view_only=bdcacb62ca334510b9cd18ea-85618bef)

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## Endnotes:

- 1 In this article, 'pro-Russian' referrers to Russia under Putin's rule and to the disinformation campaign against the West.
- 2 List of sites in descending order of frequency: cz.sputniknews.com; aeronet.cz; protiproud.cz; ac24.cz; New World Order Opposition; novarepublika.cz; svetkolemnas.info; svobodnenoviny.eu; parlamentnilisty.cz; czechfreepress.cz; zvedavec.org; ceskoaktualne.cz; prvnizpravy.parlamentnilisty.cz; eurasia24.cz.

# Shinn, D. H., & Eisenman, J.

## China's Relations with Africa: A New Era of Strategic Engagement

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### 1. Introduction

The monograph *China's Relations with Africa: A New Era of Strategic Engagement* represents one of the most comprehensive contemporary syntheses of China-Africa relations, with a particular focus on their political, security, and strategic dimensions. The authors proceed from the premise that over the past decade Africa has shifted from a peripheral region of Chinese foreign policy to an integral component of China's geostrategy, especially in the context of the Xi Jinping era and the growing emphasis on relations with the so-called Global South (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 1, pp. 1-3).

Building on their long-term research agenda, the authors further develop their analytical approach to China-Africa relations by systematically integrating diplomatic, security, party-to-party,

and institutional forms of engagement into a coherent framework of 'China-Africa strategic partnership'. They argue that China's presence in Africa is structured as a multi-level network of bilateral, regional, and global linkages aimed at advancing China's strategic interests, most notably regime stability, economic security, and the enhancement of China's international standing, while simultaneously reinforcing a Sinocentric conception of international order (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 1, pp. 8-12).

In terms of its thematic focus, the monograph is highly relevant to research on contemporary great-power competition in Sub-Saharan Africa, as it provides a detailed account of China's security cooperation, military presence, party-to-party diplomacy, and multi-lateral activities across the continent (see chs. 6-9). At the same time, the

book conceptualises China's engagement primarily within a bilateral China-Africa framework, which makes it a particularly useful point of departure for further research concerned with the broader geopolitical configuration and with triangular diplomacy among China, the United States, and France in Sub-Saharan Africa. Within the existing literature on China's presence in Africa, the publication ranks among the most comprehensive studies addressing the political and security dimensions of these relations, thereby complementing predominantly economically oriented analyses and advancing the debate on China's role in Africa into an explicitly geopolitical register.

## 2. Summary of the Book's Main Arguments

The central argument of the monograph is that under Xi Jinping's leadership Africa has evolved from a relatively marginal arena of Chinese foreign policy into a fully-fledged and structural component of China's geostrategy. The authors argue that this transformation reflects a broader shift in Chinese strategic thinking, in which relations with the developing world, and Africa in particular, are conceived as a key instrument for advancing China's core strategic interests. These interests include regime stability, sustained economic growth, and the strengthening of China's international position within an environment perceived as characterised by United States hegemonism (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 1, pp. 1-6).

According to the authors, China's engagement in Africa is constructed as a multi-level and internally interconnected network of relationships encompassing bilateral state diplomacy, cooperation within global institutions, interaction with regional and sub-regional organisations, and intensive party-to-party ties. Taken together, these dimensions constitute a Sino-centric model of influence embedded in the concept of the *China-Africa Community of Shared Future* and grounded in a normative vision of a hierarchically structured yet declaratively 'win-win' international order (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 1, pp. 8-14; ch. 3).

From a methodological perspective, the book relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The authors draw on extensive data sets, most notably their original database of party-to-party exchanges between the Chinese Communist Party and African political parties from 2002 to 2022, as well as on field research, interviews with political and security elites, and a systematic analysis of official documents and statements (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 4, pp. 85-114; ch. 1, pp. 15-18).

Empirically, the monograph covers a wide range of areas of Chinese engagement in Africa, including political and multilateral diplomacy, security cooperation, military training, United Nations peacekeeping operations, maritime security, and the protection of Chinese overseas interests. Attention is also paid to technological and information security, with the authors examining the expanding role of Chinese firms in

telecommunications, surveillance technologies, and cyber capabilities across the continent (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, chs. 6–10).

### 3. Critical Analysis

The principal strength of the monograph lies in its exceptional empirical depth and analytical rigour. The authors convincingly demonstrate that China's policy toward Africa does not consist of isolated or opportunistic initiatives but rather constitutes a long-term and strategically coherent approach that integrates security, economic, and normative dimensions of foreign policy. This strategic orientation is particularly evident in the chapters devoted to the 'holistic concept of security' and to the protection of China's overseas interests, in which the African continent is interpreted as a space crucial to sustaining economic growth, regime stability, and China's international standing (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, chs. 6–7, pp. 155–208).

From an analytical perspective, the book's emphasis on party-to-party relations between the Chinese Communist Party and African political parties represents a particularly valuable contribution. Drawing on a unique database of exchanges and official visits, the authors show that party diplomacy constitutes an autonomous and systematically employed instrument of Chinese influence that complements conventional state-to-state diplomacy and fosters long-term ties with political elites in target countries (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 4, pp. 85–114).

This insight is methodologically significant, as it enables the operationalisation of 'political-diplomatic engagement' as a distinct condition within a configurational fsQCA framework, analytically separable from purely economic or military variables. Although the authors occasionally acknowledge the role of African elites and institutions, African agency remains largely subordinated to the perspective of China's strategic interests within the book's analytical framework and is treated more as a reactive variable than as an autonomous force shaping the dynamics of China–Africa relations.

The security dimension of China's presence in Africa is likewise addressed in a comprehensive manner. The authors provide a detailed analysis of the combination of military cooperation, participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, maritime activities, and the development of capabilities aimed at protecting Chinese citizens and investments abroad. These activities are interpreted as integral components of a broader strategy of 'overseas interests protection' (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, chs. 7–9, pp. 179–282).

From the perspective of fsQCA, this approach allows for the identification and coding of different types of security engagement, ranging from 'soft' security instruments (such as peacekeeping and training) to more 'hard' forms of military presence, and for tracing their interaction with economic and diplomatic tools of influence.

The main analytical limitation of the monograph lies in the absence of an explicit comparative framework vis-à-vis

other key actors operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. While the authors repeatedly refer to geopolitical rivalry with the United States and to China's efforts to counter U.S. hegemony through cooperation with the Global South (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 1, pp. 5-7; ch. 2), other power centres remain analytically marginalised. In particular, France, as a long-standing security, military, and institutional actor in a number of Sub-Saharan African states, is not treated as a distinct analytical unit, which limits the book's capacity to capture the genuinely multipolar dynamics of the region.

Moreover, the publication does not employ configurational methods that would allow for a systematic comparison of combinations of influence instruments across states and over time. Although the authors offer a detailed account of individual dimensions of China's engagement, they do not examine under what conditions and in which combinations these dimensions produce different outcomes in terms of political influence or China's strategic position in specific African states. Consequently, the book does not provide a systematic explanation of the configurations under which particular forms of engagement lead to the dominance of a single actor, to balanced competition, or to the marginalisation of other power centres in concrete state contexts. This methodological space, namely, the analysis of configurations of economic, security, and diplomatic engagement within a triangulatory framework involving China, the United States, and France, thus remains open for further research, including through configurational approaches such as fsQCA.

Building directly on the analytical strengths and limitations identified in the preceding section, the monograph by Shinn and Eisenman constitutes an important empirical and conceptual reference point for further research on strategic triangulatory diplomacy and great-power competition in Sub-Saharan Africa. While the book provides a highly detailed and systematic account of China's political, security, and institutional engagement in Africa, its predominantly bilateral analytical framework simultaneously delineates the boundaries of existing scholarship and highlights the need for additional conceptual and methodological development.

In particular, the book's in-depth treatment of diplomatic relations, party-to-party ties, security strategy, and the protection of overseas interests offers a solid empirical basis for identifying core dimensions of Chinese engagement that can be analytically operationalised. As discussed above, these dimensions, examined separately throughout the monograph, lend themselves to being translated into conditions of economic, security, and diplomatic engagement within a configurational research design (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, chs. 2, 4, 6-8). The analytical value of the book thus lies not only in its substantive findings, but also in its capacity to inform a more systematic and comparative approach to external engagement in the region.

At the same time, the absence of an explicit triangulatory perspective and the lack of a configurational approach, identified as key limitations in the critical analysis above, create a clear research space for future inquiry. Although the

authors repeatedly situate China's engagement within the context of global power competition and acknowledge rivalry with the United States (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, chs. 1-2), other major actors, most notably France, remain analytically marginal, and the interactive effects of multiple external powers are not systematically examined.

Addressing these limitations would allow future research to move beyond a bilateral perspective and to analyse how different combinations of economic, security, and diplomatic engagement by multiple external actors shape power dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this sense, the monograph by Shinn and Eisenman serves both as a robust empirical foundation for the study of China's role in Africa and as a clear indication of the analytical directions in which the existing literature can be further developed through triangulatory and configurational approaches.

#### 4. Conclusion

*China's Relations with Africa: A New Era of Strategic Engagement* constitutes a major reference point for contemporary scholarship on China-Africa relations and for broader debates on the geopolitics of the Global South. On the basis of extensive empirical material, the authors convincingly demonstrate that China's engagement in Africa is structurally embedded in a long-term geostrategic approach that integrates diplomatic, security, party-political, and institu-

tional instruments of power (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 1; chs. 6-9, pp. 1-14; 155-282).

The publication can be strongly recommended to scholars of international relations, African studies, and security policy, as it offers a systematic and analytically grounded account of the evolving role of Africa in Chinese strategic thinking. Its particular strength lies in the detailed treatment of areas that are often marginalised in the existing literature, notably party-to-party relations, security diplomacy, and the protection of China's overseas interests (Shinn & Eisenman, 2023, ch. 4; chs. 7-8, pp. 85-114; 179-254).

Despite certain analytical limitations, most notably the predominance of a bilateral analytical framework, the monograph represents an exceptionally valuable contribution that significantly advances scholarly debate on China's role in Africa while clearly delineating the boundaries of existing knowledge. The book is primarily intended for an academic audience in international relations, security studies, and African studies, but it also constitutes a valuable resource for the analytical and strategic community concerned with Global South politics.

It is precisely these limitations, particularly the absence of a systematic triangulatory perspective and configurational analysis, that make the book a solid point of departure for further comparative and methodologically innovative research on great-power competition in Sub-Saharan Africa.

# Vassilis Petsinis

## Echoes of the War in Ukraine: Political Ramifications in the Baltics and the Balkans

Cham, Switzerland: Vassilis Petsinis, Palgrave Macmillan. 2025, 177 pages.

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Vassilis Petsinis' newest monograph, published by Palgrave Macmillan in late 2025, is a most welcome addition to the literature on the Balkans and the Baltics, addressing political developments and ramifications in both regions following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Petsinis is a well-established author in the field of area studies, focusing predominantly on ethno-nationalist politics, and has previously published another monograph with Palgrave on cross-regional ethnopolitics in Central and Eastern Europe, comparing the Western Balkans with the Baltic region. Petsinis' latest volume is a continuation of his exploration of this topic, though

in a somewhat different fashion. Hence, his newest book on the political implications of the Russian invasion is partly based on his cross-regional ethnopolitics research, with the author establishing a link to his previous work by focusing on the nexus of ethnonationalist agendas and largely right-wing politics in a changed geopolitical setting.

The volume reads very well, with the text structured into six sections (chapters) followed by an index. Each section comprises several sub-sections (sub-chapters), with the first chapter dedicated to introductory remarks, theoretical and methodological considerations (whereby the author discusses

the rationale behind his case selection), and chapter outlines (where each of the sections to follow is shortly introduced). As Petsinis himself claimed, his work:

aims at relaxing the barriers that exist between researchers and policymaking experts working on different parts of Central and Eastern Europe (in this case, the Baltic States and Southeastern Europe). The ramifications of the war in Ukraine may qualitatively differ from one country to the other and have been highly subject to the domestic specificities inside diverse political contexts. (p. 5)

Indeed, his volume lives up to this claim, filling an important research gap by examining the domestic political arenas of four different states, comparing political actors (parties) and contexts to provide an up-to-date picture of the exact domestic impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the very beginning of his piece, Petsinis outlines the specificities of the regions he tends to, providing a sound methodological foundation for his analysis. Hence, he focuses on the societies with ‘societal cleavages along ethnic lines’ (see page 7), such as Latvia and Estonia, and, on the other hand, those, such as Serbia and Croatia, with nationalist agendas and ‘various brands of Euroscepticism’ (see page 8). Therefore, his focus is on various ethno-nationalist agendas that have conditioned domestic actors’ responses to the Russia-Ukraine war.

The second chapter of the volume presents the author’s overview of the existing literature, listing the scholarship he engages with. This part of the

volume, very much like his previous work with Palgrave, is a well-written and meticulously researched one, as the author explores different theoretical perspectives, enabling him to support his empirical analysis. Therefore, he draws on the literature on nativism, ethnonationalism, and ethnopolitics as reference points for his analytical stance (see pages 19–21). More than that, he engages with the scholarship on Occidentalism and Euroscepticism, addressing various forms of political opposition to EU membership and linking them, in a broader sense, to right-wing political actors and their ideology (see pages 19–21). Most importantly, the author delves into a conceptual dissection of the terms he uses, showing how multifaceted they are. Hence, he speaks of (see page 34) ‘the broader right, thus paying attention to political origins, evolutionary trajectories, and patterns of active engagement alongside ideology. The boundaries inside this scheme are not fixed, but ‘porous’ and malleable’. It is in this way that Petsinis can correctly identify specific characteristics and changing patterns in the behavior of the political actors in question (i.e. right-wing parties) when considering the local contexts they operate in.

In chapter three, the author discusses Latvia and Estonia, both formerly republics of the Soviet Union and both facing the reality that the Russian state is militarily engaged in Ukraine, which poses a (potential) threat to the Baltic republics, which have been in the EU since 2004. Petsinis focuses on the National Alliance (NA), a Latvian party, and the Estonian Conservative People’s Party (EKRE), a national conservative

party. While NA has become much less anti-systemic over the years, having additionally participated in several government coalitions (which has made it a somewhat typical party of the national conservative right), EKRE has refused to compromise, and, despite a comparatively short spell in a government coalition a few years back, it remained a staunchly anti-establishment party and thus the prime example of a political actor that belongs to the radical right. While comparing these parties to their European counterparts, Petsinis manages to show a peculiarity of sorts, claiming that (see page 71) ‘the internal boundaries within the European “broader right” are, in practice, rather porous and malleable’. Moreover, he transcends the domestic context to underscore the parties’:

vivid preference for ‘global unipolarity’. In other words, the two parties adopted pro-Atlantic stances that revolved around the preponderant status of the US and NATO in the international system as a bulwark against any security threats emanating from Russia. This differentiated EKRE and NA from other parties of the European ‘broader right’ (e.g. FIDESZ, RN, and AfD) and their occasional quests for ‘alternative’ partners in global politics (e.g. Russia) throughout the last decade. Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NA appears to insist on NATO’s preponderance as an external provider of regional security for the Baltic States. Meanwhile, EKRE’s adoption of a ‘pro-peace’ platform on the war in Ukraine, as largely

dictated by its anti-establishment and sovereigntist prerogatives, hints, if just implicitly, at a potential change of course regarding the party’s ‘Atlantic-based’ understanding of regional security. (p. 72)

It is in chapter four that the author addresses the case of Croatia, showing how the Yugoslav past and the break-up of Yugoslavia continue to influence and shape the present (right-wing) political spectrum. In that respect, Petsinis analyzes the national conservative party, the Homeland Movement (*Domovinski Pokret*, DP), formed in early 2020 and remaining one of the largest Croatian parties, and its (contentious) relationship to the rest of the right-wing political spectrum in the country. He manages to show how:

several political actors from the Croatian ‘broader right’ sought to draw linkages between the war in Ukraine and the *Domovinski Rat* of the 1990s. Among the older parties of the radical and extreme right, HSP, HČSP, and A-HSP converged along their unconditional support for Ukraine, whereas HSP 1861 prioritized its geopolitical opposition to NATO. (p. 107)

More than that, he speaks of DP having (see page 107) somewhat ‘halted its initial “pro-Ukraine enthusiasm”—including any discursive parallels with the legacies of the “Homeland War”—and firmly shifted towards a sovereigntist direction’. While doing so, he argues that DP ideologically draws on the Yugoslav past, centering on the dissolution of

Yugoslavia and the ‘Homeland War’ of the 1990s. Additionally, he underscores the politics of identity and memory as the main ideological pillars of this right-wing party, which maintains a largely anti-systemic and nationalist stance. This makes the author mention the peculiarity of the Croatian right-wing politics, whose main trait is a specific:

ethno-nationalist matrix with an emphasis on national survival (i.e. the increase of ethnically Croatian birth-rates and the revitalization of the countryside as the symbolic *heimat* of national culture and traditions). As it has been the case with several parties of the ‘broader right’ across Europe, DP’s soft (revisionist and reformist) Eurosceptic platform comprises both a political (sovereignism and opposition to Eurofederalism) and a socio-cultural (an adamant conviction that Europe must return to its ‘Christian cultural foundations’) component. (pp. 105–106)

Chapter five is where the author continues to deal with the Yugoslav context, focusing on the biggest and most powerful political party in Serbia, Srpska Napredna Stranka (Serbian Progressive Party, SNS), as well as (usually much smaller) political actors of the broader right and their (at times highly antagonistic) relationship to the ruling party. When dealing with the actors of the national conservative, radical right, and/or extreme right over the response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the author argues that:

the mass demonstrations in support of Russia started losing their momentum since the second half of 2023. Moreover, there are no indications that, in the long run, the forces of the radical and extreme right succeeded in maintaining, or augmenting, their public appeal vis-à-vis the SNS-led government either. (p. 148)

Petsinis accurately underlines:

that the war in Ukraine provided the political forces of Serbia’s ‘broader right’ with a temporary ‘common ground’ but not a long-term opportunity structure vis-à-vis the ruling SNS. As it becomes transparent, Russophilia, as a political and public phenomenon in contemporary Serbia, is multifaceted and comprises a political/geopolitical as well as a sociocultural/sociopsychological component. Along these premises, pro-Russian trends in the Serbian politics and society can operate through both a clerical/religious and a secular façade. (p. 151)

In doing so, he claimed that the contemporary Serbian right-wing political spectrum is shaped by Russophilia that is far from a uniform one, for pro-Russian political agendas of, among others, Srpska Radikalna Stranka (Serbian Radical Party, SRS), *Obraz* (Honour), *Srpska Akcija* (Serbian Action), *Naši* (Ours), and *Nacionalno-Demokratska Alternativa* (National-Democratic Alternative), are situation-dependent and fluctuating, being, as the author argued on page 152, ‘highly subject to catalysts such as ideology, the patterns

of engagement among diverse political actors, and the (unpredictable) impact of new groundbreaking developments in domestic politics’.

In chapter six, Petsinis concludes his case by listing the most important findings of his research and highlighting the changes to identity politics that have occurred globally in the post-Ukraine invasion context. He also points to the increased relevance of the pragmatic stance, which often leads the parties of the ‘broader right’ to enter coalitions that serve their current interests rather than their ideological agenda. This makes the author call for more research on these parties and their transformation in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Israel’s military engagement in the Middle East. In addition, he speaks of the need to conduct more research on other political actors’ responses (for instance, left-wing parties), analyzing their attitudes to the changing international environment, where geopolitical considerations based

on various forms of Euroscepticism, Occidentalism, and conservatism appear to trump everything else.

This volume comes at the right time, discussing a highly topical issue. It is written in a language that allows even those not accustomed to political literature to understand the complexities of the problem at hand; hence, it is open to a much wider audience than one might assume at face value. The volume should be regarded as a timely piece that does more than address domestic political ramifications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the selected regions, exploring the links to the studies of ethnopolitics, populism, conservatism, behavior of (major) political parties, and subtle nuances of the right-wing politics. In that regard, the book occupies an important position at the intersection of several strains of academic scholarship, and both university students and policy-makers may find it equally useful.

*Đorđević Vladimir*

Chris Reiter & Will Wilkes,  
translated by Oliver Lingner

## Totally kaputt? Wie Deutschland sich selbst zerlegt

(Broken Republik – The Inside Story of Germany's  
Descent into crisis)

Munich: Piper Press. 2025, 256 pages.

Arne Semsrott

## Machtübernahme - was passiert, wenn Rechtsextremisten regieren

(The Takeover – What Happens when Right-Wing Extremists  
Govern)

Munich: Droemer Knaur Press. 2024, 208 pages.

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**T**wo recent German-language books debate the current political situation in Germany. Chris Reiter and Will Wilkes' work *Totally Broken – How Germany Destroys Itself* discusses the last few decades of German politics. As the title indicates, they argue – somewhat exaggeratedly – that Germany is totally broken. This is, most obviously, not the case. Still, the book delivers a raft

of arguments to support the idea that Germany is a troubled country. In other words, when read in conjunction with another recent work, the books provide two sides of one key argument.

Many voters of Germany's far-right AfD support the party because they have been led to believe that Germany is kaput or broken. Much of this narrative dates back to Thilo Sarrazin's bestseller

*Deutschland schafft sich ab* (2010), translated as *Germany Abolishes Itself: How We're Putting Our Country in Jeopardy*. The book shifts the structural crisis of capitalism away from class and toward race. Once readers of Sarrazin's book – and later voters of the AfD – come to believe that foreigners are responsible for an imagined or real misery, a scapegoat has been identified.

This is nothing new. In the 1930s, Hitler's slogan was *'Die Juden sind an allem schuld.'* It worked then and, so the AfD hopes, it may still work today. Meanwhile, it is only a short step from Reiter and Wilkes' depiction of a BRD – *Totally Kaputt* to Arne Semsrott's *The Takeover – What Happens When Right-Wing Extremists Govern*. For clarity, however, this is a review of two books – not a merger of them. The review therefore outlines each book separately, as they are written by different authors and deal with somewhat distinct, albeit connected, themes.

In the second book, Arne Semsrott examines – through his work *The Takeover: What Happens When Right-Wing Extremists Govern* – whether Germany's right-wing extremists could take over the government and rule the country. While this may sound like a purely hypothetical question, there are real-world test cases, such as Viktor Orbán's Hungary, Giorgia Meloni's Italy, and Donald Trump's United States. Evidently, by right-wing extremists the author refers primarily to Germany's far-right political party, the AfD.

Reiter and Wilkes begin their book by arguing that Germany's politicians live disconnected lives from the reality experienced by many Germans. For example,

German politicians recently awarded themselves a pay rise of €635.50 (\$740) per month, while welfare recipients on Germany's *Bürgergeld* must survive an entire month on roughly the amount politicians gained in a single pay increase (p. 22). Their central argument, however, is that Germany's middle class is shrinking – a class that also shows one of the lowest rates of home ownership in the Western world (p. 36).

Furthermore, Germany still suffers, even after 35 years, from problems associated with reunification. Helmut Kohl's promise of *blühende Landschaften* (blooming landscapes) never materialized, although it helped him win elections. Instead of flourishing industrial regions, western companies took over eastern businesses, leading to rapid deindustrialization in the former GDR. To make matters worse, unemployment rose to 15% – higher than in any other country of the former Eastern bloc (p. 65). Meanwhile, two million of the former GDR's sixteen million inhabitants moved westward. Together with declining birth rates, this migration has reduced East Germany's population to just below that of Bavaria, which today has about 13.2 million residents.

Germany's infamous 'debt brake' (*Schuldenbremse*) – championed by conservatives – restricted state borrowing to 0.35% of GDP (p. 73). This limited public investment in infrastructure and education for years (p. 74). The authors describe the subsequent period as a 'lost decade' (p. 81). A telling example is Germany's railway system. In 1993, the railways of the GDR and FRG were merged, and in 1994 they were reorga-

nized into the shareholding corporation Deutsche Bahn AG under Chancellor Helmut Kohl (1982–1998). Contrary to the neoliberal assumption that ‘business can do it better than a state bureaucracy’, Germany’s railway today must borrow roughly €5 million per day (p. 87) to survive. According to the authors, the railway reform begun three decades ago has therefore failed (p. 87).

Conditions are no better in the environmental sector. Reiter and Wilkes note that although Germany has a reputation as a pioneer in environmentalism, its transition to green energy has been slow and fraught with obstacles (p. 117). The situation may not improve following the removal of Robert Habeck – a prominent environmentalist and former government minister – and the emergence of a neoliberal-conservative agenda under Chancellor Friedrich Merz. As a car-producing nation, Germany has quite literally missed the train: approximately 60 percent of all electric cars sold worldwide are manufactured in China (p. 150). Perhaps, rather than lobbying the EU to weaken environmental standards for automobiles, Germany’s carmakers should focus more on future technologies.

Beyond these issues, the authors identify a structural thinning of Germany’s middle class, with increasing downward mobility for many and upward concentration for a few. According to their analysis, 3,300 super-rich individuals control roughly a quarter of all financial wealth, while about one fifth of Germans face the risk of poverty (p. 195). Social mobility from the lower strata is extremely limited (p. 195). As

an illustration, a checkout worker at the Kaufland supermarket would have to work roughly one million years to earn the same income as the company’s owner, Dieter Schwarz (p. 201).

Reiter and Wilkes argue that the history of post-war Germany can be divided into two phases. In the first phase, the economic ‘cake’ grew. In the second phase – the present – the dominant dynamic has been downward pressure and redistribution toward the top (p. 217). This trend is particularly visible in East Germany, where several regions are experiencing sharp demographic and economic decline (p. 300).

Overall, Reiter and Wilkes conclude that Ludwig Erhard’s post-war promise of *Wohlstand für Alle* (‘prosperity for all’) has broken down. The authors never explicitly and comprehensively identify the ideological driver behind this breakdown – namely neoliberalism. Erhard’s post-war dream did not collapse by itself; it was the result of political decisions. Since the 1980s, many of these policies were implemented during long conservative governments, particularly under Helmut Kohl (1982–1998) and Angela Merkel (2005–2021).

Despite this minor limitation and its somewhat overblown title, Reiter and Wilkes’ *BRD – Totally Kaputt* makes a valuable contribution to understanding post-war Germany and the social, economic, and political problems the country faces today – many of which are the result of decisions made within Germany itself.

None of these problems would be solved by an AfD takeover of government, as Arne Semsrott argues persua-

sively in *The Takeover – What Happens When Right-Wing Extremists Govern*. Founded in 2013 and increasingly successful in elections, the neo-fascist AfD is no longer a fringe party. It has become a central actor in German politics. By August 2025, roughly 25% of Germans indicated they would vote for the AfD.

According to Semsrott, the party is dominated by figures seeking to transform authoritarian, nationalistic, and *völkisch* ideologies into political reality (p. 12). In this context, the term *völkisch* refers to the racialized concept of a homogeneous *Volksgemeinschaft* associated with Nazi ideology. Such a transformation would not occur automatically. It can still be prevented. Semsrott cites the German novelist Erich Kästner, who once wrote that what happened between 1933 and 1945 could already have been foreseen – and opposed – in 1928 (p. 13).

Semsrott argues that preventing such a development requires two steps. First, it is necessary to anticipate what an AfD government might look like. Second, early action can still prevent such a government from consolidating power. These are the central arguments of his book.

According to Semsrott, an authoritarian takeover would not occur overnight but through a gradual, step-by-step process (p. 17). It might begin with replacing the upper ranks of Germany's civil service. In the Ministry of the Interior, for instance, this would involve replacing roughly twenty of the ministry's 1,700 civil servants (p. 18). Once this leadership layer is replaced, the rest of the bureaucracy would likely follow, given the strong hierarchical culture and esprit de corps within Germany's *Beamtentum*.

This would allow an AfD-led government to direct administrative practices in new ways while formally remaining within the existing legal framework (p. 19). The party would likely focus on institutions such as the police, the domestic intelligence service (which currently monitors parts of the AfD itself), and administrative bodies dealing with asylum and migration. Particularly in the latter area, policies might follow the slogan of Björn Höcke – often considered the AfD's unofficial leader – who once called for 'well-tempered cruelties' (*wohltemperierte Grausamkeit*) (p. 24).

At the same time, an AfD government might attempt to dismantle institutions dealing with environmental protection, climate policy, and sustainability. NGOs could face administrative harassment – for instance through financial audits – while institutions dedicated to Holocaust remembrance might suffer severe funding cuts. Simultaneously, the government could use the legal system to intimidate journalists and discourage critical reporting (p. 32).

Following precedents set elsewhere, it is also conceivable that Germany's army, the Bundeswehr, might be deployed domestically (p. 32), thereby breaking a long-standing post-war taboo. The military and police could be supplemented by AfD-aligned 'home defense' groups or auxiliary police units (*Hilfsspolizei*) tasked with carrying out unpopular measures such as deportation raids (p. 34).

Together with networks such as right-wing student fraternities (*Burschenschaften*), these actors could form part of a broader surveillance apparatus

targeting critics and perceived enemies of the AfD.

Germany's legal system might represent one of the strongest institutional obstacles to such a transformation. Consequently, Semsrott argues, the AfD would likely seek to undermine, circumvent, and ultimately control the judiciary. Courts might then be used against political opponents, echoing the infamous practices of Roland Freisler's *Volksgerichtshof* during the Nazi era.

To prevent such developments, Semsrott emphasizes the importance of early resistance. Historical experience from the collapse of the Weimar Republic shows how dangerous it can be to react too late. Early resistance should include large-scale demonstrations against any AfD-led government coalition.

Such protests should be organized quickly, be large in scale, and continue over extended periods (p. 47). Their purpose would be to demonstrate that right-wing extremists do not represent the majority of German society. Participants should mobilize friends, relatives, and broader social networks. Even the Catholic Church has taken a clear position, arguing that Christians cannot support the *völkisch*-nationalistic AfD (p. 48).

In fact, more than three million people already protested against the AfD's 'remigration' plans - effectively ethnic cleansing of migrants - during nationwide demonstrations in early 2024, which included over 1,200 rallies.

Nevertheless, resistance may be complicated by the fact that Germany has neglected its democratic infrastructure for decades (p. 51). Once in government,

the AfD might intensify this neglect by closing institutions and withdrawing funding from democratic initiatives.

Moreover, in the early phase of an AfD government, supportive civil servants might exploit access to state data to identify and undermine political opponents. At the same time, transparency rules could be weakened - authoritarian systems tend to operate in darkness.

Yet even an AfD government would not immediately possess unlimited power. To consolidate control, it would require the cooperation of Germany's vast administrative apparatus (p. 69). Even the Nazi Party did not initially hold an absolute parliamentary majority.

Historically, however, many German civil servants willingly provided the administrative tools for Hitler's dictatorship (p. 73). According to Semsrott, similar risks remain today. A senior official in the Interior Ministry reportedly admitted that the number of officials willing to resist would likely be 'very small' if the AfD achieved parliamentary dominance (p. 75).

Support for the AfD may also exist within Germany's judiciary. Cases such as the AfD-affiliated judge Jens Maier - who publicly expressed admiration for the Norwegian Neo-Nazi terrorist Anders Breivik - demonstrate the potential presence of right-wing sympathies within the legal system (p. 117).

Business, however, may prove less supportive. Unlike the situation in the early 1930s, German industry today is largely opposed to the AfD. The party's anti-EU and anti-euro positions conflict with the interests of export-oriented corporations. As a result, powerful busi-

ness organizations such as the Federation of German Industries (BDI) view the AfD as an economic risk (p. 136).

To prevent an AfD takeover, Semsrott proposes several measures: banning the party, withdrawing state funding, prohibiting civil servants from AfD membership, revoking gun licenses from party members, and excluding AfD politicians from publicly funded television talk shows (p. 173). These measures, he argues, could limit the spread of the party's ideology.

Examples illustrate why such action matters. Prior to the 2020 terrorist attack in Hanau, which killed nine people, the AfD's regional branch in Hesse had run an online campaign linking crime by foreigners (*Ausländerkriminalität*) to shisha bars (p. 196). Yet crime statistics show little overall difference between Germans and non-Germans, suggesting that the narrative of 'foreign crime' is largely a product of right-wing populist propaganda.

Similarly, in the East German town of Sonneberg - where an AfD candidate became *Landrat* in 2023 - neo-Nazis subsequently attacked refugee centers and migrants (p. 199). Semsrott warns that such developments could intensify under an AfD government.

The book closes with a stark warning. An AfD victory would represent a catastrophe above all for those groups identified by the party as enemies (p. 217). While the AfD might not immediately abolish democracy, its ideology could gradually permeate society. Over time, democratic institutions might be weakened and eventually dismantled.

Overall, Semsrott has written an exceptionally well-argued book about a possible future in which Germany is governed by the neo-fascist AfD. Importantly, his work is not merely a dystopian scenario. Alongside describing the dangers of an AfD takeover, Semsrott also outlines how democratic societies can prevent such a development. Central to this effort are awareness of the risks and early political intervention.

Both books ultimately serve different but complementary purposes. The AfD exploits many of the social and economic grievances identified by Reiter and Wilkes in *BRD - Totally Kaputt*. Yet the party exaggerates these problems in order to portray Germany as a country in chaos.

Notably, two of the AfD's central alarmist narratives have already failed to materialize. First, the predicted refugee chaos following Angela Merkel's decision to admit Syrian refugees in 2015 never occurred. Despite initial challenges, Germany managed the integration process relatively successfully, and many refugees now contribute to the labour market.

Second, the AfD's claim that the COVID-19 pandemic would lead to a 'Corona dictatorship' also proved unfounded. The Merkel government did not use the pandemic to establish authoritarian rule, despite the fears promoted by far-right activists.

In sum, the AfD constantly seeks new threats or enemies in order to mobilize electoral support. Reading both books together therefore provides valuable insights into Germany's recent politi-

cal economy (Reiter and Wilkes) as well as into the mechanisms through which the AfD exploits these conditions to gain power (Semsrott). Most importantly, Semsrott demonstrates how neo-fascism can be resisted. One book outlines the crisis tendencies of contemporary

capitalism in Germany, while the other explains how the far right attempts to capitalize on that crisis – and how democratic forces can prevent Germany from sliding toward another illiberal regime similar to Hungary.

*Thomas Klikauer*

# CORRIGENDUM: Really Independent? Biographies and Typology of Non-Partisan Presidential Candidates in Europe

Michael Drašar<sup>1</sup>

**Original article:** Drašar, M. (2025). Really Independent? Biographies and Typology of Non-Partisan Presidential Candidates in Europe. *Czech Journal of Political Science*, (3), 246–266.

In the original version of the article, due to multiple revisions of a passage in the theoretical part on pp. 248–250, some references were unfortunately shuffled, some wrong pages were listed, and some parts of the text are unclear. At the same time, one reference was unintentionally removed.

**Original text 1 (p. 248):** *The crisis of political partisanship might have a large scale of forms, e.g. electoral volatility, a decrease in partisan identification, a decrease in partisan membership or a performative crisis (Webb, 2005).*

**Correction 1 (p. 248):** *The crisis of political partisanship might have a large scale of forms, e.g. electoral volatility, a decrease in partisan identification or a decrease in partisan membership (e. g. Webb, 2005).*

**Original text 2 (p. 248):** *In the European presidential elections, there are evidenced cases of purposeful non-partisanship of members of political parties (see Jastramskis, 2021) or former members of political parties.*

**Correction 2 (p. 248):** *In the European presidential elections, there are evidenced cases of purposeful non-partisanship of members of political parties or former members of political parties.*

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E-mail: michael.drasar@fsv.cuni.cz. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2763-7178>.

**Original text 3 (p. 249):** This fact also applies to the political parties themselves, which, given the size of local units, must nominate non-candidates on their candidate lists (Maškarinec & Klimovský, 2016, p. 961; Holtmann, 2008, p. 11). Regarding this fact, non-partisan candidates play a significant role at the local level of the political system generally (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005). Other research is focused on the problems of electoral support for these candidates rather than non-partisanship globally. Their occurrence is usually associated with the question of institutionalisation of political parties or the socioeconomic structure of voters (Gendźwiłł, 2012; Gendźwiłł & Žóttak, 2014; Kukovič & Haček, 2011). If we look at the higher level of the political system, the non-partisan candidacy relates to the type of electoral system, as was mentioned (Brancati, 2008). Regarding the different levels of personalisation in majoritarian and personalised proportional electoral systems, in the European context, it is the case of the Single Transferable Vote system used in Ireland. Their presence positively influences the electoral process and the legislative assembly (Weeks, 2014, p. 606).

**Correction 3 (p. 249):** This fact also applies to the political parties themselves, which, given the size of local units, must nominate non-candidates on their candidate lists (Ryšavý, 2006, p. 961). Regarding this fact, non-partisan candidates play a significant role at the local level of the political system generally (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005; Holtmann, 2008). Other research is focused on the problems of electoral support for these candidates rather than non-partisanship globally. Their occurrence is usually researched in the context of institutionalisation of political parties, trust in them, or the socioeconomic structure of voters (Gendźwiłł, 2012; Gendźwiłł & Žóttak, 2014; Kukovič & Haček, 2011; Maškarinec & Klimovský, 2016). If we look at the higher level of the political system, the non-partisan candidacy relates to the type of electoral system, as was mentioned (Brancati, 2008). Regarding the different levels of personalisation in majoritarian and personalised proportional electoral systems, in the European context, it is the case of the Single Transferable Vote system used in Ireland. Their presence more or less influences the support for non-partisans (Weeks, 2014).

**This missing reference is as follows: Ryšavý, D. (2006). Komunální je komunální a velká je velká! K hypotéze politizace lokálních politických elit. *Czech Sociological Review*, 42(5), 953–970.**

**Original text 4 (p. 250):** Several authors do not mention the issue of conceptualising a non-partisan candidate at all in their works (e.g. Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005; Gendźwiłł, 2012).

**Correction 4 (p. 250):** Several authors do not mention the issue of the universal conceptualising a non-partisan candidate at all in their works. For example, Aars & Ringkjøb (2005) or Gendźwiłł (2012) tried to define independent lists, but they also point out the problem of their heterogeneity, the difficult definition of political parties or fulfilling functions of parties by these lists.

At the same, three typographical errors and typos were found in in-text references (pp. 251 and 252) and in the reference list.

**Original in-text reference 1 (p. 251):** *Political parties in post-communist area, due to the relatively recent transition to democracy, lean to the support not yet fully anchored and profiled electorate (Mair, 1998, p. 188).*

**Correction of in-text reference 1 (p. 251):** *Political parties in post-communist area, due to the relatively recent transition to democracy, lean to the support not yet fully anchored and profiled electorate (Mair, 1998, pp. 187–188).*

**Original in-text reference 2 (p. 252):** *The second approach will be the typological method, which divides phenomena into separate categories (Collier, Laporte, & Seawright, 2008, p. 153; Drulák, 2008, p. 19).*

**Correction of in-text reference 2 (p. 252):** *The second approach will be the typological method, which divides phenomena into separate categories (Collier, Laporte, & Seawright, 2008, p. 153; Drulák, 2008, p. 20).*

**Original references in the reference list:**

- Kim, W. (2023). Measuring party system institutionalization in democracies. *Party Politics*, 31(1), 3–14.
- Mair, P. (1998). *Party System Change Approaches and Interpretations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shepard, M., McGarvey, N., & Cavanagh, M. (2003). New Scottish Parliament, New Scottish Parliamentarians? *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 7(2), 79–104.

**Corrections in the reference list:**

- Kim, W. (2025). Measuring party system institutionalization in democracies. *Party Politics*, 31(1), 3–14.
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**These corrections do not affect the scientific conclusions of the original study. The author apologizes for any inconvenience or complications.**

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