

Democratic Backsliding in Czech Republic and Hungary

A comparative case study of the democratic backslide in
Czech Republic and Hungary

Hareng Omar

Abstract

The enlargement of the EU towards the CEE pointed and leaned towards democratization. Two of the countries that were on the path of democratization was the Czech Republic and Hungary. However, as time has gone by Czech Republic and Hungary that once were on the path of democratization has now suffered a Democratic Backslide. Czech Republic with Andrej Babiš as Prime Minister followed by Viktor Orbán in Hungary and his party Fidesz have been the two main reasons for the Democratic Backslide for each country, within the formal and informal sectors and institutions. My analysis centres on these two countries to analyze why and how this backslide has happened, but also to answer the question of why Czech Republic has gotten away with their backslide whilst Hungary has not. This text uses Democratic backslide and Competitive Authoritarianism as a theoretical framework. Orbán and Fidesz democratic backslide has mostly been acute in the formal sector. In Czech Republic it has been within the Informal sectors and institutions.

Key words: Democratic Backslide, Democracy, Competitive Authoritarianism, Institutions, Autocratization, Czech Republic, Hungary

Words: 9802

Table of contents

1	Background	1
1.1	Problem Definition	2
2	Theory/Literature Review	3
2.1	Hypothesis	7
3	Method and Empirical data	8
3.1	Material	9
3.1.1	V-dem Dataset	10
3.1.2	Freedom House	11
3.2	Operationalizations	12
4	Analysis	14
4.1	Czech Republic	14
4.1.1	Formal Sectors/Institutions	15
4.1.2	Informal Sectors/Institutions	18
4.2	Hungary	21
4.2.1	Formal Sectors/Institutions	22
4.2.2	Informal Sectors/Institutions	24
5	Conclusion/Discussion	28
6	References	30

1 Background

My intention is to write a paper about the differences within the formal and informal sectors of Czech Republic and Hungary to ultimately see how that has affected the democratic backslide within these two countries. Hungary and Czech Republic are two countries that have suffered a democratic backslide. The interesting aspect between these two countries are that Hungary is seen as somewhat of an authoritarian state, but Czech Republic on the other hand is still considered a robust democracy. The man responsible for the backslide in Czech Republic is a business man called Andrej Babiš who now is the prime minister of the Czech Republic. Babiš has very openly shown his autocratic and technocratic tendencies in his ruling. Babiš focus has mostly been on corrupting and seizing power of the informal sectors, hence why I will be focusing a lot on this aspect. The area in which Babiš has taken control of is the media in the Czech Republic. Babiš owns and has control of the majority of all media outlets in Czech Republic. How he has gotten this control and the effects it has had will be discussed and analyzed in latter parts of the thesis. Hungary on the other hand is ruled by the prime minister Viktor Orban along with his party Fidesz. Orban and Fidesz has also led Hungary to a form of autocratization and this has been recognised by the rest of the world (Hanley & Vachudova 2018, p278-280).

The backslide has mostly been acute within the formal sectors, but also within the informal sector. How the backslide in Hungary and Czech Republic has occurred will be discussed in this thesis, with the focus being on the differences in the formal and informal sectors of each country. What puzzles me is why has Czech Republic and Andrej Babiš gotten away with their slow but sure autocratization, but Hungary has not.

1.1 Problem Definition

The problem at hand is to understand and analyze the differences between in Czech Republic and Hungary and their democratic backslide. These two cases are very interesting because of the fact that each country has emphasized a different aspect of the autocratization process. Czech Republic and Andrej Babiš democratic backslide has mostly been within the informal sectors, and Orban and Hungary by focusing on the formal sectors. As previously stated, their outcomes have also been different and they have also gotten a different recognition from the rest of the world. This then leads me to the problem and phenomenon of these two cases. To answer why and what differentiates these two countries I have chosen to focus on the formal and informal sector and the autocratization that these two sectors have endured. Authoritarian changes within formal and informal institutions is very much related to the phenomenon and theory that is “Democratic Backslide”(Hanley & Vachudova 2018, p.278). The definition of this phenomenon and theory will be stated below. I also feel as if there is a lot of room for research with this thesis, there is not a lot of research that focuses on these aspects of the two selected countries, and that is what I aim to do. My aim is to create a broader understanding of the democratic backslide paradigm but also explain that democratic backslide can happen in different ways and have different or similar outcomes. Therefore the purpose of this thesis is to analyze and understand the democratic backslide of Czech Republic and Hungary by focusing on authoritarian changes within formal and informal sectors. What is also puzzling in these two cases are that Hungary has been deemed as somewhat of an authoritarian state but Czech Republic has not, this is why the focus is on both the formal and informal sectors as I believe that authoritarian changes within the informal sector is not anywhere nearly as highlighted as the ones done within the formal sectors.

2 Theory/Literature Review

My expected answer and hypothesis is that there are differences within the autocratization of the formal and informal sectors of Czech Republic and Hungary. This has then affected the level of backslide that each country has suffered. However, in order to answer the question it is important to have a theoretical standing point that lays the foundation for the main purpose. There are a lot of theories regarding Democratic Backslide and there are many definitions of the phenomenon. But the general definition of the phenomenon can be stated as “changes within formal and informal institutions that moves the polity towards the direction of a hybrid or authoritarian regime”. This means that power holders in a country drive a process of democratic regression. The process and regression is often done gradually and very rarely occurs at once. The process takes time, this also means that democratic backsliding is not driven by outsiders as it may be in a coup d'état. The mechanism that drives this process can be called “executive aggrandizement”. Which refers to when an elected incumbent starts to concentrate political and later on economic power by ripping away institutional checks and balances. The areas that the elected incumbent generally targets are the constitutional courts and within the judiciary it is often the media. This then leads to top appointments to state owned companies and agencies. Instead of using anti-democratic manoeuvres the backsliding governments use the already existing institutions and regulatory mechanisms (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018, p.278-279).

The elections are then mainly won by referring to corruption and protecting national interests. By naming external threats they create a sense of frustration with the current power holders, and this then leads to an increase in popularity for the party running in the election. The external threats that are named very often are refugees and foreign owned big businesses. In other words they refer to a national grandeur in order to create a sense of us and them. The results of this process are striking, by claiming to defend the nation it is eligible for the party to gain popularity and win the election. This then makes it easier to concentrate power and remove liberal checks and balances. Due to the fact that they promise to remove corruption

and increase efficiency, the population do not mind removing or changing the checks and balances that are necessary for a democracy to thrive(Hanley & Vachudova, 2018,p.279).

Previous research that are related to this topic and puzzle has been made before. An example of this is the article *Understanding the illiberal turn:Democratic backsliding in Czech Republic* written by Sean Hanley and Anna Milada Vachudova in the year of 2018. This article talks about the phenomenon and the theory that is democratic backslide. It starts off by defining the phenomenon that is democratic backsliding, and the definition is very nearly identical to the one stated above. Hanley and Vachudova then start to analyze the case of Czech Republic and compare it to Hungary and Poland. Hanley And Vachudova first talk about how the Czech Republic fits within the backslide paradigm, and the initial thought is that it does not fall within the paradigm that is democratic backslide. The reasoning behind this according to Hanley and Vachudova is that several democratic datasets such as V-dem and Freedom House still consider Czech Republic to be a robust democracy. Much of this is due to the broadly power-dispersed democratic model and system. The model and system consists of a strong upper house that is followed by an independent central bank that is very strong. Along with this Czech Republic also has a constitution that is very hard to change and a more inclusive proportional representation system(Hanley & Vachudova 2018, p.280).

According to Hanley and Vachudova there are two key changes that have made Czech Republic more majoritarian. The first change is a dilution of the proportionality of the electoral system that was made in 2000. The second change is that as of 2012 Czech Republic now has enabled the direct election of the presidency role. Alongside the rise of Andrej Babiš and his party ANO this introduction of a direct presidential election has posed the biggest problems to the democracy in Czech Republic. The elected president Zeman has publically aligned himself with Fidesz in Hungary and shares the same beliefs and ambitions for Czech Republic. This is very relevant to my research as I am analyzing Czech Republic and Hungary specifically (Hanley & Vachudova 2018, p.280-281).

The article then focuses on Andrej Babiš and his technocratic tendencies. Hanley and Vachudova talk about Babiš and his visions for Czech Republic and the concern that it brings. Babiš talks about how he wants to abolish the current existing senate and implement legislative and political changes that practically gives him all power. The article also talks about what Babiš has done to increase his own power, and this has been done mostly within the informal sector such as controlling the media and state administration (Hanley & Vachudova 2018, p.282-283).

This research is similar to what I aim to analyze and it therefore increases the validity of my text as I am basing it on previous studies. However, where my text differs from this article is that I aim to examine the aspect of why Czech Republic has gotten away with its backslide compared to Hungary that has been deemed and stigmatized by the EU and several other countries.

The purpose of the Democratic Backslide theory is mainly to explain why and how countries that are considered to be democratic in any way start moving towards an authoritarian direction. With this being the foundation of the theory it discusses and analyzes different parts of autocratization, and this is very well connected to my research as one can see that the reason a country suffers a democratic backslide can rarely be described and understood by only using a specific aspect. This theory and definition suits my research question very well due to the fact that I want to investigate the formal and informal sectors of the Czech Republic and Hungary. My thought is to continue this theory and apply it on the countries stated above. This means that my thesis will be theory consuming. One can also make the case that it will be testing the theory, however I do not believe so because it is very clear that the Democratic Backslide theory can and does describe each country fairly well (Hanley, Vachudova 2018).

It is also important to note that there is a lot of criticism towards the Democratic Backslide paradigm despite the fact there being a consensus amongst scholars that there is a democratic backslide in the CEE. The scholars that are criticizing the backslide paradigm are saying that the backslide is merely a result of the fall of the Soviet union. The fall of the Soviet Union meant that autocrats had to abandon power or tolerate opposition. But after time the backslide according to scholars is only a reconsolidation of the authoritarianism that already had

existed, meaning that the democracy was practically never fully established(Levitsky & Way, 2015 p.48-52).

Competitive Authoritarianism which is a book written by Steven Levitsky and Lucan A.Way focuses on competitive elections and how hybrid regimes violate standard democratic procedures. The focus is specifically on the post cold war era due to the fact that this led to a democratization process of many eastern european countries after the fall of the Soviet Union. What Levitsky and Way focus on is the elections and what regimes do to manipulate the outcome and by doing that breaking standard democratic procedures. These regimes are defined as Hybrid Regimes. The manipulation according to Levitsky and Way is done mostly by buying and controlling the media, abusing the state resources along with different ways of skewing the playing field towards opponents thus then benefitting the incumbents(Levitsky & Way, 2010, p.1,5-10)

The competitive authoritarianism theory is divided into three types of regimes by Levitsky and Way. The first type is *democratization* which according to Levitsky and Way is when autocrats fail and their successor governs democratically. Then comes the second type that is *stable authoritarianism* which is when an autocratic regime remains in power. The third and final type is *unstable authoritarianism* which occurs when an autocratic regime falls and the successor fails to rule democratically(Levitsky & Way, 2010, p.37-38).

In the post Soviet era there is a large group of countries that has gone through the first type of change that is *democratization*. The main reason behind these groups of countries *democratization* is that the countries have strong institutions followed by an established bureaucracy and legislature that makes it hard for autocrats to come into power. Along with strong legislature and institutions another big reason behind the democratization is the external pressure from democratic countries and organizations. The countries that have suffered either type two or type three have one thing in common, and that is the lack of external pressure by other countries and organizations that seek to maintain and promote democracy (Levitsky & Way, 2010, p.1.2).

This is very relevant to my thesis as this has been demonstrated in both Czech Republic and Hungary on various occasions. It also benefits my text as it lifts up aspects of the informal sectors and the things that may occur behind closed doors. These aspects are very hard to come by as the things that happen may not be known to the public. Some of the aspects mentioned in the book and that I will use is the manipulation of media and threatening and abusing potential opponents by using different methods. This will increase the validity of my text due to the fact that I have a theoretical standing point and foundation to rely upon even when it comes to the part of my text that focuses on the informal sectors and happens behind the curtains. As Levitsky and Way suggest, if a country has strong institutions and legislative power combined with ties to organizations and countries that promote democracy then that means that the country will most of the time fall under *democratization*. However, as Levitsky and Way say that there are exceptions to this phenomenon and the explanation is mostly that some events occur informally and behind closed doors, and this is the aspect that I will mainly focus on and apply on both Czech Republic and Hungary(Levitsky & Way, p.20-30).

2.1 Hypothesis

Based on my original understanding of the backslide paradigm and background of Hungary and Czech Republic, my hypothesis is very clear. My hypothesis is that both of the countries have suffered a democratic backslide, in some cases they are very similar in what authoritarian changes that has been done. However, what differentiates them is that I believe that most of the authoritarian changes and developments in Hungary have occurred within the formal sector/institutions. The backslide in Czech Republic has mostly occurred within the informal sectors/institutions. This has then resulted in Hungary being stigmatized by other countries and organizations as an authoritarian state. Czech Republic on the other hand, due to the backslide occurring informally and behind closed doors I believe that they have gotten away with their authoritarian government. I believe that because of the fact that some aspects of the backslide are not known to the public, it is very difficult for external actors to say that Czech Republic is an authoritarian state.

3 Method and Empirical data

In order to be able to do my research it is necessary for me to operationalize important terms and give them a clear definition. These terms are also my variables in my research method, the X variables who are the dependent variables are “informal” institutions, “formal” institutions and my Y variable which is the dependent variable is “Democratic Backslide”. To define informal institutions I plan on using the text *Informal institutions and comparative politics: A research agenda* by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky. This text brings up various forms of informal sectors and how they are different from each other. I need to find the definition that fits my research question the best in order to operationalize “informal” institutions. This then leads us to the definition of the term “formal” institutions. In order to define and operationalize this term I will use a book called *Law, Informal rules and economic performance* and it is written by Svetozar Pejovich and Enrico Colombatto. This book defines different forms of institutions very much like the one from Helmke and Levitsky. After I have defined these terms, the operationalization will be very easy as it is then obvious what definition I will use in my thesis. Democratic Backslide and its definition is stated above so there is no need to define this once again.

This then leads us to my method and how I will write my paper. I will do a comparative study and use the method of agreement. This method is necessary for me to use in order to do a comparative case study, as the main goal and idea for me is to see the differences between Hungary and Czech Republic. By using the method of agreement this means that the two cases which in this case are Czech Republic and Hungary are similar but differ on one variable. The variable that differs them is the dependent variable (Y) which in my case is the level/grade of democratic backslide. The independent variables are authoritarian changes within formal and informal sectors of each country. So that clarifies the fact that X affects Y (Esaiasson, et al, 2017, s. 103). Hungary and Czech Republic are similar in many aspects. The first aspect is their geographical sites, they are very close to one another with both having similar neighboring countries such as Slovakia and Austria. They are also very similar when it comes to their history as both of the countries have historically fallen under Soviet Rule and

then become independent almost simultaneously. Thus leading to a simultaneous democratization process. We can also see similarities when it comes to religion as a majority of those who are believers belong to the roman-catholic church. This goes back to their similar history even before the Soviet Union(Globalis 2021A;Globalis 2021B).

Therefore, I feel as if a comparative study by use of the method of agreement is the more suitable method to use in order to do my desired research.(Esaiasson, et al, 2017 s.161-164)

3.1 Material

When it comes to measuring the backslide or analyze the level of democracy of Czech Republic and Hungary I will use two different datasets that measure democracy. The following indexes are Freedom House along with the V-dem dataset. This is necessary for me to see how severe each countrys' backslide is and what that has meant to their democracy index. Although using two datasets may increase validity, this is only the case if they show similar results. If the results are entirely different then this poses a challenge as to why they differ so much. Some of my material are articles and papers written by investigative journalists in their native languages. A thorough translation was done to every single article to ensure that the information it presents is understood to the extent that is possible and is presented and interpreted to the best extent. These articles were used to find information that may be more difficult to find in English texts.Following this, a majority of my material and empirical data are secondary. The reason behind this is because of the fact that the majority of my material consists of studies, other research and articles, because I want to avoid material and data that is biased, especially when it comes to analyzing autocratization in two countries.

3.1.1 V-dem Dataset

Due to the fact that my thesis is based upon the theory and phenomenon that is Democratic Backsliding, it is of the utmost importance that I use one or more datasets to measure democracy. The reason behind this is as the Backslide theory suggests the process is gradual and a country that suffers a backslide does not necessarily go from a democracy to fully authoritarian. This therefore emphasizes the importance of using a dataset that measures different types of a democracy. As stated earlier a large part of my thesis is to measure the level of backslide of Czech Republic and Hungary. V-dem provides a multidimensional dataset to conceptualize and analyze democracy. Defining and measuring democracy is not a simple thing to do and V-dem focuses on many aspects of democracy in order to measure it (V-Dem, 2021).

V-dem distinguishes between five different democratic high-level principles: electoral, liberal, participatory and egalitarian. These principles lay the foundation for the dataset which then seeks to analyze and measure these different principles. The dataset measures the process from a democracy to authoritarian by using a scale of 0-1 with 0 being a fully authoritarian regime and 1 being a full liberal democracy which is the highest definition of a democracy according to V-dem. Using this dataset increases the validity of my text but the dataset may also be problematic in some specific aspects. The main issue may be that the dataset focuses on principles and levels of democracy within the formal sectors and institutions of my selected countries. But due to the fact that the informal sector and institutions also make an equal part of my text, measuring the level of democracy within the informal sectors may be a bit more difficult. The aspects I will focus on, such as deals made behind closed doors and buying and controlling the media and future opponents is not as easy as measuring the political system and legislature for example. I need to have this in consideration when using this dataset and therefore in order to increase the validity of the informal part I will not use the dataset to measure it, meaning that the dataset will measure the formal sectors (V-Dem, 2021).

3.1.2 Freedom House

In order to make sure that the V-dem index and measurement of democracy is correct I will also use another dataset to increase the validity. This is mainly done as a precaution and safety in case the V-dem dataset is incorrect. The second dataset and democracy index I will use is the one of Freedom House. Freedom House, similar to V-dem, is a dataset that measures various forms of Democracy by using different indexes. The index consists of separate ratings of national and local governance, electoral process, independent media, civil society, judicial framework and independence, and corruption. This then results in a democracy percentage dependent on to which extent each country are liberal and democratical when it comes to these aspects. The democracy percentage score is from 0% to 100% with 0 meaning that there is no democracy whatsoever and 100% meaning it is a full on liberal and consolidated democracy. Freedom house also has a democracy score to complement the percentage. The score goes from 1-7 with 7 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest(Freedom House, 2021).

Similar to the V-dem dataset there is a scale of democracy which is as previously stated what is necessary for me to see the outcome of each country's backslide. One of the aspects the dataset measures is the level of media independence. This is very relevant to my research as this belongs to the informal sector and therefore I can use certain aspects of this dataset to measure the authoritarian changes within the informal sectors of Czech Republic and Hungary. However, the main focus of this dataset is mostly the formal sectors of the countries as those are the easiest to measure. This then results in that the results are mostly based on the formal sectors and not the informal. Although it may include some aspects of informal sectors this index can not be used to only measure the informal sectors. So this has also been taken into consideration when analyzing the results(Freedom House, 2021).

3.2 Operationalizations

Informal Sector/Institutions

As previously stated one of the key terms in this thesis is Informal Institutions. This term needs to be operationalized in order to make it clear what definition it has in my thesis. According to Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitskiy Informal Institutions can be defined as *socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels*. This definition makes it very clear what Informal Institutions are and it also gives a more specific definition of what it is not. This is important due to the fact that many definitions of this term also mentions that self-enforcement from a state is also included as a formal institution. The issue with this is that these informal rules of self-enforcement can come from an external source such as mafia bosses and businessmen. In the case of Czech Republic and Andrej Babiš, many informal institutional changes have been made from the business side of Babiš and not the political one. Therefore the definition made by Helmke and Levitskiy is more suitable as it includes the self-enforcement aspect as an informal institution (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p.727).

Formal Sector/Institutions

The distinction between formal and informal is not as clear as one may think. The definition according to Svetozar Pejovich and Enrico Colomatto is:

“Both formal and informal institutions affect individual behavior. However, unlike informal institutions, formal rules are a policy variable. Formal rules are constitutions, statutes, common laws and other governmental regulations. They usually take a written form and are externally enforced. They define the political system (the hierarchical structure, decision-making powers, the individual’s rights); the economic system (property rights, freedom of contract, open entry into all markets); and the protection system (judiciary, police, military).

Formal rules could be institutionalized customs and traditions, whereby they serve the function of making informal rules more uniform, predictable, enforceable and transparent” (Pejovich & Colomatto, 2008, p.141-145).

In other words this Formal Sector/institutions can be described as policy variables such as constitutions and laws. These things can be seen in forms of a document and are available to the public. The people that are a part of this policy variables are also a part of the formal sectors. What is important to note is that these people that are part of the policy variables can also fall under the informal sectors, especially when it comes to their potential influence as some things may occur behind closed doors and therefore not be seen or known to the public, which according to my definition above makes it fall under the informal sector

4 Analysis

The following part will now focus on Czech Republic and Hungary's formal and informal sectors to see what has happened and what has enabled this democratic backslide. The first part will focus on Czech Republic by mentioning the current situation and what has happened and how it has happened. The second part will be focusing on Hungary and similarly to the first part it will give a background to the country and then analyze it.

4.1 Czech Republic

The enlargement of the EU towards the CEE pointed towards a democratization within the CEE. Many countries were frontrunners for this democratization such as Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018, p.276) Czech Republic was on the path of democratization but in 2011 things started to change. In 2011 the businessman Andrej Babiš founded the party ANO. The party claimed that they are a citizens' movement of non-politicians championing the interests of the people against a cabal of corrupt and inefficient traditional parties. After a couple of years the party had its first breakthrough in the year 2013 where they got 18,65% of the votes in the election. This enabled them to become the second biggest party in the country mostly due to the fact that they claimed the current politicians to be incompetent and corrupt. Babiš also made it abundantly clear that he wanted to run the country efficiently, almost like a business (Havlik 2015, p.199-202). Four years later ANO became the biggest party in Czech Republic. They received 29,6% of the votes. Although they did become the biggest party, a coalition was necessary. However, an attempt to form a coalition was unsuccessful due to other parties fearing that they might be left out and be without any actual political influence (Pehe 2018, p.65-70).

This then brings up the question to why were other parties afraid of joining a coalition with ANO and what has happened within the formal and informal sectors of Czech Republic after the rise of ANO?

4.1.1 Formal Sectors/Institutions

Generally speaking the Czech Republic is to this day considered a robust democracy by various indexes such as Freedom house and V-dem. Many aspects of the formal sector are well developed and have a high level of democratical output. Both Freedom house and V-dem consider Czech Republic to be a performing democracy and at times a high-level performing democracy when it comes to regional comparison.

Country	Total Score and Status	Democracy Percentage	Democracy Score
Czech Republic	76 ■ Consolidated Democracy	76.19	5.57

Source: Freedom House 2021

Freedom house states that Czech Republic has a Democracy Percentage of 76,19%. and a democracy score of 5.57. This is a relatively high number when compared to surrounding countries and it shows why Czech Republic is considered a robust democracy(Freedom House 2021)

Czech Republic	34	0.71	0.054	36	0.8	0.049	32	0.88	0.044	14	0.9	0.054	56	0.59	0.05	65	0.76	0.624
----------------	----	------	-------	----	-----	-------	----	------	-------	----	-----	-------	----	------	------	----	------	-------

Source: V-dem 2021

Followed by the V-dem dataset we can see similar results here.

We can see that Czech Republic has a score of 0,71 when it comes to the liberal democracy index. This places Czech Republic at 34th place in the whole world. The liberal democracy index is decided based upon the five different principles you can see in the chart above. On the Electoral Democracy Index Czech Republic has received a score of 0,8. On the Liberal Component Index they have received a score of 0,88. Following this on the fourth index which is Egalitarian Component index we can see the score of 0,9. The final two indexes, Participatory and Deliberative Component indexes, we can see that Czech Republic scored 0,59 and 0,76. (V-Dem 2021)

Czech Republic has a strong democratical model that consists of a strong and more representative system. The democracy is also considered robust due to the fact that Czech Republic has an independent central bank along with a constitution that is hard to change. This makes it harder for a party or a person to make constitutional changes, and this is very necessary for a democracy to exist or thrive. There have been attempts to make constitutional changes by Babiš in some instances but without any proper outcome. This is also because the Czech Republic has a strong judicial system that maintains and prevents legislative changes that can be seen as a threat to democracy. (Roberts 2006, p.38-45)

However, this does not mean that there are no existing problems and democratic challenges within Czech Republic's formal institutions. In recent times there have been two cases of majoritarian changes. The first change resulted in the fact that the proportionality of the electoral system became diluted. This made the system more majoritarian and therefore paved the way for future changes to occur (Kopecký 2004, p.347-358). This then leads to the second change that has played a big role in Czech Republic's democratical challenges. The second change is the introduction of the direct presidential election. Which then posed a huge democratical challenge for the Czech Republic (Roberts 2017, p.562-570).

A case that demonstrates this is when the president Zeman became the president in the year 2013. Zeman is an ex-prime minister that has been involved within the Czech political sphere for a long time. He has at many times publically aligned himself with authoritarian regimes such as Fidesz in Hungary and expressed how he wishes to change the political structure of

the Czech Republic. His ultimate goal has been to change the system so that in practice the president has the most power. During the year 2013 he appointed a so-called caretaker government of political cronies over the heads of Czech Republic's party leaders. This caretaker was seen by the others as a technocratic caretaker. The appointment of this caretaker resulted in a failure for Zeman as the other parties and the constitutional court cooperated to dismiss this caretaker. The parties used their powers and dismissed the entire government as it was deemed as a technocratic one(Kopecek 2017, p.225-235).

Following these events the discontent of this attempt early elections were held in 2013 which resulted in a major loss of votes for Zemans party Citizens' Rights Party (Strana práv občanů, SPO). Following the results of the elections Zeman stated that the president has the power to dismiss the prime minister without dismissing the entire government, but his attempt was quickly shut down by constitutional lawyers that clearly proved him wrong. These events and attempts are clear signs of executive aggrandisement but in these cases they were failed attempts. These attempts failed due to the strong Czech institutions and party-centredness of the political system. This highlights and proves why Czech Republic still may seem as a robust democracy by other countries and organizations(Kopecek 2017,p.230-240).

However, despite the fact that there is clear evidence and proof of the stability within the formal institutions in Czech Republic,it is important to understand that some of the challenges are yet to come within the formal sectors but that they need to be highlighted.

Andrej Babiš and ANO along with their ambitions pose major democratical challenges for the Czech Republic. As stated earlier ANO came into the political sphere of Czech Republic to, according to them, start effectivising policy and decision making. Babiš claims that the previous but also current politicians are corrupt and are slow, he also states that they do not focus on the people's interest. In his autobiography Babiš talks about his ambitions and ultimate goal for the Czech Republic. His goal and ambition certainly raises some problems and are not to be taken lightly. What he wishes is a majoritarian centralised system that practically removes all checks and balances within the Czech Republic. He starts off by wanting to abolish the existing senate, followed by reducing the amount of representatives in the lower house by half. He wants to remove regional elected governments and wants to introduce a so-called first past the post electoral system. This system basically means that the party that reaches a certain amount of the votes first is directly elected and appointed(Babiš 2017,p.126-135).

Following these ambitions there has also been clear cut cases where Andrej Babiš has used his power as Prime Minister. By appointing people close to him to key ministerial roles Babiš has gained a lot of power and influence. Babiš replaced the ministers within the Financial Administration to people that have strong and close ties with his company Agrofert Group. By doing this he got the power enabling him to practically shape institutions and actors within the economical sphere. This gives Babiš power and control over key formal institutions that are meant to be transparent and meritocratic in a democracy(Hanley & Vachudova, 2019,p.287-288).

These ambitions do raise a certain level of concern. Despite the fact that they have not been implemented yet, it goes to show what changes could happen within the formal sectors and institutions of the Czech Republic. These changes are most certainly leaning towards authoritarianism, due to the fact that if implemented he would have the power and the ability to practically do whatever he wishes. This would reshape and centralise almost all institutions and sectors of the Czech Republic, both informal and formal.

4.1.2 Informal Sectors/Institutions

In order to understand how Babiš and ANO has accumulated power within state owned enterprises and economy we have to understand the fact that Babiš is a businessman. It does not come as a surprise that Czech Republic has an oligarch as a politician, this is something that has occurred often in the surrounding and neighbouring countries. Andrej Babiš bought the company called Agrofert Group in the early 1990s. Agrofert Group started expanding due to acquiring state owned enterprises and state contracts that he received through his contacts within the political sphere in the late 1990s(Pergler 2014). The expansion has now resulted in Agrofert becoming the largest trading company in the Czech Republic and also being the largest employer with 34,000 employees(Tramba 2016) . After the rise of ANO Agrofert has continued with state contracts that favours them and allows them to grow. They have also signed deals with the state that has allowed them to take state subsidies and EU subsidies. Only in the year 2014 Agrofert Group earned 3.1 billion crowns just from these subsidies and

state contracts. Andrej Babiš was up until 2017 the sole owner of Agrofert Group but had to then transfer his ownership to two other family trusted companies. The reason behind this transfer was a law that was introduced that stated Babiš political business and political involvement posed a conflict of interest. However, despite the fact that the ownership was transferred one can not deny the fact that Babiš still controls the business as this transfer was only done as a necessity(Wagenknecht 2017).

Another area of concern is Babiš influence and control over the media in Czech Republic. At the same time Babiš started his political career he started to become more and more involved in media. The reason behind this is that he knew from previous occasions that having medial influence increases popularity and decreases the risk of being scrutinized and criticized. Before the financial crisis in 2008, nearly 80% of the media in Czech Republic was owned by foreign owners. After the crisis oligarchs started to buy up the media in order to benefit their own interests(Reporters without Borders 2017). Babiš bought MF Dnes and Lidové noviny, which are two of the biggest media outlets in Czech Republic. Besides this Babiš owns the biggest radio station in the country followed by the vast majority of newspapers that are handed out for free out in the streets. Although physical newspapers are not being read like they used to be, it is still important to note that it still has an effect on people's opinion(Lazarová 2014).

There have been various occasions where it has become very clear how Babiš uses the media he has bought to benefit his own personal and political interests. In the year 2017 there were tape recordings that clearly showed Babiš talking about using stories that are damaging to a specific opponent of ANO. The information he tended to use was also very clearly shown to be illegally obtained as he had used his contacts within the police and security services to access classified files and information. This is a major rule for concern and it relates back to the Competitive Authoritarianism theory that was mentioned in the earlier stages of the text. This is a case where someone uses media or any other types of control to dictate the narrative of a political opponent in a negative way. By using the power of media Babiš is able to control the narrative and therefore have an indirect influence on the upcoming election. The manipulation is not done formally so therefore it is hard to see it coming, but the rest of the population does not know what is happening behind closed doors and they believe what the

media is saying. They may not believe the media completely but it certainly does have an affect on the public opinion(Perkernová 2014).

Further on we can also see the case in 2014 were Babiš used his position as Minister of Finance to threaten the server called Echo24. Echo24 was founded by a former writer of Lidove Noviny which is owned by Babiš. The writer left because of dissatisfaction with Babiš and his control. Babiš threatened to start a financial investigation towards the main investor of Echo24 Jan Klenor. Although Babiš faced some criticism for his actions the investigation did eventually happen and they claimed that it is very likely that a company does face an investigation once every 145 years(Banzl 2014).

But this then brings the question of how random the investigation really was? There is clear evidence that the investigation was a way to control and silence the media to benefit his personal and political interests. Once again this relates back to the theory of Competitive Authoritarianism. Although it was not done during an election, this was done as a precaution to benefit Babiš in the upcoming elections. It becomes very clear how this has affected the Backslide in Czech Republic. By using and simultaneously silencing the media Babiš and ANO have major influence over the popular opinion which then has an immediate effect on the elections. This is a clear case of competitive Authoritarianism that leads to a Democratic Backslide within the informal sectors(Levitsky & Way 2010,p.5-10).

Moving on from the media we can see another area where Babiš has appointed people close to him in key minister roles. Babiš and ANO have not used meritocracy or transparency when appointing staff members and ministers. There has been a clear pattern of the people appointed. The ministerial roles within the Financial Administration were replaced with people that have a strong connection to Agrofert Group. The staff are also political allies, however, this is something that has been reoccurring even before Andrej Babiš and ANO(Mazancova 2018).

As mentioned previously, the appointment of key ministerial roles has played a big part in the democratic backslide within the formal sector of Czech Republic. But the issue continues in the informal sectors. There is clear evidence of Andrej Babiš appointing former police officers and security agents to his security staff in Agrofert Group. By doing this he has

gained a lot of intel about possible opponents and these also have an effect of his control within the media. By gaining intel informally and behind closed doors, it enables Babiš to push his own narrative and agenda in the media. This has thus then in recent time resulted in a lot of criticism against Andrej Babiš by investigative journalists that claim they are being threatened because of their writings criticizing Andrej Babiš. This informal intelligence gained by Andrej Babiš is concerning and plays a big part of their democratic backslide. By having this intel, Babiš has the potential power to practically dictate the narrative towards political and economical opponents. Following this it also results in the fact that he has the power to even blackmail state officials if necessary. It goes to show that this informal intel has the potential to influence both the informal and formal institutions(Svihel 2016, Novinky.cz 2018).

4.2 Hungary

Hungary is not considered to be a robust democracy around the world. Viktor Orban and his party Fidesz has over the last decade taken full control of Hungary. But Viktor Orbans political career started in the 1990s where he was the prime minister of Hungary between the years of 1998-2002. During this time Fidesz was considered a national conservative party. But by failing to win the next election Fidesz took a different route and started to implement a more populist approach, by referring to social issues, fears of the people and the insecurities of the population(Greskovits 2020,p.257-258). In the following years there was political issues within Hungary followed by the global crisis in 2008 that paved the way for Orban. In 2010 Orban and his party scored a majority in the election that gave him twothirds of control in the unicameral parliament. Orban was not shy in his statements and said multiple times that the people have chosen to abandon the old system and elected a new system by referring to himself and his party(Visnovitz & Jenne 2021,p.688-689).

4.2.1 Formal Sectors/Institutions

Unlike Czech Republic, Hungary is not considered to be a robust democracy. We can see this by using various different democracy indexes such as V-dem and Freedom house, where it clearly shows that Hungary is far from being seen as democratic as the Czech Republic(V-Dem 2021 Freedom House 2021) Down below I shall reveal and present V-dems score of Hungary when it comes to democratic output.

Hungary	89	0.37	0.044	96	0.47	0.056	71	0.74	0.065	80	0.66	0.083	41	0.62	0.06	138	0.44	0.626
---------	----	------	-------	----	------	-------	----	------	-------	----	------	-------	----	------	------	-----	------	-------

Source: V-dem 2021

The V-dem dataset and democracy index has ranked Hungary at 89th place in the whole world when it comes to democracy. Hungary has received a 0,37 on the liberal democracy index by V-dem. On the Electoral Democracy index Hungary has received a 0,47. The third index is the Liberal Component Index where Hungary has a score of 0,74. The fourth and fifth indexes are the Egalitarian and the Participatory component indexes where Hungary has received 0,66 and 0,62. The final index is the Deliberative component index where Hungary has a score of 0,44(V-dem 2021).

Country	Total Score and Status	Democracy Percentage	Democracy Score
Hungary	45  Transitional or Hybrid Regime	45.24	3.71

Source: Freedom House 2021

Freedom House has given Hungary a democracy percentage of 45,24%,. Freedom House has also given Hungary a democracy score of 3,71 which makes Hungary classified as a Transitional or Hybrid Regime. This clearly indicates that Hungary is not seen as a liberal democracy anymore, so this then leads to the question of why and what has happened(Freedom House 2021).

As stated above, in the last decade Victor Orban along with his party Fidesz have seized control of nearly all aspects of politics in Hungary. They have for the last decade taken executive, legislative and judiciary control. This has then resulted in Orban and Fidesz practically undermining existing liberal institutions that maintain and regulate the checks and balances. A consequence of this has been that Fidesz has been able to change the constitution of Hungary unilaterally.,resulting in the that Fidesz now has passed laws that enable them to add judges to the constitutional court without the consent and approval from the opposition. It comes as no surprise as the majority of the new judges added to the constitutional court are Fidesz loyalists. Following these events many of the already existing judges were not content with the appointment of the new judges. In order to shut the criticism down, Orban ordered the Constitution to curtail the court's power(Kreko, Enyedi 2018,p.39-45)

The new Constitution enabled Fidesz and Viktor Orban to make other constitutional changes. For example ,Orban decided to change the electoral system into a system that benefits him and his party more but also at the same time reorganizing a selective group of bodies in Hungary. In many key positions and areas Orban has appointed people that are very close to him to ensure that decisions that are taken are in his benefit(Kreko, Enyedi 2018,p.45-51).A clear case of the change of bodies in came in the year of 2014 where there was a complete overhaul of new appointments. Orban appointed his former spokesperson Peter Szijjártó as the new foreign minister. This was done to ensure that foreign policy has Orbans best in mind. Shortly after in the summer of 2014 200 new id cards were issued for new staff within the Foreign Ministry. The Foreign Ministry had 600 employees before the appointment of the new staff(Visnovitz & Jenne 2021,p.690-692)

The most recent constitutional change that Orbán has made was during the pandemic of Covid-19. Orbán decided that in the times of the pandemic there has to be easy and quick decision making in order to handle the pandemic in the most optimal manner. By having constitutional power and control Orbán decided to introduce martial law. This emergency legislation leaves Orbán and Fidesz unchallenged when it comes to political power. All other parties and laws are to be under the control of Fidesz as they need to be able to be quick in their decision making. This has thus resulted in the removal of necessary checks and balances in Hungary. Those few checks and balances that are existing are also to be questioned due to the appointment of people close to Orbán in key ministerial roles (Zerofsky 2020). Following this, although Orbán has a lot of support, it has still raised certain amounts of concern, both from the population but also other countries and organizations such as the EU. Due to the fact that these changes are seen as authoritarian, the EU has at times sanctioned or threatened Hungary with sanctions in order to return to democracy. These attempts have been without success as the democratic backslide is still ongoing. But it still highlights the level and severity of the backslide that Hungary has endured and is still enduring (Kelemen 2017).

This is a clear cut example of how Orbán and his party have pushed the democratic backslide within the formal sectors. The new emergency legislation also enabled Orbán and Fidesz to hand out prison sentences to whomever that may spread misleading and false information according to them. Once again very similar to the case in Czech Republic, there are clear indicators that point to Competitive Authoritarianism (Zerofsky 2020).

4.2.2 Informal Sectors/Institutions

Despite the fact that the Democratic Backslide in Hungary has mostly been acute within the formal sectors, there are also concerns and challenges within the informal sectors also. As stated the emergency law has enabled Orbán to capture anyone who may criticize him as it can be seen as “misleading” information. This then leads to the question of how Orbán and Fidesz know if someone is spreading “misleading” information about them. Very similar to

Babiš and ANO in Czech Republic, Orban owns a vast amount of media outlets in Hungary, which therefore gives him control and immediate access to the media. Both the mass media and law enforcement have fallen under direct rule and control of Fidesz and Orban since 2010. The majority of the media outlets have been strangled when it comes to the financial aspect. The only media outlet that is not financially strangled is RTL Klub which is Hungary's most popular tv channel followed by index.hu which is the most popular website. Public radio and Tv channels also fall into the rule and control of the state. Private channels have been aligned with friendly and trusted businesses and therefore have a strong connection to Fidesz and Orban. Those few independent channels and outlets have been threatened with taxes followed by the possible withdrawal of licenses. This is done in order to dictate and control the narrative towards Fidesz and Orban himself(Zoltan 2019,p.385-390).

Following the control of media and other sources of information, Fidesz have given incentives to people to participate in government controlled clientele. This has therefore resulted in the fact that the police and public prosecution also have fallen under the control of the state. The police and the public prosecution are asked to prioritize state trust and loyalty above morale within their profession, resulting in the fact that accusations and claims against government officials and cronies are not investigated. The accusations are being deemed as groundless and people may even be threatened for accusing these officials and cronies(Zoltan 2019,p.390-395).

Despite the fact that the judicial system is still relatively independent from the government formally, one must not forget that the appointment of new judges to the court is also a part of the informal control that Fidesz and Orban have. They might have been appointed to a formal role but their influence and manipulation of possible cases are very much informal. Their influence is not to be taken lightly as they have the possible power to decide certain cases and their outcomes. This is not only for the appointment of the new judges but as stated in the formal sector part, the appointment of the new Foreign Minister and of the 200 new employees within the Foreign Ministry also clearly demonstrates how Orban uses formal power to possibly accumulating more informal power and control.(Levitsky & Way 2010, p.20-30).

Although Orban and Fidesz may have formal institutional power, the decision and policy making process is done informally. The decision and policy making are done by a group of

Orban and Fidesz loyalists that Orban trusts. This circle ensures that the decisions that are made are almost guaranteed to benefit Viktor Orban and Fidesz. He also aims to polarize the country by presenting false immigration statistics. This is done in order to create an outer enemy that brings the country together and is also a consequence of Orbans populist approach that he embraced before becoming the Prime Minister in 2010. This then shifts the focus and enables Orban to reshape the state institutions as stated in the formal sector/institutions part as the focus is on the problems that Orban himself lifts up.(Zerofsky 2020). One must not forget the fact that this is also a strategic move, because of the fact that formally and to the public it may seem as if decisions are made democratically, but in reality it is done behind closed doors. This then leads to the concern regarding the state funds and what is done with them. One can not possibly guarantee that state funds such as taxes and other sources of state income are being used for state purposes. It is important to have this in mind as this circle has nearly total control and therefore one may draw the conclusion that the same is being done with state funds(Kelemen & Orenstein 2016).

Although Orban is not a prominent businessman as Babiš, he has sought to gain a lot of economical power and control. In order to thrive as a business and get the possibilities to sign state contracts, the incentives show that a strong relationship with Orban and Fidesz certainly increases the odds. By prioritizing businesses that have close ties to the party and Orban it poses another democratic issue. One can draw the conclusion that the economic playing field is not level and fair for all of those involved. Businesses want to grow and earn the rights to possible state contracts, as those are very beneficial. In order to do this, the incentives show that you have to start having close ties with the state, resulting in the fact that more and more businesses follow these incentives and therefore the economic playing field becomes centralized as Orban and Fidesz have control over these actors as well(Miklos & Simons 2021, p.20-27).

As Orban owns the media he dictates and controls the narrative. If someone does not follow the narrative then Orban also has a major influence within the police and security services. Therefore he can gain intel about anyone that may concern him and use it however he wishes against them and this is another example of how the Competitive Authoritarianism theory demonstrates itself in Hungary(Levitsky & Way 2010, p.1-10)By using these informal and indirect methods, Orban and Fidesz have a major control of the outcome since they dictate

and control the narrative against anyone that may be an opponent to them. Similar to the case of Czech Republic, there are clear indicators that point to the fact that the outcome of the elections are decided beforehand. So by using illegitimate methods Orban and Fidesz have managed to seize power democratically(Levitsky & Way 2010, p.1-5)

5 Conclusion/Discussion

Based on the findings we can see many similarities between the democratic backslide in Czech Republic and Hungary. Both Andrej Babiš and Viktor Orban have sought to gain massive control over the informal institutions and sectors. The control and manipulation of the media followed by the police and security services has played a major part in Orbans and Babiš' way of governing. Both Viktor Orban and Andrej Babiš have been carefully selecting people close to them when it comes to appointing key ministerial roles, which then results in the fact that their influence may be informal but it stretches and covers nearly all key elements of ruling and politics. Where the two countries differ is mostly within the Formal sectors and institutions. Andrej Babiš has not succeeded in the Formal sectors like Viktor Orban has. Although the ambitions for Babiš may be similar to Orban, the findings show that Orban has succeeded in gaining control of the formal sectors. As stated earlier, the constitutional changes and the emergency legislation has given Orban nearly complete control of the formal sectors and institutions. Babiš on the other hand is still in the process. But if anything is to be considered, Babiš may not be too far away from gaining the control of the formal sectors and institutions, thus resulting in a democratic backslide within the formal sectors too.

Relating back to the theory of Competitive Authoritarianism, the relevancy of this theory becomes quite obvious. Due to the indirect and informal control over the media and security services it is hard to not argue that the outcome of their elections are practically decided even before they are being held. Controlling the narrative and therefore using illegitimate methods to gain power through democracy is a trademark of Competitive Authoritarianism as a theory. This also shows the correlation between the Democratic Backslide theory and Competitive Authoritarianism. Based on the findings we can see that key elements of the Competitive Authoritarianism theory results in a Democratic Backslide.

Although Czech Republic may not be considered a Hybrid regime in the same way that Hungary is, I believe that based on my findings I believe that my hypothesis is proven to be correct. Based on the findings as previously stated it becomes clear that the majority of the

backslide in Hungary has been within the Formal sectors and Institutions. This has then resulted in the fact that other countries and organizations see the shaping and manipulation of the formal institutions and sectors. These changes are easier to find and see, especially for other countries and organizations. Therefore going back to my purpose and hypothesis I believe that Hungary has been stigmatized as somewhat of an Authoritarian or Hybrid Regime because of the level of backsliding within the formal institutions and sectors. Czech Republic on the other hand is still considered a robust democracy. The reason behind this is because of the fact that the majority of the backslide has occurred within the informal sectors and institutions. Therefore, due to the fact that Andrej Babiš has used his control and manipulation behind closed doors, it is more difficult for other countries and organizations to see the severity of the backslide and how much control Babiš has informally. Based on this I can say that if Czech Republic and Andrej Babiš continue their democratic backslide within the formal sectors and institutions, then and only then will they cease to be seen as a robust democracy.

Ultimately I believe that this text can help to broaden the Democratic Backslide paradigm. It can broaden the paradigm in the way that this text shows that in order for a country to suffer a democratic backslide or be seen as a Hybrid regime, one must not only focus on the formal sectors and institutions. As this text shows, authoritarian changes within the informal sectors and institutions play a major part in the Autocratization of a country. Orban started by autocratizing the informal sectors and institutions and then later on within the formal sectors. Babiš is on the path of autocratization of the informal sectors and may very well be heading down the same path as Viktor Orban and Fidesz in Hungary and suffer the same level of Democratic Backsliding.

6 References

Babiš, A. 2017. *O čem sním, když náhodou spím*. Prague: ANO.

Banzl, M. 2014. “Je Babiš ‘český Berlusconi?’ [Is Babiš the Czech Berlusconi?],” *EuroZprávy.cz*, 16 September. Accessed 20 December 2021.
<http://domaci.eurozpravy.cz/politika/102380-je-babis-cesky-berlusconi/>.

Esaiasson, P., Gilljam, M., Oscarsson, H., Towns, A., & Wängnerud, L. (2017). *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. (5:e uppl.). Wolters Kluwer

Freedom House.2021.*Nations in transit*. Collected from Freedom House:<https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores?sort=asc&order=Democracy%20Score> Accessed the 15th of December 2021

Globalis 2021A. *Tjeckien*. Accessed 13th December 2021
<https://www.globalis.se/Laender/tjeckien>

Globalis 2021B. *Ungern*. Accessed 13th December 2021
<https://www.globalis.se/Laender/ungern>

Greskovits,Béla. (2020) Rebuilding the Hungarian right through conquering civil society: the Civic Circles Movement, *East European Politics*, 36:2, 247-266, DOI: [10.1080/21599165.2020.1718657](https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2020.1718657)

Hanley,Seán,and Milada Anna Vachudova.(2018).Understanding the illiberal turn:democratic backsliding in the Czech Republic.*East European Politics*,34(3),276-296.
DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2018.1493457

Havlík, V. 2015. “The Rise of Party Populism in the Czech Republic.” In *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*, edited by H. Kriesi, and T. S. Pappas, 199–216. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Helmke, G. and Levitsky, S. (2004) “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 2(4), pp. 725–740

Lazarová, D. 2014. “Forbes: Andrej Babiš is most powerful person of Czech media world.” *Radio Prague*, 3 January. Accessed 20 December 2021.
<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/zpravy/andrej-babis-is-most-powerful-person-of-czech-media-world-forbes/1025966>.

Levitsky, S., & Way, L. (2010). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Problems of International Politics). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511781353

Levitsky, S., and L. Way. "The Myth of Democratic Recession". *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 1, Jan. 2015, pp. 45-58.

Kelemen, Daniel. "Europe's Other Democratic Deficit: National Authoritarianism in Europe's Democratic Union." *Cambridge University Press*, 9 Jan. 2017, doi:10.1017/gov.2016.41.

Kelemen, Daniel, and Mitchell Orenstein. "Europe's Autocracy Problem." *Foreign Affairs*, 2016, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/2016-01-07/europes-autocracy-problem.

Krekó, P., and Z. Enyedi. "Explaining Eastern Europe: Orbán's Laboratory of Illiberalism". *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29, no. 3, July 2018, pp. 39-51.

Kopeček, L. 2017. Miloš Zeman - příběh talentovaného pragmatika: Intelektuál válčí s intelektuály [Miloš Zeman – the story of a talented pragmatist: An intellectual at war with intellectuals]. Brno: Barrister and Principal.

Kopecký, P. 2004. "The Czech Republic: Entrenching Proportional Representation." In *The Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, edited by J. Colomer, 347–358. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mazancová, H. 2018. "Změny ve státní správě? Některé jsou protizákonné, kritizuje Babišovu vládu Rekonstrukce státu [Changes in the state administration? Some are unlawful says criticism of Babiš government by Reconstruction of the State." iRozhlas. 9 April. Accessed 20th December 2021. https://www.irozhlas.cz/zpravy-domov/andrej-babis-statni-sprava-sluzebni-zakon-josef-postranecky_1804091245_hm.

Nazifa Alizada, Rowan Cole, Lisa Gastaldi, Sandra Grahn, Sebastian Hellmeier, Palina Kolvani, Jean Lachapelle, Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F. Maerz, Shreeya Pillai, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2021. *Autocratization Turns Viral. Democracy Report 2021*. University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute.

Pehe, Jiri. "Explaining Eastern Europe: Czech Democracy Under Pressure." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29 no. 3, 2018, p. 65-77. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/jod.2018.0045.

Pejovich, S. & Colombatto, Enrico. (2008). *Law, informal rules and economic performance: The case for common law*. 10.4337/9781848442900.

Pergler, T. 2014. *Babiš. Příběh oligarcha*. [Babiš: the story of an oligarch]. Prague: Mladá fronta.

Perkernová, K. 2014. "Sobotka: Nejčistší by bylo, kdyby Babiš přestal podnikat" [Sobotka: the cleanest solution would be if Babiš was no longer in business]. *Deník.cz* 28 March. Accessed 20 December 2021. https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/sobotka-nejcistsi-by-bylo-kdyby-babis-prestal-podnikat-20140328.html

Přibáň: Mocenské duo Zeman–Babiš by nás odsunulo na evropskou periferii. [Přibáň: duo of Zeman and Babiš in power will push us to the periphery of Europe]” Novinky.cz, 9 July 2017, Accessed 20th December 2021 :<https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/442911-priban-mocenske-duo-zeman-babis-by-nas-odsunulo-na-evropskou-periferii.html>.

Reporters without Borders. 2017. “Local oligarch’s conflicts of interest dominate Czech media”. 26 July 2017. Accessed 20 December 2021. <https://rsf.org/en/news/local-oligarch-conflicts-interest-dominate-czech-media>.

Roberts, A. 2006. “What Kind of Democracy is Emerging in Eastern Europe?” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22 (1): 37–64.

Roberts, A. 2017. “Czech Democracy in the Eyes of Czech Political Scientists.” *East European Politics* 33 (4): 562–572.

Sebők Miklós, Jasper Simons, How Orbán won? Neoliberal disenchantment and the grand strategy of financial nationalism to reconstruct capitalism and regain autonomy, *Socio-Economic Review*, 2021;, mwab052, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwab052>

Švihel, P. 2016. “Selžou spíše lidé než technika, varují před unikem dat z EET experti [People will fail, rather than technology, warn experts over data leaks from Electronic Record of Sales system]”, *Seznam.cz*, 18 December 2016. Accessed 21 December 2021. <https://www.seznam.cz/zpravy/clanek/selzou-spise-lide-nez-technika-varuji-pred-unikem-dat-z-eet-experti-7712>.

Tramba, David. 2016. “Byznys Andreje Babiše: 5 postřehů z výroční zprávy Agrofertu [Andrej Babiš’s business: 5 take-aways from Agrofert’s annual report]”. *Dotyk*. 26 July. Accessed 20 December 2021. <https://www.dotyk.cz/byznys/byznys-andreje-babise-5-postrehu-z-vyrocnizpravy-agrofertu-20160726.html>

Vachudova, Milada Anna. (2020). Ethnopolitism and democratic backsliding in Central Europe. *East European Politics*, 36(3), 318-340.

Visnovitz, P., Jenne, . Populist argumentation in foreign policy: the case of Hungary under Viktor Orbán, 2010–2020. *Comp Eur Polit* 19, 683–702 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-021-00256-3>

Wagenknecht, Lukáš. 2017. “Proč nevyřeší svěrenský fond střet zájmů ministra financí? [Why don’t the trust funds solve the finance minister’s conflict of interest?]” *Tyden.cz*, 31 January 2017. Accessed 21 December 2021. http://www.tyden.cz/rubriky/nazory/komentatori/proc-nevyresi-sverensky-fond-stret-zajmu-ministra-financi_415801.html.

Zerofsky, Elizabeth. "How Viktor Orbán Used the Coronavirus to Seize More Power." *The New Yorker*, 9 Apr. 2020, Accessed 21 December 2021 www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-europe/how-viktor-orban-used-the-coronavirus-to-seize-more-power.

Zoltán Ádám (2019) Explaining Orbán: A Political Transaction Cost Theory of Authoritarian Populism, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 66:6, 385-401,
DOI:[10.1080/10758216.2019.1643249](https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2019.1643249)