

***Civic and Uncivic Values in the Czech Republic: Value Transformation, Politics, Education, and Gender Equality.*** Ed. Sabrina Ramet, Vladimir Đorđević, and Christine Hassenstab. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. xxiii, 257 pp. Notes. Appendix. Index. Illustrations. Figures. Tables. \$149.99, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.205

Recent years have been bruising for democratic development in east central Europe. The halo of 1989's largely peaceful revolutions overthrowing communism has been dimmed by populist mobilization and democratic backsliding. That the Czech Republic, home of the Velvet Revolution and playwright-dissident-president Václav Havel, has been no less vulnerable to these trends than the rest of the neighborhood constitutes the starting point of the new volume *Civic and Uncivic Values in the Czech Republic: Value Transformation, Politics, Education, and Gender Equality*, edited by Sabrina Ramet, Vladimir Đorđević, and Christine Hassenstab. The essays in the volume ask how should we understand the seemingly paradoxical Czech case, which looks very respectable on some social and political indicators but, at the same time, is shot through with a pervasive sense that the political system is dysfunctional. It was this sentiment that opened the door to oligarch Andrej Babiš's Alliance of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO) to ascend to power and preside over a gradual but significant process of democratic backsliding in recent years.

The strength of the volume is its multifaceted survey of civic values: the principles of tolerance, respect for the rule of law, and individual rights that the book's authors (among many others!) posit as the basis of democracy. The book opens with a pair of essays contextualizing Czech society using a variety of cross-national data and institutional rankings from such sources as the European Values Study and Freedom House, which offer a familiar set of indicators on attitudes toward democracy, the rights of minorities, trust in various political institutions, and so on. This contextualization sets the scene for a panoply of detailed studies of Czech society and politics drawing on a far wider range of sources than social scientists typically use. As the following thumbnail sketches suggest, these various vantage points do not always converge on a consistent assessment of the strength of civic values.

Elisabeth Bakke offers a detailed study of political party organization from the 1990s through the present, highlighting the dramatic weakening of "established" parties and rise of less organized populist "outsider" parties of both the right and left. Jaromír Volek's chapter on the media is among the most pessimistic in the volume, detailing a confluence of tabloidization and oligarchization that culminates with Andrej Babiš, who paved his rise to power by purchasing the most influential national newspapers. A chapter by the historian Oldřich Tůma analyzes history textbooks in the school system to probe the politics of memory and its instrumentalization in the public discourse; however, it offers a more positive view overall of civic values than the chapter on the media. A chapter by the literature scholar Herbert Eagle uses cultural media to probe civic attitudes by analyzing the films Jan Hřebejk and Petr Jarchovský, a screenwriter-director duo whose films exploring the legacies of communism and World War II have won international acclaim, most notably with "Divided We Fall" (*Musíme si pomáhat*, 2000).

The book's final chapters shift the analytical lens to the enactment of civic principles in society. Vladimir Đorđević's contribution analyzes women's political participation since 1989. On the positive side, the oft-lamented erosion of women's political representation and re-traditionalization of the social sphere in the 1990s has largely been reversed. Less positively, women's representation in the higher tiers of politics and the professional sphere more generally still lags significantly: the Czech Republic

ranks 21 out of 28 EU countries for parliamentary representation (153). Focusing on the reception of feminism, Sharon Wolchik argues that, despite a rich history of women's organization in the interwar period, the communist regime's conflicted incorporation of women into politics and the economy created much ambivalence about the term "feminism," which carried into the 1990s. Though there is greater receptiveness to feminism today, Wolchik's interviews with contemporary Czech activists reveal that it still comes with many caveats. Eva Taterová's chapter on antisemitism comes to very similar findings: on the one hand, the Czech Republic is one of Israel's closest contemporary European allies, but on the other, the available evidence suggests an increase in antisemitic incidents, especially internet-based harassment. Finally, the sociologists Jiří Navrátil and Ondřej Císář examine notions of citizenship among contemporary Czech social movements.

Collectively, the volume's chapters provide an uncommonly wide-ranging and informative analysis of political and civil societal development in a country often overlooked because of language barriers to outside scholars, its relatively small size, and the large shadows cast by neighboring Hungary and Poland, which have become the poster children of democratic backsliding and ethno-populist mobilization. This volume is, therefore, especially valuable as a means to reflect on the broader dimensions of such backsliding both regionally and analytically. It should make the book's potential audience much wider than specialists in Czech politics. By the same token, however, it is disappointing that many of the book's interior chapters do not sufficiently contextualize the analysis of their central theme—be it antisemitism, social movement activism, the party system, or the media—with comparisons to other countries. This reader would have expected more frequent and extensive comparisons with the rest of Europe, and especially Hungary and Poland.

The book begins and ends by evoking the notion of the Czech Republic as a flawed democracy, one in which citizens overwhelmingly support democratic principles but also are deeply dissatisfied with their political system. How different is this picture from that in much of the rest of the world today, including western Europe and the United States? This volume offers us a fine-grained picture of popular discontent and perceived political dysfunction in the Czech Republic, but it falls short of providing the comparative context to know how worried we should be.

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***Unsettled Heritage: Living Next to Poland's Material Jewish Traces after the Holocaust.*** By Yechiel Weizman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022. xiv, 189 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$45.00, hard bound.

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Although much is known about the wartime fate of Jewish sites in Poland, particularly the larger ones, considerably less attention has been devoted to the postwar transformation of these sites, and even less to Jewish material patrimony within Poland's small provincial towns. Given the size of the Jewish population in prewar Poland and the extent of the genocide, there remained a huge inventory of unused or underused property after the war. Interestingly, unlike the case of abandoned Orthodox Churches in the east or Protestant churches in Silesia, for the most part there have been no positively accepted Catholic claims on synagogues and study halls. Indeed, in the early postwar years government policy