

Abstract

The presented thesis mainly focuses on an analysis of twenty years of the politics of electoral reform in Czechoslovakia (1990–1992), on the federal level (the Federal Assembly), and the national level (the Czech National Council), respectively, and later on the politics of electoral reform in the Czech Republic, on the national level (the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic).

First, the thesis discusses how and why electoral systems are chosen and changed. Recent analysis of the politics of electoral reform has yielded two main theoretical perspectives regarding the reforms of recent decades. The first one, the power-maximizing perspective, assumes that politicians control the choice of the electoral system and that they are motivated to maximize their power. The other perspective allows for a wider range of actors – in particular, including ordinary citizens as well as politicians – and sees electoral reform as the product of a mix of inherent and contingent factors. Reform can, under this approach, occur in response to specific instances of systemic failure. More recently, Alan Renwick (in 2010 and more precisely in 2011) seeks to develop a more refined understanding of electoral reform processes through two steps. At the outset, there is an acknowledgement that there are different types of electoral reform process. Subsequently Renwick seeks to develop a more nuanced understanding by analyzing various aspects of the reform process in considerable detail. For this, it is important to realize that we can identify two potential routes to electoral reform: either the politicians in power do decide that they want reform (than we can have two types of electoral reform process, either so called *elite majority imposition* or *elite settlement*); or those politicians lose control over the decision process (than we can speak, according to Renwick, either about so called *elite-mass interaction* or about *mass imposition*).

For our purposes of Czech politics of electoral reform analysis, it seems to be useful to consider the elite majority imposition type. Elected politicians dominate the process and seek electoral reform to advance their partisan or personal power interests. This type is close to the power-maximizing model, and the reform process occurs because the elite majority have both the will to change the system and the power to impose their wishes. This was the case of the (eventually failed) 2000 electoral reform in the CR, as well as the (unfinished and therefore failed) 2006–2009 electoral reform process. Its main purposes were to strengthen the seat shares of the parties initiating the electoral reform process. However, the elite majority imposition type is not applicable to the reform process of the early 1990s

that took place under specific conditions of democratic transition. In this context, it seems to be useful for the reform process to be analyzed by using the social choice approach (mainly the so-called contextualized rationality) as a bargaining of explicit nature between individual political actors. However, uncertainty and the lack of shared information offer special conditions modifying the original power-maximizing model to the so-called *maximin* rule based on a risk-minimizing argument, in the sense of the Rawlsian concept of veil of ignorance. These circumstances can support electoral reform based on wide consensus, which corresponds to the Renwick's type of the reform process by *elite settlement* and which was the case of the politics of electoral reform in Czechoslovakia in the period from 1990 to 1992.