

Weimar Republic as a lesson for Czech liberal democracy

Abstract

This rigorous thesis is based on two basic premises. The first is that history should be a source of valuable knowledge and lessons. The second is that the ability to analyse past mistakes and learn from them is essential for the survival of modern liberal democracy.

The Weimar Republic is a classic example of a type of modern liberal democracy that was burdened throughout its existence with many problems that eventually led to its downfall. This thesis aims first to subject the Weimar Republic to a thorough analysis, and then to extract from this analysis transferable lessons for the present. Particular attention is paid to Czech liberal democracy, to which the insights gained from the analysis of the Weimar Republic are transferred and subsequently examined.

The analysis builds on several pillars. The first and most important is the Weimar Constitution and the constitutional system of the then German Empire. In particular, attention is paid to the problematic relationship between the executive and the legislature, the electoral system, and the imbalance of powers under emergency legislation. However, the shortcomings of the constitutional framework alone cannot reliably explain the collapse of a system as complex as the Weimar Republic. Therefore, the analysis cannot do without three other areas that undoubtedly had more or less influence on the tragic developments after 1933. These are economic, social and international political factors. The impact of economic catastrophes on the newly formed republic or the support of extremist parties is examined, taking into account the stratification of German society at the time.

The identified shortcomings and causes of the fall of the republic are then filtered according to their applicability and transferability to the reality of the 21st century, and then examined in the current form of Czech liberal democracy. The comparison is made mainly in terms of constitutional and social law, with only the economy as a relevant factor. International politics and its influence is not discussed in detail due to the very different circumstances. Since one of the main themes is the threat to democracy and its collapse, attention is not paid to partial weaknesses that do not pose an existential threat. They are therefore only mentioned.

The output of this thesis should be an assessment of the extent to which Czech liberal democracy is defensible against potential threats, where its weaknesses lie, and in what ways the Weimar Republic can be a potential source of lessons or even warnings.

Klíčová slova: constitution, democracy, Weimar Republic