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Generational dynamics of political trust and satisfaction in Czechia: the enduring impact of political socialisation during socialism

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ABSTRACT

The article examines how exposure to socialism shapes political attitudes and how the fall of the Iron Curtain affected political socialisation across generations in Czechia, while exploring the influence of political events on the formation of political attitudes. Generations born in the 1980s and later show a lower democratic deficit than older generations who were exposed to the socialist regime. When comparing generations exposed to socialism with revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations, younger cohorts were, during 2010–2019, more trusting of government and more satisfied with politics than their predecessors. They appear to have developed a more contented and level-headed relationship with democratic institutions.

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Generational differences; political socialisation; trust in government; satisfaction with politics; Czechia

1. Introduction

Each generation has its own views and ways of thinking shaped by the political, social and cultural environment in which they grew up. The way individuals are socialised is influenced by a variety of agents, including parents, family, peers, school, media and political events (Neundorf and Smets 2017). Studies have confirmed that our initial and subsequent interactions with political institutions also shape our political trust as do social background, gender, cognitive abilities, education level and occupation (Deary, Batty, and Gale 2008; Schoon and Cheng 2011). However, previous research has not provided a clear answer as to whether trust in political actors and institutions declines (Brewer et al. 2004; Twenge 2013; Twenge, Campbell, and Freeman 2012), changes over a lifetime (Hudson 2006) or increases (Mishler and Rose 2001; Patterson 1999).

Differences in political attitudes between generations also occur because of cultural modernisation. As cultural contexts change, younger generations are socialised with new, different values and face challenges that their parents and grandparents did not face. Among other things, the opinions of older and younger generations differ on

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issues such as post-materialism, gender roles or individual choice norms, with older generations being more conservative (Manea and Rabušic 2021).

In this article, I examine generational differences in trust in government and satisfaction with politics between Czech generations. Lower levels of trust in political institutions in post-socialist Europe have been attributed to various factors, including political culture (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2014), institutions (Boda and Medve-Bálint 2014; Mishler and Rose 1997), economic conditions (Hibbing and Patterson 1994) and the interplay between social trust and government quality (Muringani, Fitjar, and Rodríguez-Pose 2024).

The level of trust in Czech political institutions has dynamically changed over the past 35 years. It experienced a "honeymoon period" after the collapse of the socialist regime, declined in the late 1990s (Kołczyńska 2020) and then increased again after 2005 (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění 2025). However, since 2000, political trust in Central and Eastern Europe has generally remained below the European Union average (Choi and Woo 2023; Muringani, Fitjar, and Rodríguez-Pose 2024). This study examines generational differences in trust in government and political satisfaction, especially considering the role of exposure to socialism, gender, support for radical parties as a sign of political radicalisation and alignment with the parties in power.

My primary interest is in assessing the role of the socialising agent of a political event, namely, the fall of the Iron Curtain in Czechia. The revolutionary generation, an age cohort born in the 1980s, was subject to many hopes and expectations regarding its role in the democratic transformation and political renewal. It was considered the first generation after a 40-year period without a socialist burden, without being affected by the socialist regime or socialised by its institutions to the same extent as the preceding generations. This generation has been viewed as a potential catalyst for transforming the political landscape and bringing the ideals of the revolution to life. However, does this mean that the generation has a lower democratic deficit than older generations who were exposed to the socialist regime for a more extensive period of their lives? Do revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations express a higher level of trust in political institutions and satisfaction with politics than preceding generations?

The research findings indicate that younger generations in Czechia do show greater trust in the government and satisfaction with politics than their older counterparts, suggesting a more confident and contented relationship with politics and its institutions among the younger population. Furthermore, even among the younger generation, those who tend to be politically radical and support anti-establishment parties still show higher levels of trust and satisfaction with politics than those who support similar parties among the older generations socialised mainly during the socialist regime.

2. State of the art: generational differences in political attitudes

Research on generational differences in political attitudes has revealed a complex interplay between geographical, social, political and economic factors. Younger generations in Western Europe have experienced a separation from the traditional cleavages of social class, religion and the left/right identification of older generations as well as an increase in the importance of attitudes towards immigration (Walczak, van der Brug, and De Vries 2012). Additionally, we can observe disparities between younger and older generations in their relation to cultural modernisation and value concerns

centred on post-materialism, gender roles and individual choice norms (Manea and Rabušic 2021). However, the younger generations do not just grow apart from the older ones, there are also age-related similarities in attitudes towards participation and agreement on key political issues, such as the economy (Furlong and Cartmel 2012). Young people's knowledge of and interest in politics increase with age, as do their negative and cynical attitudes towards politics (Mortimore and Tyrrell 2004). Although knowledge and interest in politics tend to increase with age, participation in political protest activities declines accordingly (Goerres 2009).

Previous studies of generational differences among Europeans also show that young adults in Western Europe are just as supportive of or opposed to liberal democracy as the older population. The differences, however, emerge in the way the populations mobilise politically (Fernández Guzmán Grassi, Portos, and Felicetti 2024). Even though satisfaction with democracy has risen among individuals across all age groups, young Europeans tend to be more content with democracy than their older counterparts (Zilinsky 2019).

Research on the relationship between gender and political trust remains inconclusive. While some studies suggest that women exhibit higher levels of political trust (Christensen and Lægreid 2005; Čermák and Stachová 2010; Schoon and Cheng 2011), others find lower trust among women (Alesina and Ferrara 2002; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). The gender gap in trust and satisfaction with politics can be attributed to several factors. Research suggests that women have, in some areas, different policy preferences (Eagly and Diekman 2006; Garritzmann and Schwander 2021), leading to different expectations of politics and policy outcomes and, consequently, to more positive assessments of trust and satisfaction. Another theoretical explanation lies in gender differences in political interest. Women, who tend to be less interested in politics (Fraile and Gomez 2017), may evaluate the political system more favourably due to lower awareness of specific issues and policy outcomes. Psychological factors may also play a role. Women tend to have higher levels of agreeableness than men (Vianello et al. 2013), which may lead them to express more moderate political opinions. This tendency is often attributed to social role norms and self-expectations.

Additionally, some findings indicate that the effect varies depending on the specific political institution being assessed (Reinhardt 2015), the measurements (Bunting, Gaskell, and Stoker 2021) or that political trust is influenced more by personality traits associated with femininity rather than sex (McDermott and Jones 2022). Women in post-socialist Central European and former Soviet Union countries (Choi and Woo 2023) including Czechia (Čermák and Stachová 2010) express higher levels of trust in political institutions than men. At the same time, citizens are more likely to trust and be satisfied with politics if the party they support is in power (Čermák and Stachová 2010). These studies highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence generational differences in political attitudes and opinions and that show the dynamics behind the formation of political attitudes and behaviours among generations.

3. Political socialisation and the influence of political events as agents

Building on theories of political socialisation as well as the historical legacy of communism by Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2017a), I hypothesise that exposure to socialism shapes political attitudes in the direction of democratic deficiency. Political socialisation as a concept can serve as a description of the formation of political opinions and attitudes on the

individual level as well as the generational or age cohort levels. It is defined as the "learning of social patterns corresponding to [an individual's] social position as mediated through various agencies of society" (Hyman 1959, 25) or as the "process by which citizens crystalize political identities, values, and behaviours that remain relatively persistent throughout later life" (Neundorf and Smets 2017, 1).

The process of political socialisation, which begins at an early age, is widely acknowledged to be a longitudinal learning experience (van Deth, Abendschön, and Vollmar 2011), reaching its peak in adolescence and early adulthood (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Jennings and Niemi 2015) but also continuing in later stages of life (Ghitza, Gelman, and Auerbach 2023). It is facilitated by various agents. Among these, the most significant are parents, family and school. Other key agents of political socialisation include conventional and social media, as well as political events (Neundorf and Smets 2017). In this study, political events were examined as agents of political socialisation, specifically, the pivotal political event of the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

The common political experience of individuals coming of age in specific political contexts influences the political behaviour of a generation and plays a key role in the process. In particular, individuals who came of age in politically polarised contexts tend to exhibit lower voter turnout rates in subsequent years (Smets and Neundorf 2014). This suggests that the experience of significant political events during the formative years has a lasting impact on the political behaviour of an individual and that this influence extends to the generation. However, these conclusions apply to political crises in Western democracies. When considering consolidating democracies, such as the post-socialist regimes, the capacity of individuals to adapt to the new regime is extensively influenced by their socioeconomic standing in both the old and the new regimes (Hertz, Meurs, and Selcuk 2009; Kraaykamp and Nieuwbeerta 2000). The Cold War generation, which succeeded in economically adapting, proved to be more capable of adjusting to the recently established democratic system and expressing greater satisfaction with democracy (Neundorf 2010). The economic winners in the post-socialist era are, in particular, more in alignment with the democratic transition and express satisfaction with the democratic regime (Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002).

Furthermore, according to a study on the legacies of communism by Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2017b), childhood exposure to communist ideology has a significant positive impact on an individual's capacity to resist the communist regime. Individuals who were exposed to communism during their formative years demonstrate a greater capacity to resist the adoption of communist ideology than those who were exposed to the communist regime during adulthood. In contrast, exposure to communism during adulthood is associated with a greater tendency to identify with the communist regime and, as adults, may be more likely to adopt its values to navigate their daily lives.

Childhood exposure appears to be an important factor in resistance to regime indoctrination. Either because the subject of politics is uninteresting to children at this point or because the regime succeeded in suppressing their interest in politics and the ability to oppose the regime in adult life. Childhood and adult exposure to socialism still reinforce each other and intensify their affiliation with the socialist regime. The longer the duration an individual's exposure to socialism is, the more pronounced the likelihood their political attitudes and behaviour will exhibit a democratic deficit. The results also imply that individuals tend to consolidate their preferences for political regimes at a later stage in life (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017b).

Drawing on research into the impact of political events on political socialisation, together with exposure to socialism, I argue that the revolutionary generation born in 1981–1990 and the post-revolutionary generation born 1990–2001 exhibit lower amounts of democratic deficit in their political attitudes and behaviours than those exposed to socialism for longer timeframes. This can first be attributed to the effect of childhood resistance to indoctrination and exposure to socialism. Second, the revolutionary generation was notably less exposed to socialism in terms of timeframe than the generations preceding it. Third, compared to the preceding generations, the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations received liberal civic educations and could benefit from extracurricular activities which were no longer subject to the control of the autocratic socialist state. At the same time, generations that have been exposed to socialism and hold a positive affiliation with radical parties are expected to exhibit greater democratic deficits than revolutionary generations. The inclination to support radical parties can signify radicalisation in political attitudes as well as possible nostalgia for the former regime. Greater democratic deficits can be observed in lower levels of satisfaction with democracy and diminished trust in democratic institutions among the generations exposed to the socialist regime. Additionally, I examine here the impact of support for parties in power on political trust and satisfaction as prior research (Čermák and Stachová 2010) suggests it is an important determinant of whether individuals perceive their expectations as likely to be met. Based on this theoretical background, I test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Generations exposed to socialism in adulthood are less trustful towards government than those who did not experience socialism.

Hypothesis 2: Support for radical parties and generational socialisation during a socialist regime undermines trust in government.

Hypothesis 3: Support for parties in power and generational socialisation after the collapse of the socialist regime positively influence trust in government.

Hypothesis 4: Generations exposed to socialism in adulthood are less satisfied with politics than those who did not experience socialism.

Hypothesis 5: Support for radical parties and generational socialisation during a socialist regime weakens satisfaction with politics.

Hypothesis 6: Support for parties in power and generational socialisation after the collapse of the socialist regime positively influence satisfaction with politics.

4. Generational and transformation changes after the collapse of the socialist regime

The transition from socialism to post-socialism has significantly impacted generational differences, particularly in terms of identity formation and social mobility. The process of articulating intergenerational divisions has been intensified by historical events, leading to the emergence of distinct generational identities. A revolution, like the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, goes beyond just a change in rulers or institutional amendments. It requires deep social and cultural transformation, which can only be achieved by socialising successive generations in the newly established political

environment (Marada 2004). For a new generation to arise, a common historical experience for a specific age group is necessary. Recognition of formative historical events is crucial for understanding their impact on socialisation in the new environment (Marada 2004).

Cultural and social transformation also includes changes in the political and social organisation of youth. Political institutions such as the Komsomol and the Pioneer Organisation of the Socialist Youth Union aimed to play an important role in the process of political socialisation of young people. They were designed to instil socialist norms and promote conformity to the regime. This process was reinforced by group pressure, which encouraged young people to adopt state-approved values and to create new generations of socialist leaders (Hahn 1969). Although formal institutions for youth political participation existed, in practice, young people remained largely alienated from politics, engaging only passively and in a largely symbolic manner, especially in the later stages of the socialist era (Marody 1992; Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998). After 1989, institutions of political socialisation diversified and fragmented. Individualised consumption and the emergence of subcultures contrariwise created a wide range of new ways of socialising and embracing political identity (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998).

5. Conceptualisation

5.1. Trust

"Political trust is characterized as a typical expression of diffuse support" (Easton 1975, 447). It is a "necessary precondition for democratic rule" (van der Meer 2017, 1) and a "creator of collective power" (Gamson 1968, 42), a precondition for liberal democracy, but one that cannot be unconditional. Trust can be understood as confidence in the political capacity to act in the best interests of individuals while at the same time holding accountable the behaviour of political actors and institutions (van der Meer 2017).

Trust is also a central theme and concept in this analysis. The study's data consists of information that specifically addresses trust in government, with the interviewees asked to "*please say how much you trust the Czech government on a four-level scale from 'I do not trust the Czech government at all' to 'I fully trust the Czech government'*". Trust is crucial for the legitimacy of governance and law enforcement. Government plays a vital political role in overseeing state budgets and providing citizens necessary public goods and services. It is essential for citizens to support these functions through taxation, compliance and the facilitation of reforms (OECD 2024). The relationship between citizens and government is often viewed as a social contract, and trust in government is fundamental to upholding it and ensuring that mutual obligations are met.

In post-socialist Europe, trust in political institutions is generally lower than in Western Europe (Boda and Medve-Bálint 2014; Mishler and Rose 1997; Muringani, Fitjar, and Rodríguez-Pose 2024). Among post-socialist countries, youth in the Baltic states exhibit higher and more stable levels of political trust compared to their counterparts in the Visegrád countries. Only 11% of individuals under 30 in the Visegrád region fully trust the government, whereas this proportion rises to 27% in the Baltic states (Harring et al. 2023, 53). Overall, younger cohorts in post-socialist countries tend to hold a more favourable

perception of democratic functioning. Those who were children or young adults at the time of the Iron Curtain's collapse express greater satisfaction with democracy than older generations. When comparing post-socialist countries, young people in Poland, Slovakia and Czechia report higher levels of satisfaction with democracy relative to their counterparts in other post-socialist countries (Pew Research Center 2009, 32).

Trust in the Czech government evolved dynamically, reflecting shifts in public expectations and political developments. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, there was a "honeymoon period" characterised by high public trust in the newly established democracy, with 77.9% of Czechs expressing trust in their government. However, this trust declined to 57.2% in 1995 and dropped further to 27.1% by 2000. This downward trend in political trust can be attributed to broader shifts in the public perceptions of politics, largely influenced by political scandals and corruption incidents that emerged around the turn of the millennium (Linek 2010). Since 2005, however, confidence has been on the rise again, with 34.2% in 2005, 70.9% in 2010, 47% in 2015 and 45.9% in 2020 (Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění 2025), signalling a stabilising trend. Czechia offers an interesting case study of the complex dynamics of trust in politics that arose in several post-socialist countries.

5.2. Satisfaction with politics

The methods used by scholars to study satisfaction with politics have been inconsistent. There are different approaches to understanding political satisfaction and inconsistencies among the conceptualisations being used (Singh and Mayne 2023). In general, there are two conceptual strands: *the literal* approach describes the attitude-based measurement of democratic quality in which respondents rate the regime's quality, whereas *the encompassing* approach captures respondents' perceptions of the daily functioning of politics (Singh and Mayne 2023). Recently, the encompassing approach has been used more frequently. Some studies do not even distinguish between political satisfaction and satisfaction with democracy (Campbell 2015). Satisfaction with the political situation can also be referred to as political wellbeing, which reflects the sum of satisfaction with public policies being discussed, implemented or in effect (van Klaveren, Maassen van den Brink, and Van Praag 2004). It can also be derived as a subset of life satisfaction and operationalised as a mixture of satisfaction with democracy and satisfaction with the actions of political leaders (Korol and Bevelander 2023). Indeed, prior research has shown that young people who report high levels of life satisfaction also tend to report high satisfaction with democracy and the actions of political leaders in their countries (Korol and Bevelander 2023). Furthermore, young people in Western and Central Europe tend to be more satisfied with democracy than older citizens, and satisfaction with democracy has even increased among people across Europe (Zilinsky 2019).

Based on the data used for this study, the encompassing approach to political satisfaction is used, as the respondents were asked on a five-level scale: "*How satisfied are you with the overall current political situation in Czechia?*" This research examines the level of satisfaction among citizens with the actions of their political leaders during a specified period of time, focusing on their political wellbeing rather than general satisfaction with the regime.

Trust and satisfaction with politics are essential indicators of a thriving democratic system, serving as fundamental prerequisites for a country's political health. These

factors can significantly impact the nature of the political culture within a country as well as voter motivation to participate in elections. A reciprocal relationship between trust and satisfaction with politics has been confirmed (Weber, Steinmetz, and Kabst 2017); thus, it is essential to consider both indicators in research.

5.3. Democratic deficits

Democratic deficits are a growing concern in contemporary democracies. They are characterised by a disconnection between citizens and their governments, leading to decreased responsiveness, legitimacy and trust in political institutions (Warren 2009). This gap arises from a complex interplay of factors, including rising public expectations, negative media coverage of government and the perceived shortcomings of democratic systems in meeting these expectations (Norris 2011). One way to address democratic deficits is to foster greater citizen participation. When citizens feel empowered to engage with the political process, governments have an opportunity to be more responsive and the legitimacy of the system can be strengthened (Nabatchi 2010; Warren 2009). These deficits can manifest as a sense of disconnection from democratic institutions and a lack of influence over political decisions. Citizens feel unable to utilise available channels to hold the government, municipalities or political parties accountable (Norris 2011). Tackling democratic deficits is crucial for maintaining active citizenship, effective governance and the ongoing health of democratic procedures.

5.4. Generations

Based on Strauss and Howe (1991), I distinguish between the following five generations: the Silent Generation (born 1925–1945), the baby boomers (born 1946–1964) and Generation X (born 1965–1980). In Czechia, the part of Generation X born in the 1970s is also called "Husák's Children". Husák was the president of Czechoslovakia in the 1970s, and this era of normalisation was typical of its baby boom. The sample also includes Generation Y or so-called millennials (born 1981–1995) and the early part of Generation Z (1995–2001). Given the aim of this research is to examine the impact the fall of the socialist regime had on political socialisation, I categorise these last two generations into distinct groups: the "revolutionary generation", comprising individuals born between 1981 and 1990, and the "post-revolutionary generation", encompassing those born between 1991 and 2001. The revolutionary generation is the first cohort largely unformed by socialist political socialisation, with minimal childhood exposure to socialism. Research suggests that early exposure fosters resistance to regime indoctrination, whereas exposure in adulthood makes it much harder to resist (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017b). Their political socialisation took place during the post-1989 liberalisation, making them the first generation free of socialist ideological constraints. The "post-revolutionary generation" is one with no direct exposure to socialism.

6. Data and methods

The data collection "Naše společnost" (Our Society) of the Czech Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM) between January 2010 and December 2019 (Tabery et al. 2010) was used for the purposes of this research. The data was collected almost on a monthly basis

approximately 10 times a year; therefore, the time points of the used data are months combined from this time period into a single dataset. The gathering of data did not cease after December 2019; however, I opted not to consider the impact of the pandemic on public trust in government and satisfaction with the political situation due to the "rally around the flag" phenomenon. This refers to factors that lead to an increase in leaders' approval ratings, which falls outside the scope of this research. Nevertheless, this is a very intriguing and significant aspect of the topic that warrants further exploration.

The objective of this study is to investigate the long-term patterns of generational variations in trust levels towards the government and overall satisfaction with the political situation. The analysis took into account the time factor, using the year in which each case was collected as a control variable in the linear regression analysis.

The demographic characteristics of gender, education, age and region in Czechia were reflected in the sample parameters. The sample is representative because its composition aligns with the population, allowing for minor deviations. Trained interviewers gathered the data using a standard interview format. The data are cross-sectional and not weighted (Tabery et al. 2010). They are restricted in terms of ethnic and cultural variations. Due to this limitation, I was unable to assess the democratic deficits between the cultural, ethnic and national subgroups in Czechia.

6.1. Data period selection

When examining trust and satisfaction with politics, it is crucial to consider the contextual backdrop of political discourse, prevailing economic conditions and events that coincide with data gathering. Such contextual factors significantly shape and influence individuals' perspectives and attitudes, and their interpretation is essential to a comprehensive analysis. The selected time span for the study, encompassing the years 2010 to 2019, holds interest due to its sociopolitical and economic context within Czechia. Following the 2008 global financial crisis, Czech society faced a series of economic challenges. During this period, voters held heightened expectations of the government's role in ensuring financial stability after the crisis. Moreover, the latter part of the decade witnessed robust economic growth, which was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. To account for this dynamic, my analysis incorporates a subjective evaluation of Czechia's economic situation as a controlling variable in the linear regression analysis. There is a positive relationship between trust in political institutions and economic growth. However, trust in political institutions tends to diminish during economic crises (Sobiech 2016). This period, characterised by substantial economic growth in its second half, provides an ideal context for studying the generational gap in political attitudes in Czechia. By analysing generational differences in trust and political satisfaction during a period of economic expansion, this study aims to contribute to the broader theoretical debate on the relationship between economic prosperity and the political attitudes of various generations.

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the political challenges of the era in addition to the economic ones. Czechia underwent leadership changes during the specified period, marked by shifts in government coalitions. These transitions had the potential to significantly influence trust and satisfaction dynamics. Notably, some of these leadership changes were perceived as unstable or ineffective, further worsening public trust in political institutions. Additionally, the country faced a number of political

scandals, which likely contributed to fluctuations in trust levels, especially due to incidents such as corruption allegations or the misuse of public funds. From 2010 to 2019, two caretaker governments were formed as a result of political crises that emerged following a series of political scandals. Caretaker governments typically achieve greater popularity and trust owing to their lack of strict ideological definitions and the perception that they are knowledgeable experts who make well-informed decisions in their respective fields (Hanley 2018). Nevertheless, the legitimacy of these caretaker governments raises doubts (Hloušek and Kopeček 2014).

The first "caretaker government" ruled in the studied period from May 2009 to July 2010, with Jan Fischer in the position of prime minister. The next coalition government, led by Petr Nečas, was in power from 2010 to 2013 and was characterised by liberal market policies and conservative political beliefs. The coalition consisted of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), TOP 09 and Public Affairs (Hanley 2012). The government dissolved with a series of political scandals and corruption accusations which affected voters' political trust at that time. To resolve this political crisis, a new caretaker government was established under Prime Minister Jiří Rusnok, who served from July 2013 to January 2014.

In 2014, a new coalition government from the other side of the political spectrum was elected. This central-left coalition consisted of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens 2011 (ANO) and the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL). Ruling until 2017, higher public expenditure running parallel to economic growth was a typical characteristic of its politics. The government faced multiple allegations of misusing public funds, and the minister of finance at that time, Andrej Babiš, was accused of media capture (Hanley and Vachudova 2018).

Following the parliamentary elections in October 2017, ANO won but, at first, failed to secure a vote of confidence. In a second attempt to secure a vote of confidence, a minority government was formed comprising ANO and ČSSD with the tacit backing of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM). For the first time since 1989, the KSČM held bargaining power in parliament, despite achieving its lowest electoral result at the time – 7.76% of the vote (Czech Statistical Office 2017).

6.2. Selection and coding of the variables

I coded and then analysed the dataset as follows: the dependent variable is an ordinal variable measuring trust in government, where the lowest level, "no trust in government", was coded as 1 and the highest level, "full trust in government", was coded 4. In the second set of linear regression modelling, the dependent variable was an ordinal variable of satisfaction with the political situation on a 5-point scale from "not at all satisfied" (1) to "fully satisfied" (5) with the political situation.

The independent variable in all models is a categorical variable of generations. To present interaction terms in a hierarchical manner and to isolate their effects, I present 10 different models: with no interactions (models 1, 6), with separate interactions of generations and gender (models 2, 7), support of radical parties (models 3, 8), support of governing parties (models 4, 9) and with all interactions in one model (models 5, 10). An overview of the variables is provided in Tables 1–3, while the results of all linear regression models are presented in Tables 4–7.

Table 1. Univariate statistics of the variables in models 1–5.

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
No trust in Government (1) – Full trust in Government (4)	76,253	2.156.269	0.8528482	1	4
No satisfaction with Politics (1) – Fully satisfied with Politics (5)	75,043	2.381.848	0.9907568	1	5
Generations					
Silent Generation	87,042	0.0953218	0.2936606	0	1
Baby boomers	87,042	0.3206038	0.4667114	0	1
Generation X	87,042	0.2843455	0.4511047	0	1
Revolutionary gen.	87,042	0.1782243	0.3827037	0	1
Post-revolutionary gen.	87,042	0.1215046	0.3267146	0	1
Radical Party					
0	53,532	0.8372189	0.3691693	0	1
1	53,532	0.1627811	0.3691693	0	1
Left (0) – Right (1) Political orientation	80,015	0.5052365	0.2402519	0	1
Years of education	97,764	0.4739543	0.3198894	0	1
Female					
0	87,749	0.4864329	0.4998187	0	1
1	87,749	0.5135671	0.4998187	0	1
Age	87,545	0.3706634	0.2119255	0	1
Evaluation of the economic situation in Czechia	76,968	0.4377923	0.2501257	0	1
Governing Parties					
Opposition party	53,532	0.5304491	0.4990767	0	1
Governing party	53,532	0.4695509	0.4990767	0	1
Year of the survey	98,159	2014.38	284.503	2010	2019

Table 2. Mean estimation of trust in Government (no trust in government (1) – full trust in government (4)) across the generations.

Generations	Observations	Mean – trust in government	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Silent Gen	7457	2.105807	0.8855903	0	4
Baby boomers	24621	2.14049	0.8696303	0	4
Gen X	21694	2.145847	0.8421364	0	4
Revolutionary	13402	2.163558	0.8349093	0	4
Post-revolution.	8477	2.249381	0.8205427	0	4

Table 3. Mean estimation of satisfaction with politics (not satisfied (1) – fully satisfied (5) with political situation) across the generations.

Generations	Observations	Mean – satisfaction with politics	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Silent Gen	6960	2.16092	0.9627171	0	5
Baby boomers	24356	2.287404	0.9903699	0	5
Gen X	21357	2.391581	0.992343	0	5
Revolutionary	13299	2.467479	0.9764363	0	5
Post-revolution.	8464	2.648393	0.9487405	0	5

In all ten models, I also control for the respondents' political orientation on the left-right spectrum, their subjective evaluation of the economic situation in Czechia at that time, years of education, age and the year in which the data were collected. To facilitate easier interpretation of the regression results, the variables of political orientation, years of education, age and evaluation of the economic situation were treated as continuous variables and rescaled to a 0–1 range using min–max normalisation to standardise the scales. Gender, radical parties and governing parties are dummy variables.

I recoded variables of "radical parties" and "governing party" from a variable that answered the question: "*If you went to the polls next week, which party would you vote*

Table 4. Results of linear regression trust in government.

VARIABLES	Model 1 with no interaction term	Model 2 Interaction Term Female	Model 3 Interaction Term Radical Parties	Model 4 Interaction Term Governing Parties
Baby boomers	0.014	0.048**	0.015	0.007
	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Generation X	0.025	0.062*	0.021	0.023
	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Revolutionary generation	0.075*	0.100**	0.071*	0.080**
	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.040)	(0.041)
Post-revolutionary generation	0.138***	0.137***	0.137***	0.166***
	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.049)
Female	0.030***	0.084***	0.030***	0.030***
	(0.007)	(0.022)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Baby boomers # Female		−0.068***		
		(0.025)		
Generation X # Female		−0.073***		
		(0.026)		
Revolutionary gen. # Female		−0.053*		
		(0.028)		
Post-revolutionary gen. # Female		0.002		
		(0.034)		
Radical party = 1	−0.026**	−0.026**	−0.038	−0.024**
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.024)	(0.011)
Left (0) – right (1) political orientation	0.072***	0.072***	0.070***	0.072***
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Years of education	−0.030**	−0.029**	−0.029**	−0.030**
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Age	0.233***	0.229***	0.240***	0.236***
	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Evaluation of the economic situation	1.125***	1.125***	1.126***	1.125***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Governing party = 1	0.527***	0.527***	0.528***	0.524***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.024)
Survey year	0.009***	0.009***	0.009***	0.008***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Baby boomers # radical party			−0.006	
			(0.028)	
Gen X # radical party			0.038	
			(0.032)	
Revolutionary gen. # radical party			0.055	
			(0.039)	
Post-revolutionary gen. # radical party			0.029	
			(0.055)	
Baby boomers # gov. party				0.018
				(0.026)
Gen X # gov. party				0.010
				(0.027)
Revolutionary gen. # gov. party				−0.005
				(0.029)
Post-revolutionary gen. # gov. party				−0.061*
				(0.036)

(*Continued*)

Table 4. Continued.

VARIABLES	Model 1 with no interaction term	Model 2 Interaction Term Female	Model 3 Interaction Term Radical Parties	Model 4 Interaction Term Governing Parties
Constant	−16.099***	−16.287***	−15.840***	−15.251***
	−3.272	−3.273	−3.274	−3.307
Observations	39,746	39,746	39,746	39,746
R-squared	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.273
Adjusted R-squared	0.273	0.273	0.273	0.273

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

for?" The "radical parties" variable was coded as the inclination to support KSČM, Dawn (Úsvit), Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) or Tricolour (Trikolora). This does not imply that these were the only radical parties that emerged in the Czech political landscape between 2010 and 2019. Rather, this approach concentrates on relevant radical political parties in the Czech political party system which are anti-globalist and anti-immigration and mobilise their supporters by expressing concerns about European integration and cultural liberalism (Lach et al. 2010). They endorse ideas of nationalism, exclusionism, welfare chauvinism and traditional ethics, and they often express xenophobic views (Kriesi and Schulte-Cloos 2020; Mudde 2007). Additionally, as an arbitrary threshold, I have included only those radical parties that obtained at least 1.5% of the vote in parliamentary or senate elections between 2010 and 2020. This is because individuals with low political trust are more inclined to support radical and protest parties (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018).

The categorical variable "governing party" was coded based on the parties that respondents would vote for if they went to the polls next week and whether the party was in government at the time of the survey. The considered parties include ČSSD, ODS, KSČM, KDU-ČSL, the Green Party, TOP 09, Public Affairs, the Party of Civic Rights (SPOZ), ANO 2011, the Pirates, the Party of Free Citizens (Svobodní), SPD, Dawn, STAN and Tricolour.

6.3. Measuring trust

To measure trust, I used trust levels in government in the 2010–2019 period. To test hypotheses 1–3, trust in government was used as the dependent variable in the linear regression models. To present the results of the hypothesis testing, I used marginal plots with predictive margins (see Figures 1–5). Table 2 presents the average levels of trust in the government in Czechia for each generation.

6.4. Measuring satisfaction

To measure satisfaction with the political situation in Czechia, I used an ordinal variable of satisfaction with the political situation on a scale from 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The satisfaction variable was then used as a dependent variable in the linear regression models. I used marginal plots with predictive margins, as shown in Figures 6–10, to present the results of the hypothesis tests. Table 3 presents the average levels of satisfaction with the political situation in Czechia for each generation.

Table 5. Results of linear regression Trust in government with all interaction terms.

VARIABLES	Model 5 – All interaction terms
Baby boomers	0.041
	(0.027)
Generation X	0.047
	(0.036)
Revolutionary generation	0.095**
	(0.045)
Post-revolutionary generation	0.160***
	(0.053)
Female	0.084***
	(0.022)
Baby boomers # female	−0.068***
	(0.025)
Generation X # female	−0.072***
	(0.026)
Revolutionary gen. # female	−0.052*
	(0.028)
Post-revolutionary gen. # female	0.006
	(0.034)
Radical party = 1	−0.039
	(0.026)
Baby boomers # radical party	−0.002
	(0.030)
Gen X # radical party	0.044
	(0.034)
Revolutionary gen. # radical party	0.055
	(0.041)
Post-revolutionary gen. # radical party	0.014
	(0.057)
Governing party = 1	0.518***
	(0.025)
Baby boomers # governing party	0.020
	(0.028)
Gen X # governing party	0.022
	(0.029)
Revolutionary gen. # governing party	0.006
	(0.031)
Post-revolutionary gen. # governing party	−0.057
	(0.037)
Left (0) – right (1) political orientation	0.070***
	(0.016)
Years of education	−0.029**
	(0.012)
Age	0.237***
	(0.067)
Evaluation of the economic situation	1.125***
	(0.017)
Survey year	0.008***
	(0.002)
Constant	−15.452***
	(3.307)
Observations	39,746
R-squared	0.274
Adjusted R-squared	0.273

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Table 6. Results of linear regression satisfaction with politics.

VARIABLES	Model 6 without interaction term	Model 7 with interaction term female	Model 8 with interaction term radical parties	Model 9 with interaction term governing parties
Baby boomers	0.015	0.041	0.020	0.002
	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.025)
Generation X	0.056	0.091**	0.053	0.029
	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Revolutionary generation	0.088*	0.121**	0.093*	0.045
	(0.047)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.050)
Post-revolutionary generation	0.154***	0.149**	0.157***	0.136**
	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.057)	(0.059)
Female	0.051***	0.100***	0.051***	0.051***
	(0.009)	(0.027)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Baby boomers # female		−0.051*		
		(0.031)		
Generation X # female		−0.070**		
		(0.032)		
Revolutionary gen. # female		−0.068**		
		(0.034)		
Post-revolutionary gen. # female		0.012		
		(0.040)		
Radical party = 1	−0.033**	−0.033**	−0.031	−0.037***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.030)	(0.014)
Left (0) – right (1) political orientation	0.054***	0.053***	0.053***	0.054***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Years of education	−0.102***	−0.102***	−0.102***	−0.103***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Age	−0.050	−0.053	−0.045	−0.050
	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.080)
Evaluation of the economic situation	1.950***	1.949***	1.950***	1.949***
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Governing party = 1	0.394***	0.394***	0.395***	0.346***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.028)
Survey year	−0.005**	−0.005**	−0.005**	−0.004**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Baby boomers # radical party			−0.019	
			(0.034)	
Gen X # radical party			0.043	
			(0.038)	
Revolutionary gen. # radical party			−0.029	
			(0.048)	
Post-revolutionary gen. # radical party			0.000	
			(0.062)	
Baby boomers # governing party				0.031
				(0.031)
Gen X # governing party				0.057*
				(0.032)
Revolutionary gen. # governing party				0.092***
				(0.035)
Post-revolutionary gen. # governing party				0.035
				(0.042)

(*Continued*)

Table 6. Continued.

VARIABLES	Model 6 without interaction term	Model 7 with interaction term female	Model 8 with interaction term radical parties	Model 9 with interaction term governing parties
Constant	11.353***	11.217***	11.460***	10.057**
	−3.977	−3.978	−3.979	−4.013
Observations	39,09	39,09	39,09	39,09
R-squared	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.298
Adjusted R-squared	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.298

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

7. Results

7.1. Trust in government in Czechia

Hypothesis 1: Generations exposed to socialism in adulthood are less trustful towards government than those that did not experience socialism.

Supporting Hypothesis 1, we can confirm that the generations exposed to socialism during adulthood are less trustful of the government than those not exposed to socialism (Figure 1). Belonging to the revolutionary generation is associated with a 0.095 increase (SD = 0.045; $p < 0.05$) in the probability of trusting the government on a scale ranging from 1 (no trust) to 4 (full trust) compared to the Silent Generation, which serves as the reference category (Model 5). Belonging to the post-revolutionary generation increases the probability of trusting the government by 0.160 (SD = 0.053; $p<0.01$) compared to the Silent Generation as a reference category (Model 5).

The inclination to vote for radical parties (β = −0.026; SD = 0.011; $p<0.05$) and years of education (β = −0.030; SD = 0.012; $p<0.05$) was negatively associated with trust in the government. Age (β = 0.233; SD = 0.067; $p<0.01$) is positively associated with trust in the government. As the evaluation of the Czech economic situation becomes more favourable on a scale from 0 (very bad) to 1 (really good), trust in government increases by 1.125 (SD = 0.017; $p<0.01$).

Considering the development of trust in government over the past decade across different generations, it should be noted that the disparities between generations have remained consistent throughout the entire period under review (Figure 2). Nevertheless, an increase in trust in the government has been observed across all generations, which is consistent with the notion that economic growth strengthens political trust, as we observed in the Czech economy from 2014 to 2019 (Czech Statistical Office 2024).

The comparison of trust between women and men was statistically significant across all models tested. Consistent with prior research (Čermák and Stachová 2010; Schoon and Cheng 2011), women trust government more than men across all generations (Figure 3). In Model 2, being female increases the probability of trusting the government by 0.084 (SD = 0.022; $p<0.01$), compared to men. A woman belonging to the post-revolutionary cohort typically assessed her level of trust in government using a scale ranging from 1 (no trust) to 4 (full trust), with a predicted value of 2.35. A man belonging to the baby boomer cohort typically assessed his level of trust in government with a predicted value of 2.17.

Table 7. Results of linear regression Satisfaction with politics – all interaction terms.

VARIABLES	Model 10 – all interaction terms
Baby boomers	0.030
	(0.035)
Generation X	0.046
	(0.045)
Revolutionary generation	0.075
	(0.055)
Post-revolutionary generation	0.128**
	(0.064)
Female	0.100***
	(0.027)
Baby boomers # female	−0.052*
	(0.031)
Generation X # female	−0.069**
	(0.032)
Revolutionary gen. # female	−0.069**
	(0.034)
Post-revolutionary gen. # female	0.013
	(0.041)
Radical party = 1	−0.053
	(0.033)
Baby boomers # radical party	−0.009
	(0.037)
Gen X # radical party	0.074*
	(0.041)
Revolutionary gen. # radical party	0.012
	(0.051)
Post-revolutionary gen. # radical party	0.021
	(0.064)
Governing party = 1	0.339***
	(0.031)
Baby boomers # governing party	0.031
	(0.034)
Gen X # governing party	0.077**
	(0.035)
Revolutionary gen. # governing party	0.099***
	(0.038)
Post-revolutionary gen. # governing party	0.039
	(0.044)
Left (0) – right (1) political orientation	0.053***
	(0.019)
Years of education	−0.102***
	(0.015)
Age	−0.047
	(0.080)
Evaluation of the economic situation	1.949***
	(0.020)
Survey year	−0.004**
	(0.002)
Constant	9.873**
	(4.013)
Observations	39,090
R-squared	0.299
Adjusted R-squared	0.298

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Hypothesis 2: Support for radical parties and generational socialisation during a socialist regime undermines trust in government.

Hypothesis 2 must be rejected. While the results of Model 1 indicate a negative relationship between trust in government and the inclination to vote for radical parties (β =

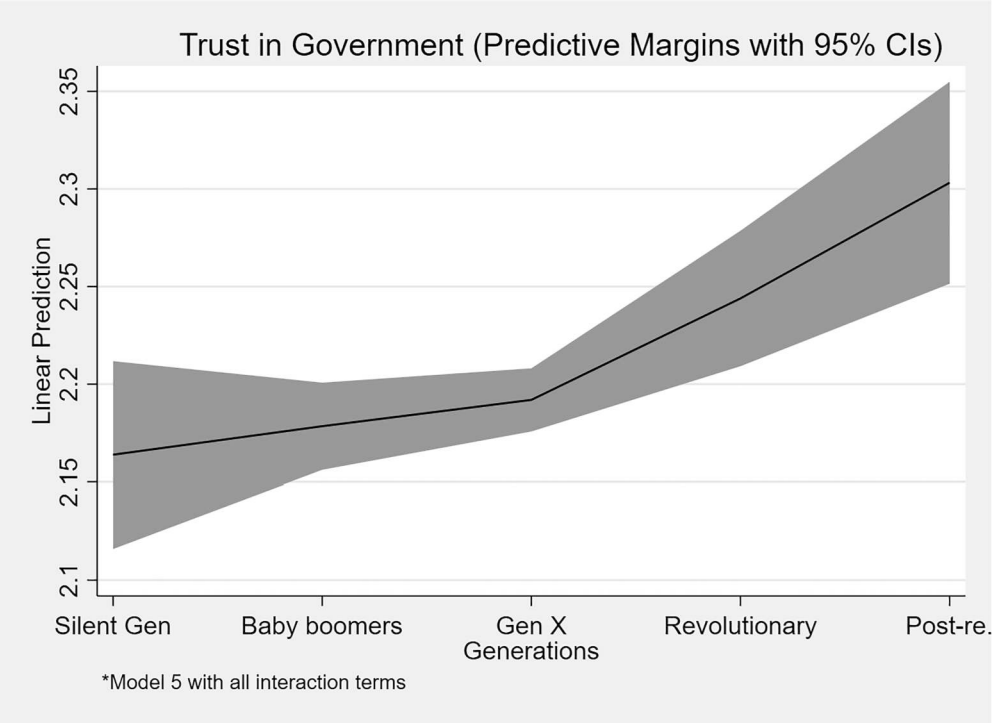

Figure 1. Trust in Government (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

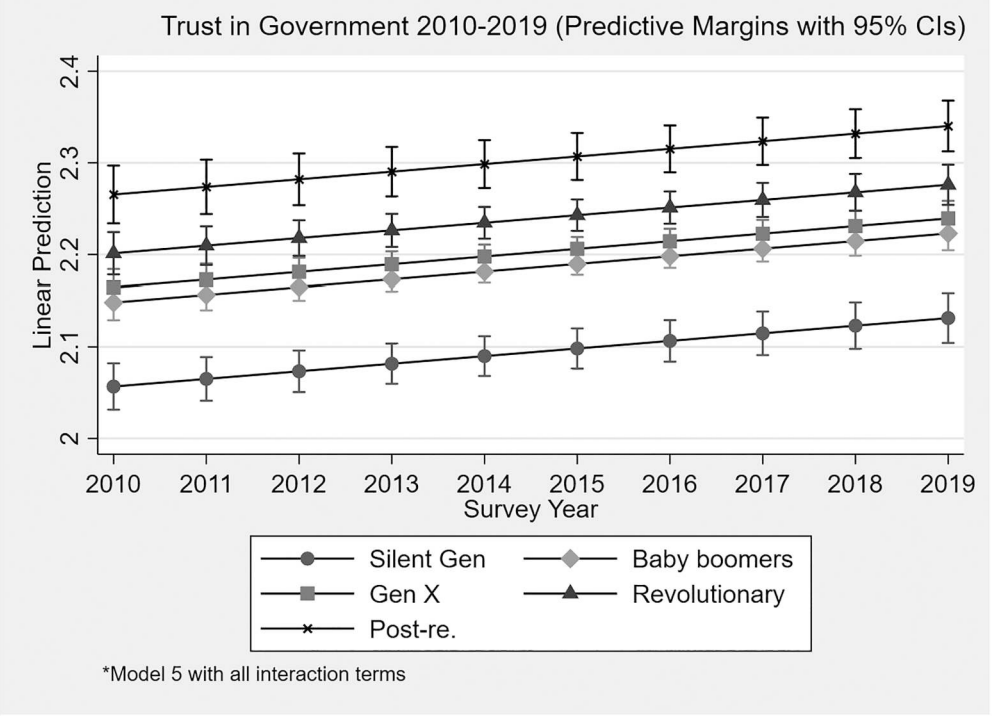

Figure 2. Trust in Government 2010–2019 (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

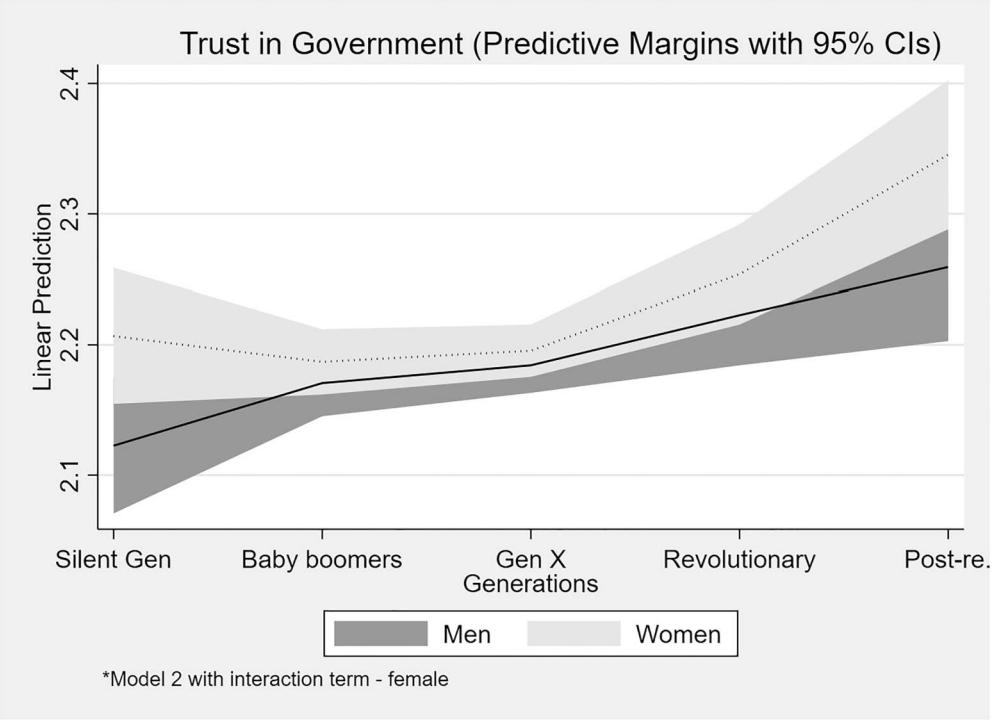

Figure 3. Trust in Government (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

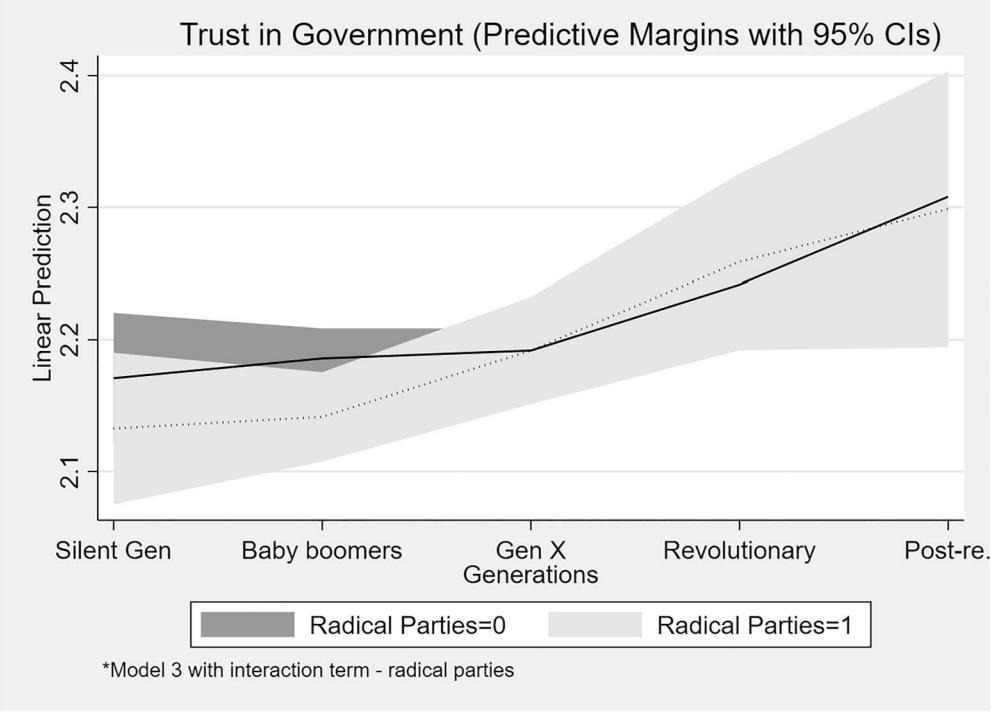

Figure 4. Trust in Government (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

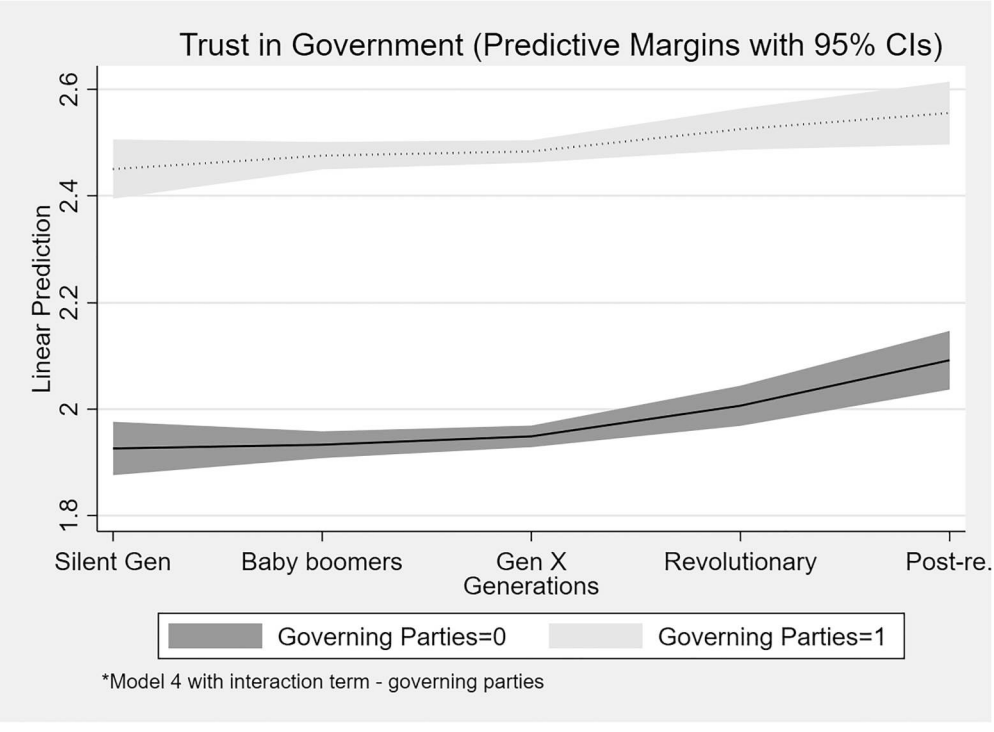

Figure 5. Trust in Government (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

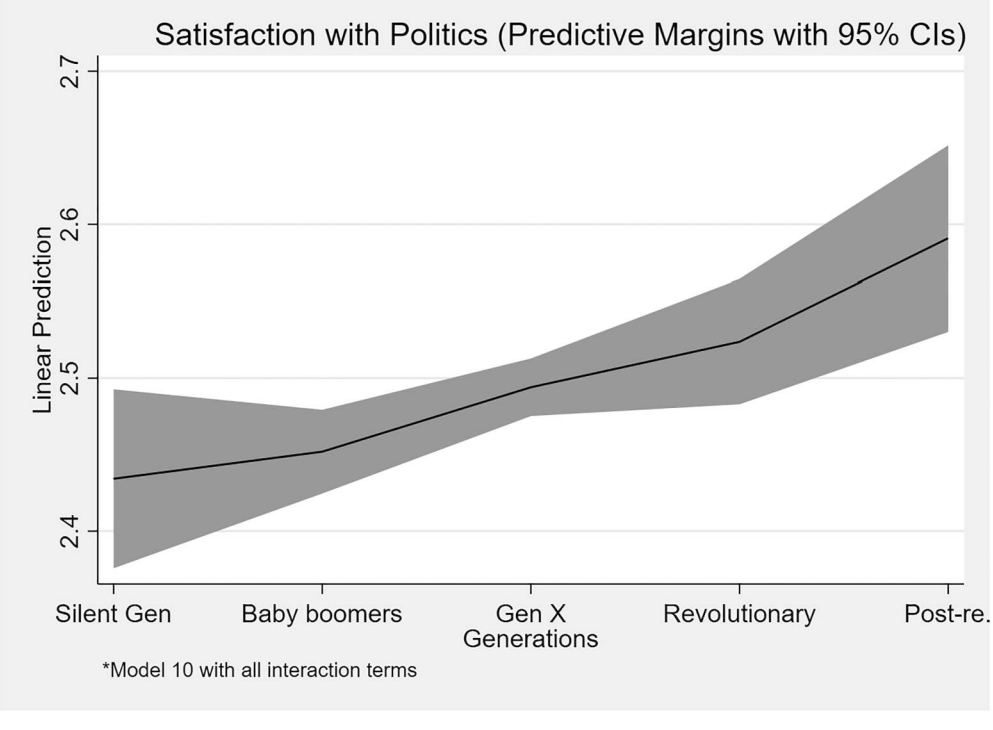

Figure 6. Satisfaction with Politics (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

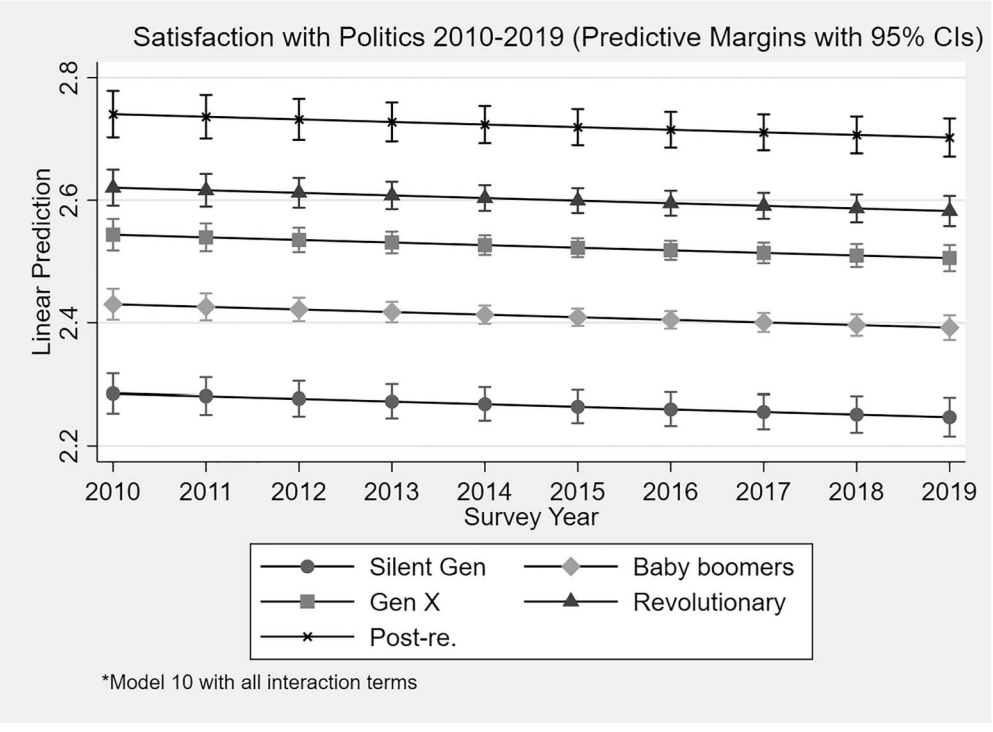

Figure 7. Satisfaction with Politics 2010–2019 (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

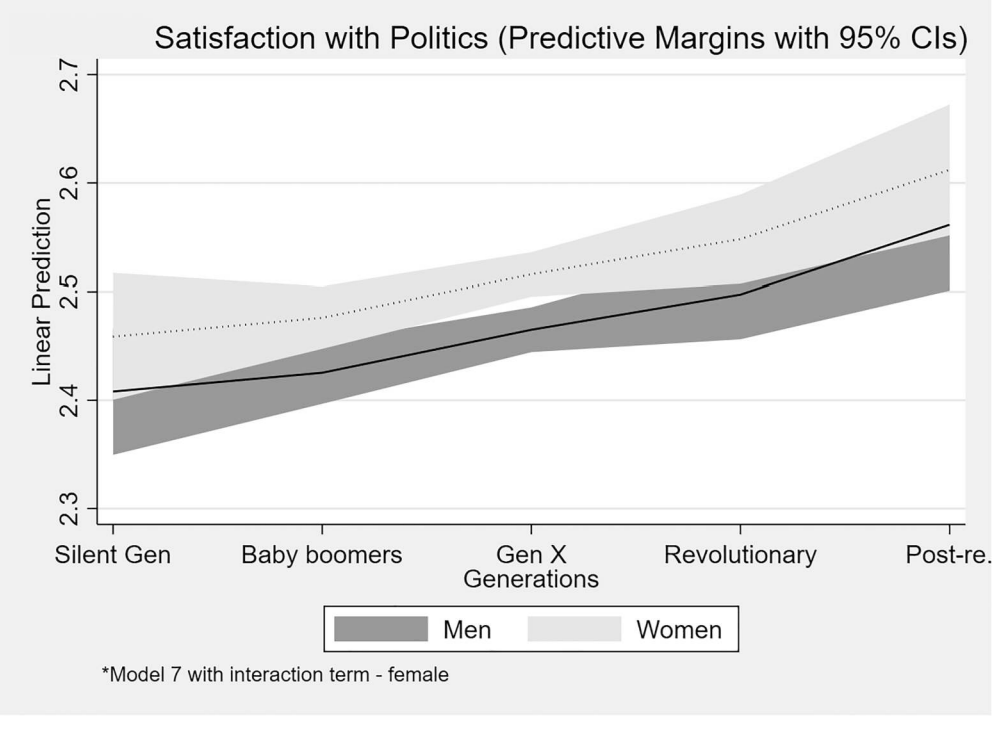

Figure 8. Satisfaction with Politics (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

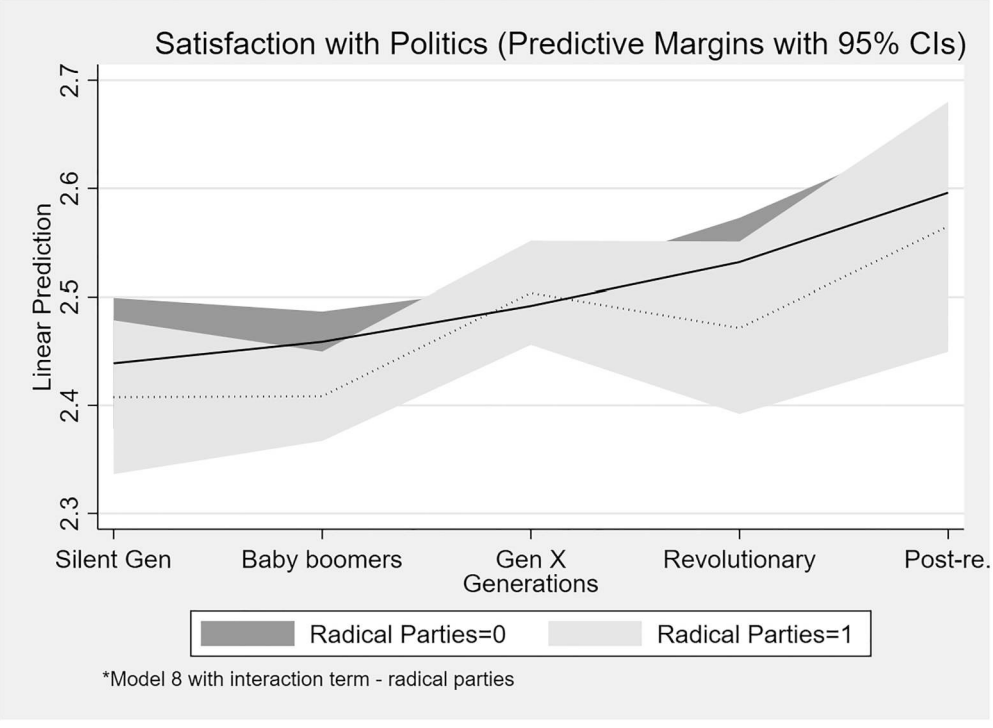

Figure 9. Satisfaction with Politics (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

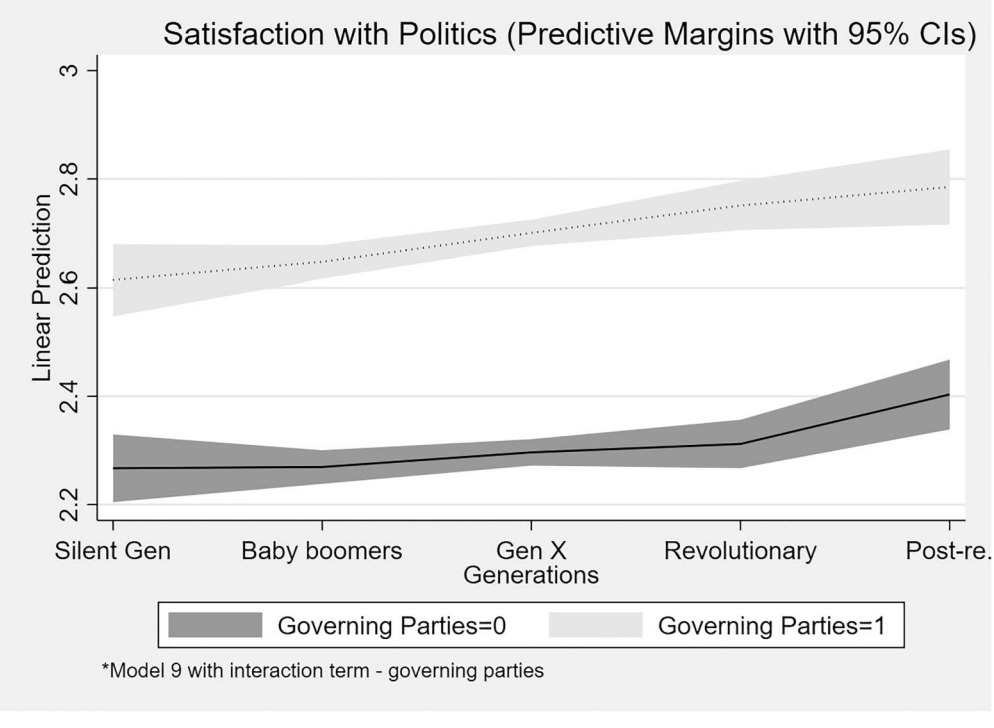

Figure 10. Satisfaction with Politics (Predictive Margins with 95% CIs).

−0.026; SD = 0.011; $p<0.05$), the findings in Model 3 with interaction between generations and radical parties are not statistically significant. We can conclude that members of the Silent Generation and baby boomers who do not prefer radical parties exhibit higher levels of trust in government compared to their counterparts within the same cohorts who do support these radical parties. However, from Generation X onward, no significant differences in trust are observed between individuals who prefer radical parties and those who do not (Figure 4).

Hypothesis 3: Support for parties in power and generational socialisation after the collapse of the socialist regime positively influence trust in government.

We can confirm Hypothesis 3. The intention to vote for the party in power serves as a strong predictor of higher trust in government across generations. Supporting the party in power is associated with an increase in trust in government by 0.524 on a 1–4 scale (SD = 0.024; $p < 0.01$). The predicted value of trust in government among baby boomers who support an opposition party is 1.93, compared to 2.48 for baby boomers who would vote for a party in power, on a scale ranging from 1 (no trust) to 4 (full trust). Comparably, the predicted value for the post-revolutionary cohort is 2.10 for those voting for the opposition and 2.56 for those supporting the party in power (Figure 5). Among all generations, members of the post-revolutionary generation who support the party in power express the highest predicted level of trust in government. These findings suggest that alignment with the party in power remains a key driver of political trust and reinforces the influence of electoral preferences on institutional trust.

7.2. Satisfaction with politics in Czechia

Hypothesis 4: Generations exposed to socialism in adulthood are less satisfied with politics than those who did not experience socialism.

We can confirm Hypothesis 4. Generations exposed to socialism in adulthood are less satisfied with politics than those who did not experience socialism (Figure 6). Belonging to the post-revolutionary generation is associated with a 0.128 increase in the probability of being satisfied with politics (SD = 0.064; $p < 0.05$) compared to the Silent Generation, which serves as the reference category. Educational level (β = −0.102; SD = 0.015; $p<0.01$) is negatively associated with political satisfaction. As the assessment of the Czech economic situation on a scale from 0 (very bad) to 1 (really good) becomes more favourable, satisfaction with politics on a scale from 1 to 5 increases by 1.949 (SD = 0.020; $p<0.01$) (Model 10). Considering the development of political satisfaction over the past decade across various generations, disparities between generations have persisted throughout the entire reviewed 2010–2019 period (Figure 7) but levels of satisfaction stayed stable for each generation over the decade. The revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations exhibit greater levels of satisfaction with the political situation in comparison to the generations who experienced socialism in adulthood. This observation is applicable to both generational and time-series comparisons.

Women across all generations (β = 0.100; SD = 0.027; $p<0.01$) tend to be more satisfied with the political situation than men (Model 7). A woman belonging to the post-revolutionary cohort assessed her level of satisfaction with the political situation using a scale ranging from 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), with a predicted value of 2.66. A man

belonging to the baby boomer cohort typically assessed his level of satisfaction with the political situation with a predicted value of 2.43 (Figure 8).

> Hypothesis 5: Support for radical parties and generational socialisation during a socialist regime weakens satisfaction with politics.

Hypothesis 5 must be rejected. Although there is a statistically significant negative relationship between support for radical parties and political satisfaction ($\beta = -0.033$; SD = 0.013; $p<0.05$), the findings across models 6–10 and the predictive margins remain inconclusive (Figure 9).

> Hypothesis 6: Support for parties in power and generational socialisation after the collapse of the socialist regime positively influence satisfaction with politics.

Hypothesis 6 can be confirmed. Across generations, support for the party in power emerges as a robust indicator of increased political satisfaction. Supporting the party in power correlates with an increase in political satisfaction of 0.346 on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) (SD = 0.028; p <0.01) (Model 9). Belonging to Generation X and supporting the party in power increases the probability of being satisfied with politics by 0.057 on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) (SD = 0.032; p <0.1), compared to the Silent Generation as a reference category.

Belonging to the revolutionary generation and supporting the party in power increases the probability of being satisfied with politics by 0.092 on a scale on a scale of 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) (SD = 0.035; p <0.01), compared to the Silent Generation as a reference category (Model 9). For baby boomers, the predicted value of satisfaction with politics is 2.27 for those who support opposition parties, compared to 2.65 for those who support the party in power. For the post-revolutionary cohort, the predicted values are 2.40 for opposition supporters and 2.79 for governing party supporters (Figure 10). Similarly to trust in government, post-revolutionary cohorts who support the parties in power have the highest expected level of satisfaction with politics across all generations.

8. Conclusion and discussion

This comparative study of generations in Czechia contributes to the understanding of generational differences in trust in and satisfaction with politics. It focuses on the role of political socialisation and the influence of political events that have shaped the political attitudes of the Czech population. Generations who were not exposed to socialism during adulthood were more trusting and satisfied with politics than the generations exposed to socialism. This study suggests that early childhood exposure to communism has a comparatively lower effect on political attitudes of trust and satisfaction, whereas adult exposure has the expected effect on political attitudes.

The study confirms previous research (Pew Research Center 2009; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017b) and shows that younger generations in post-socialist Europe who were only exposed to socialism in their childhood or early adulthood rate their trust in and satisfaction with politics higher than older generations. Generation X, which was exposed to the socialist era throughout their childhood and young adulthood, expressed, as the data analysis shows, higher levels of trust and satisfaction with politics than the Silent Generation and baby boomers, who spent the majority of their productive years under

socialism. Generation X was able to resist regime indoctrination more successfully than their older counterparts and was able to better identify with the newly established democratic regime. The revolutionary generation, which was exposed to socialism only in early childhood, reports higher levels of trust in government and satisfaction with politics than previous generations in all tests. The data analysis confirms Pop-Eleches and Tucker's (2017b) research results wherein the longer the duration of time an individual was exposed to socialism, the more probable it is that their political attitudes and behaviour will display a democratic deficit in terms of trust and satisfaction with politics.

Consistent with previous research (Furlong and Cartmel 2012; Pew Research Center 2009; Zilinsky 2019), the results demonstrated that younger generations were more trusting and more satisfied with politics than their older predecessors. As evidenced by the results, the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations have a lower democratic deficit. We can theorise about the reasons for this, but one possible explanation is that they feel stronger attachment to democratic institutions than the older generation who were socialised under the socialist regime. Regarding this matter, we could argue that confidence and contentment with politics among the younger population in Czechia provide a solid foundation for sustaining active participation in civic life, successful governance and the continuation of healthy democratic practices. The trends described above can be attributed to civic education and extracurricular activities rooted in democratic principles that were available and forwarded to the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations during the 1990s and the 2000s. This allowed them to benefit from the establishment of the new regime in comparison to those whose educational paths were significantly shaped by the autocratic regime's indoctrination.

Further theorising about the factors that contribute to differences in trust and satisfaction with politics among generations, it is plausible to argue that the socialisation of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations in the democratic system was better able to prepare these generations for life in a democratic, liberal and capitalist society. The post-revolutionary generation especially is characterised by higher levels of international exposure and educational attainment, as well as having benefited from European integration; moreover, they are often referred to as digital natives (Parker and Igielnik 2020). All these aspects can contribute to an increase in trust in government and in satisfaction with politics. One could argue that the expectations placed on the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations have been fulfilled, as it seems that democratic politics better reflects the demands and expectations of the younger generations. In addition, although it might be anticipated that younger generations would be more inclined to participate in civil disobedience than their older counterparts, the results indicate that they are more pro-government than their predecessors.

Based on theoretical work and previous research, a possible explanation I offer for the higher democratic deficit among the Silent Generation and baby boomers in Czechia is that it is a result of their exposure to socialism in adulthood. However, we also need to consider other possible explanations that might influence the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations to become less trusting of politics, less satisfied with politics in later life and more similar to older generations. For example, the development of other serious political events could have a decisive influence on how younger generations perceive politics. Additionally, the recurrent experience of disappointment and unfulfilled expectations can lead these generations to become more cynical and, consequently, adopt the opinions of

previous generations. Their democratic deficits might then be similar when compared by age at different time periods. It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of cross-sectional data in isolating the impact of historical events such as the Velvet Revolution.

Given the low levels of trust and satisfaction with politics among the baby boomers, what are the theoretical explanations for these trends? During their formative years, baby boomers witnessed some of the most turbulent and divisive events in Czech history, such as the Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the fall of the Iron Curtain. They grew up in an era of normalisation, often described as an era of apathy, passivity and escapism, where political indifference was compensated for by the private pleasures of consumerism. At the height of their productive lives, they had to adapt to the newly established democratic regime and reorient from a planned economy to capitalism. All these tumultuous events theoretically provide sufficient reasons to be more disillusioned with, cynical about or sceptical of politics and its leaders, theoretically explaining the lower levels of trust and satisfaction with politics.

Considering descriptive political representation, the results of the study may be surprising because we would expect the Silent Generation and baby boomers to identify more easily with political representation because the political representation reflects their age composition. In 2013, 53% of all members of the lower house of the Czech parliament were over 50 years old (Czech Statistical Office 2021). However, the younger generation is more likely to trust political representation and be satisfied with the actions of political representation.

From a gender perspective, we can conclude that women generally tend to be more trusting and satisfied with politics than men. This can be interpreted either as a greater democratic deficit among men, a tendency for women to be more agreeable in their political positions or that women are less knowledgeable or interested in politics, potentially resulting in less critical evaluations. Support for the party in power also significantly increases trust in government and satisfaction with politics.

Future research with longitudinal or comparative data may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between political socialisation, political attitudes and generational differences. It would be valuable to observe the extent to which the political attitudes of the revolutionary and post-revolutionary generations persist throughout their lives. It is evident that these trends cannot be attributed solely to the naivety of youth or the experienced traits of older people.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the Public Opinion Research Centre (Tabery et al. 2010) at the Academy of Sciences of Czechia. The data collection is called "Naše společnost 2010 – leden – 2019 – prosinec" at https://doi.org/10.14473/CSDA/TZGES8.

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