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**Ethnic Diversity, Democracy and Electoral Extremism in Interwar Czechoslovakia**

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**Abstract**

The political elites of the successor states of interwar Czechoslovakia confronted a central paradox. On the one hand, since they viewed their state as a vehicle of national expression and survival, they sought to build a unitary nation-state. On the other hand, this unitary ideal had to confront a deeply multicultural reality: over one third of the inhabitants of Czechoslovakia were ethnically foreign. This was a result of the imperial recognition of the limits of state power to affect cultural engineering. Historians generally acknowledge that the successor states of interwar Europe had little appreciation for these limits. The result was a mix of minorities policies, pursued with different intensity and combination at different times, that oscillated between assimilation, accommodation, and discrimination.

It is not surprising therefore that the minorities of Czechoslovakia did not always embrace the new national state. On this much historians agree. What remains unknown or at least disputed, however, is the precise nature of minority public opinion in Czechoslovakia, and the preferred mix of political strategies of various minorities for dealing with their new states. The present study is intended to fill in part of that gap in our knowledge.