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The Development of Political Party Systems in the Czech Republic and Slovakia after 1989

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Declaration

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration with others, except as specified in the text and where due acknowledgement has been made."

Signature

22/05/2006

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Czech Political Parties

4K	Čtyřkoalice	Four Coalition (KDU-ČSL, US, DEU, ODA)
ČSL	Československá strana lidová	Czechoslovak People's Party
ČSS	Československá strana socialistická	Czechoslovak Socialist Party
ČSSD	Česká strana sociálně demokratická	Czech Social Democratic Party
DEU	Demokratická unie	Democratic Union
HSD-SMS	Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii - Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko	Movement for Self-Governing Democracy - Society for Moravia and Silesia
KDS	Křesťanskodemokratická strana	Christian Democratic Party
KDU-ČSL	Křesťanska a demokratická unie - Československá strana lidová	Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party
KSČ	Komunistická strana Československa	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
KSČM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
MOH	Moravské občanské hnutí	Moravian Civic Movement
ODA	Občanská demokratická aliance	Civic Democratic Alliance
ODS	Občanská demokratická strana	Civic Democratic Party
OF	Občanské fórum	Civic Forum
OH	Občanské hnutí	Civic Movement
SMV	Strana moravského venkova	Party of the Moravian Countryside
SNK	Sdružení nezávislých kandidátů	Association of Independent Candidates
SNK-ED	Sdružení nezávislých kandidátů - Evropští demokraté	Association of Independent Candidates - European Democrats
SPR-RSČ	Sdružení pro republiku - Republikanská strana Československa	Association for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia
SZ	Strana zelených	Green Party
US	Unie svobody	Freedom Union
US-DEU	Unie svobody - Demokratická unie	Freedom Union - Democratic Union
LSU	Liberální sociální unie	Liberal Social Union

Slovak Political Parties

Coexistence	Egyuttélés	Coexistence
ANO	Aliancia nového občana	Alliance of the New Citizen
DS	Demokratická strana	Democratic Party
DÚ	Demokratická únia Slovenska	Democratic Union of Slovakia
HZD	Hnutie za demokraciu	Movement for Democracy
HZDS	Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
KDH	Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie	Christian Democratic Movement
KSS	Komunistická strana Slovenska	Communist Party of Slovakia
ĽS-HZDS	Ľudová strana - Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko	People's Party - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia
MKDH	Maďarske křestanskodemokratické hnutie	Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement
MNI	Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva	Hungarian Independent Initiative
MPP-MOS	Magyar Polgári Part - Mad'arská občianska strana	Hungarian Civic Party
ODU	Občianska demokratická únia	Civic Democratic Union
RSS	Roľnická strana Slovenska	Peasants' Party of Slovakia
SDA	Sociálne-demokratická alternatíva	Social Democratic Alternative
SDK	Slovenská demokratická koalícia	Slovak Democratic Coalition
SDKÚ	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union
SDĽ	Strana demokratickej ľavice	Party of the Democratic Left
SDSS	Sociálne-demokratická strana Slovenska	Slovak Social Democratic Party
SF	Slobodne fórum	Free Forum
Smer	Smer	Direction
SMK	Strana maďarskej koalicie	Party of Hungarian Coalition
SNS	Slovenská národná strana	Slovak National Party
SOP	Strana občianského porozumenia	Party of Civic Understanding
SZS	Strana zelených na Slovensku	Green Party of Slovakia
VPN	Verejnost' proti násiliu	Public Against Violence
ZRS	Združenie robotníkov Slovenska	Association of Slovak Workers

I. Introduction

The transition to democracy and consolidation of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe is a widely debated topic within the study of comparative politics. Nearly twenty years after embarking on the democratization and economic liberalization path, most of these states have emerged with stable and internationally accepted democratic systems. The literature on democratization has identified many different factors that contribute to the success of democracy (its stabilization and consolidation) in post-communist states. One of the crucial factors in the development of democracy is institution-building. New democratic states must rapidly and decisively put democratic institutions in place in order to be able to carry out the procedures related to democracy. Institutions include not only the governing bodies, but also political parties, which form the basis of political competition. The development and maintenance of political parties is crucial to newly-formed democracies, and the ability of parties to win elections, survive, and adapt is one important indicator of the successful functioning of democracy.

Studies of newly-formed or renewed political parties and political party systems focus on the contexts and conditions for their development, incorporating a variety of variables that account for differences in their consolidation and institutionalization. Hand in hand with the institutionalization of political parties is the establishment or stabilization of a party system, defined as the patterned interactions (competition and cooperation) between different parties in a system. While it has been argued that the term "party system" should be used only in cases when patterned interactions are established (Mair 1997), I take a looser understanding of the term, and will seek to evaluate whether the party systems in the Czech and Slovak Republics have stabilized and consolidated. Many different factors have been identified as connected specific structure of the party system: historical legacies, previous regime types, type of democratic governmental system, electoral structure and law, as well as the parties themselves.

Political parties are considered of the utmost importance to democracy in many post-communist states. This is reflected even in the post-communist constitutions with the "constitutional anchoring" of political parties in the Czech Republic (Šimíček 2003). Article 5 of the 1993 Czech constitution states "The political system is based on the free and voluntary foundation and free competition of political parties…" Similarly, the

Slovak constitution guarantees the autonomy of political parties and citizens' participation in them: "Citizens have the right to establish political parties and political movements and to associate in them. ... Political parties and political movements, as well as clubs, societies, and other associations are separated from the state" (Article 29, Sections 2 and 4). Thus, not only do political theorists consider parties necessary for the development, but so do the lawmakers and institution-builders within the states in question. Thus parties offer themselves as an important aspect of democratization to be examined and analyzed.

While many studies of party systems are quite broad and include many different countries over a given period of time, this study will be more limited in its scope. I will focus on political party systems and their development in two Central European states during the post-communist era. The two states chosen are the Czech Republic and Slovakia, successor states to the former Czechoslovakia. These states have been chosen because, despite their similarity in many political and historical aspects, and their shared statehood under communism, and during the early years of transition, there are some important differences in the development of their political systems after 1989.

This study will attempt to describe and analyze the development of the political party system in the post-communist Czech and Slovak Republics after 1989. I will rely on comparative analysis as a method of comparing the different development of the party systems in the two states. Both qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources will be employed. The structure of the paper should be arranged along temporal lines, describing and comparing the development of each party system in several stages. These stages are:

A. The communist era of hegemonic party rule, included to help demonstrate possible legacies of the communist "party system";

B. The formation of opposition coalitions and their success in the first post-communist elections;

C. The breakup of these large coalitions into smaller parties: this section will include an overview of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia;

D. The "turning point" 1998 elections: marked by struggle within and among the parties in both countries;

E. The final stage covers the two most recent electoral periods: 1998-2002 and 2002 until just before the 2006 elections;

Sections B, C, and E will include evaluations of the party systems including attempts at classifications following Sartori's (1976) model. I will also analyze the behavior and interactions of the individual parties with the goal of classifying them along ideological and behavioral models discussed in the section on theory. The final section will also include some prospects for the future of the Czech and Slovak party systems. Another section after the time-period analyses will focus specifically on the development of a phenomenon unique to post-communist party systems: communist successor parties. This section will be devoted to the description and analysis of the different development and roles of the KSČM in the Czech Republic, and the SDĽ in Slovakia.

At a time when studies of democratic transition are moving away from the Central and Eastern European region, this project brings light to the fact that while countries like the Czech and Slovak Republics are widely considered success-stories in democratization, there are still unresolved issues and important developments that need to be made. Particularly with regards to Slovakia, this analysis will show that consolidation of the party system has not happened, even after 16 years of democratization. On the other hand, the applicability to the Czech system of models built on Western European cases helps solidify the argument that its party system has stabilized and consolidated.

II. Theory and Methodology

A. Democratization and Consolidation

The so-called "third wave" of democratization (Huntington 1991), starting with Southern Europe and Latin American and perhaps encompassing the post-communist European countries has caused a great debate within comparative politics as to how democracy can be defined. One of the first and most widely used definitions is the minimalist definition as outlined first by Joseph Schumpeter and later by Dahl. The minimalist or procedural definition requires seven major conditions for a governing regime to be considered a democracy: 1. control over governmental decisions exercised by elected officials, 2. frequent and fair elections without corruption or violence, 3. universal suffrage (or near universal), 4. the freedom to run for political office, 5. free expression of opinion, 6. available alternate sources of information (aside from government-controlled sources), and 7. the freedom to form independent associations (Dahl 1971). While some, like Huntington (1991), view democracy as a dichotomous matter—either a country is democratic or not—others have proposed numerous "types" of democracy that can exist.[1]

Given the vast number of "definitions" of democracy that exists, determining whether a country in transition has become a democracy is a daunting task. The process of democratization seen from an institutional perspective has three basic stages: the fall of the non-democratic regime, the building of democratic institutions, and the consolidation of those institutions. The institutions crucial to democracy include not only the government, parliament, bureaucracy and legal system, but also the system of free political competition, based in most democracies on political parties. Merely setting up these institutions does not create a stable, consolidated democracy. They must be consolidated: in other words, the major players in the democratic must accept the shape and roles of the institution and agree to "play by the rules of the game."

Linz and Stepan (1996, 14) set out five major areas of a modern consolidated democracy: civil society, political society, rule of law, state apparatus, and economic

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[1] This has led to the spawning of over 500 different "types" of democracy, leading to confusion within the field. See Collier and Levitsky (1996) for an overview of the many types of democracy and suggestions for streamlining the categorization of democracy in future research.

society. This paper will deal with particularly with the second area: political society. The consolidation of political society includes the institutionalization of political parties as well as the consolidation and stabilization of the political party system. Political parties and their development must be distinguished from the party system and its development. Studies of individual parties focus on their organization, structure, behavior and ability to represent a given electorate, while studies of party systems look at how the parties in a given country interact, compete, and cooperate. The party system cannot be equated with the number of parties, but rather consists of: "patterns of competition and cooperation between different parties in that system" (Ware 1999, 7). Following Sartori (1976), I take the party system to be greater than the sum of its parts—more than just the actions and behavior of the parties. This makes the "measurement" of party systems and its operationalization somewhat difficult. I will follow the established theory of party systems. A following section will outline different variables that must be examined in classifying a party system.

B. Party Systems and Democratic Consolidation

Political parties form the basis of democratic competition in most contemporary democracies. While many theorists expand on the decline of political parties in Western Europe, for the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, parties remain extremely important actors in the establishment and consolidation of democracy. Millard contends: "In the circumstances of post-communism, where alternative mechanisms of representation such as pressure groups remained undeveloped or ill-linked to national decision-making processes, parties were virtually the sole agents of representation" (2004, 3). Therefore, analyzing the party system in a given country can help evaluations of the processes of democratization and consolidation. For this reason, the nature of political parties and party systems or aspects of them are considered in a wide range of theories and models regarding the evaluation of consolidated democracies. A stable party system is a necessary, though by no means sufficient condition for a consolidated democracy.

While the debate over the normative evaluation is quite diverse and there is little consensus over the type of party system that is most ideal or supportive of democracy,

some conclusions are generally agreed upon regarding the structure of party systems. An excessive number of parties is considered to be disadvantageous for the consolidation of democracy, since the presence of many parties often indicates weak ties to the electorate and high volatility. Volatility in the party system—the frequent splitting, forming, and disappearing of political parties—makes consolidation of the electoral system difficult. The reason is twofold. First, parties are supposed to be vehicles of representation within the system and a key part of representation is accountability. When parties are likely to disappear or from the scene after one or two elections, voters are unable to hold them accountable. Frequent splitting and formation of new parties also decreases the amount of accountability. If the incumbent no longer exists, it is difficult for the voters to "punish" them with votes for the opposition or another party. Secondly, high volatility in the party system decreases overall commitment of both politicians and voters to specific parties (Birch 2003, 120).

Two further aspects of a consolidated party system are important. One is the ideological structure—the positions that various parties occupy on a right-left spectrum, and the distances between them. While there is no formula for an ideal ideological structure of a party system, extremely large distances between the parties can make competition quite difficult. Similarly, the inability or unwillingness of certain parties to identify their ideological orientation can inhibit other parties from settling into a position, and in turn, an electorate. Furthermore, the presence of parties whose orientations do not support or is openly hostile to the democratic regime can also threaten democratic stability with the possibility of a return to non-democracy (Dawisha and Parrot 1997, 18).

These four aspects of party systems: number of parties, the presence of anti-system parties, and volatility in the party system, have important implications for the consolidation of the party system and in turn of democracy. The next section will outline my approach to the classification of party systems and the variables that are crucial to their analysis.

C. Categorizing Party Systems

Major Variables

The study of political party systems depends in large part on the various ways in which the systems are classified. At the most basic level, one can identify two types of systems based on the presence or absence of competition. Democratic theory calls for free and competitive elections as an essential foundation of democracy. Systems that fall under totalitarian, authoritarian, and other non-democratic regime types may have political party systems, but cannot be considered competitive. Non-competitive regimes can be either single-party systems, in which only one party is allowed to exist; or hegemonic party systems, which have more parties, but one which dominates over the others and controls the political system. Among competitive political systems, there can be one-party systems (several parties exist, but a single party almost always successfully wins elections, i.e., Japan), two-party systems (i.e. the US), and multi-party systems which characterize much of Western Europe and the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Both competitive and non-competitive party systems are relevant for this study, as I will briefly analyze the Czechoslovak communist regime, which qualifies as a hegemonic party system, and the democratic regime that has emerged since 1989 as a multi-party system.

Several variables are central to the study of party systems. Following and expanding upon Sartori's (1976) theory of party systems, Ware (1999, 150-75) recognizes four major variables, which have been outlined in the previous section: number and relative strength of parties, party penetration of society, ideological placement, and stance of parties towards the legitimacy of the regime. The first variable is the number of political parties in society. Before categorizing the system, it must first be decided which parties are indeed relevant to the system. In this case, Sartori proposes that parties must either have "coalition potential" or "blackmail potential"[2] to be considered relevant. Once the relevant parties have been determined, systems are divided into two-party and multi-party. However, some suggest that this variable should also

[2] Coalition potential, as the name suggests, means that it either has enough support to lead elections and form a coalition, or is acceptable by other parties (even rivals) as a potential coalition partner. Parties with blackmail potential, on the other hand, are not considered acceptable coalition partners (often they are anti-system parties), but still have some power or enough support to affect what coalition-parties can do.

take into account the relative size of parties. In this case, the "multi-party" category is divided into several different pictures depending on the relative strength of the parties in parliament. These are: "two-and-a-half party systems; systems with one large party and several much smaller ones; systems with two larger parties and several much smaller ones; even multiparty systems" (Ware 1999, 163).

A second axis of comparison for party systems is the ideological placement of parties. For individual parties, ideological categorization can be important, and at the system level, the *combination* of ideologies represented among political parties is important as it can structure the nature of competition. While valid for Western European parties, where the traditional left-right axis or party families hold true, this axis is more problematic for newly emerging and unstable political systems, both because parties do not have historical roots identifying them with particular ideologies and because individuals are somewhat less likely to identify along ideological lines. For this study, ideology is relevant in the case of the Czech Republic, but will be more problematic for the case of the Slovak Republic (more on this below).

The third variable, somewhat related to ideology, is the stance of parties towards the legitimacy of the regime. This deals with the existence and importance of anti-system parties, on both the left and right. "Anti-system parties" are those which do not "accept fully the rules of the liberal democratic political game" and might attempt to change the system or some of its basic foundations if in power. Although some anti-system parties do not receive significant support, there are quite a few cases where they receive enough support to become relevant as "blackmail parties," though they rarely develop coalition potential without significant reform.

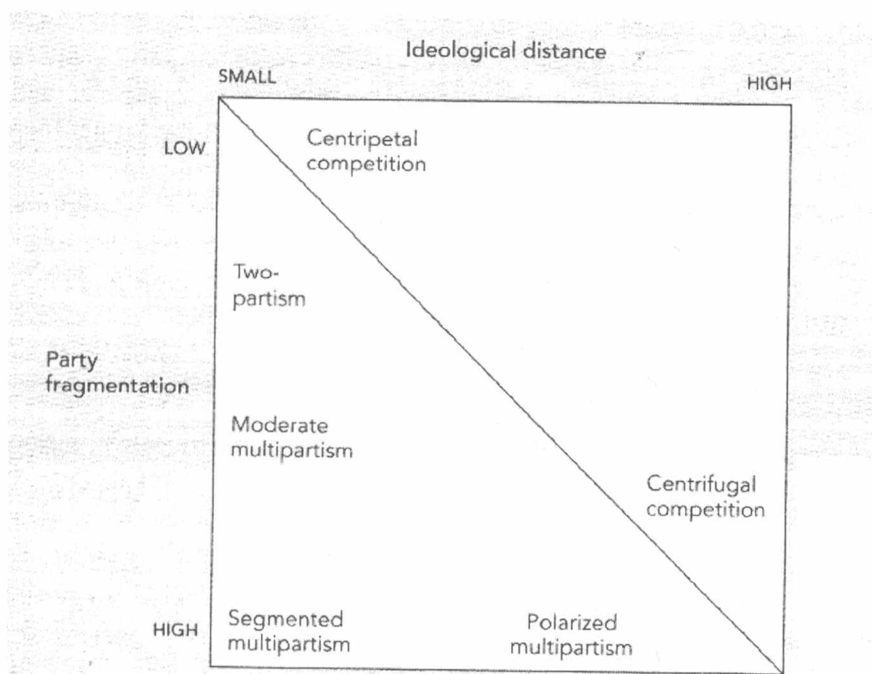
The final variable is the extent to which political parties are able to penetrate society. While some political cultures operate on the basis of very loose ties between parties and voters, others have parties as an important focal point of life, even outside of politics. Generally, in societies where there is less penetration of parties, there are more possibilities for new parties to emerge. This has been the case with post-communist countries in which nearly all parties are new and thus have low ties with the public, and in turn the public is distrustful of parties. Party penetration of society can be measured

by individuals' identification with parties or membership, involvement in party-related organization, and general attitudes (indifference, trust, etc.) towards political parties.

Sartori's Model of Classification

In his seminal work on political parties and systems, Sartori focuses on two major axes of comparison: *party fragmentation* and *ideological distance*. The former includes the above mentioned number and relative size of the parties in parliament, and the latter focuses mainly on the left-right spectrum (in Ware 1999, 168). In considering competition and ideological difference, not only are the positions, but also the direction in which competition pulls the party's ideological stances are important. The direction can either be "centripetal" (pulling towards the center) or "centrifugal" pulling parties away from the center. As the left-right spectrum is not always explicitly useful for the two case studies at hand, I will supplement the ideological distance variable with other indicators, especially those used by Slovak political scientists (Szomolányi, Mesežnikov, and others) of "standard" and "non-standard" parties to describe the type of competition characteristic of the Slovak political system. Nevertheless, when applicable, especially in the most recent electoral periods, I will analyze the party systems using the variables outlined by Ware, but for the sake of parsimony, I will classify the systems according to Sartori's simplified schema [see **Figure A**], when applicable. Using models developed specifically with Western European systems in mind has downfalls, but the creation of additional models is unnecessary and does not provide as much in the way of comparison with existing party systems. With this in mind, it will be helpful to outline the ways in which party systems of post-communist states can be expected to differ from the traditional Western European models.

Figure A: Sartori's Model of Party System Classification (simplified)



Source: Ware 1999, 169 *figure 5.1*

Differences of Post-Communist Party Systems

Peter Mair (1997) argues that the case of party systems in post-communist states are different than Western Europe for several reasons. The first is the timing of the emergence of the party system vis-à-vis democratization. Unlike in Western Europe, where cleavages and then political parties developed over decades before universal suffrage brought full democracy, post-communist states experienced the transformation to democracy *before* political parties could be created. Thus the party system has not had time to develop stable roots and freezing is unlikely. Secondly, the electorate in post-communist polities is much less stable, as identities and social structures are not well-aligned; parties are generally top-down organizations with low membership. Because all parties are new, much more splitting and factionalization occurs in post-communist party systems than among the established and well-disciplined Western European parties. Finally, party competition itself is quite unstable, creating a situation in which parties are unable to predict their likely victories (or defeats) and thus are not motivated to compromise or target narrower electorates.

D. Party System Development

In addition to classifying party systems according to the aforementioned schema, the study of emerging party systems must include analysis of how the systems developed and the factors which influence their development. The factors that will be examined here include: historical context, type of regime change, number of and space between cleavages in society, and the electoral system.

Historical Context and Path Dependency

The democratization process in the post-communist states in Central and Eastern Europe provided a new impetus for the study of party and party system development. Much of the research emphasizes the importance of historical experience and its influence on political developments in the new democracies. Party systems (like other aspects of the political system) are often described as path-dependent, as actors are constrained in part by their countries' and their own experiences (Pennings and Lane 1998; Kitschelt, et.al. 1999; Linz and Stepan 1996).

Dawisha and Parrot (1997), among others, have argued for the analysis of pre-communist political and democratic structures in the study of post-communist regimes. They argue that the "popular memory" of pre-communist democracy can be an important factor both in the establishment of democracy and in the modeling of its institutions. The correlation between the strength of democracy before communism and the success of democracy in the post-communist era does not necessarily indicate causality. The importance of pre-communist legacies in this respect has been exaggerated. Pre-communist political structures are important in the cases of a few revival parties (such as the Czech Social Democrats and Christian Democrats) and in determining the structure of some aspects of the system, but the role of "popular memory" is mostly limited to rhetoric, and other factors much more greatly influence the outcome of post-communist democratization.

Kitschelt, et.al. (1999) have outlined a much more convincing way in which the pre-communist social and political structures matter. The character of pre-communist society and politics was influential for what type of communist regime would be

installed. Because of the path-dependent constraints upon actors, the style of communist rule affected the type of regime change and therefore the process of transformation and its likely success. The authors provide extensive evidence of the constraints placed on post-communist regimes by the nature of both the precommunist and communist regimes. It would be redundant to restate these arguments. However, I do include a brief discussion of the party system under communist rule, both to provide a frame for comparison with post-communist rule and to highlight the changes that took place, especially in the early years of the transformation.

Type of Regime Change

While the systematic relation between non-democratic regime type and paths of regime change is still a subject of debate among scholars, in individual cases it can provide important explanations regarding the paths available to the leaders of the democratic opposition. In their study of democratic transition in Southern Europe, South America and CEE, Linz and Stepan (1996) view the type of pre-democratic regime as important in determining which paths of regime change are possible. For each non-democratic regime type (authoritarian, totalitarian, post-totalitarian, and sultanistic), only some paths of transition are possible. The independent variables include the nature of the non-democratic leadership, the democratic opposition, state institutions (bureaucracy, military, law, etc.). In the case of ("frozen") post-totalitarian regimes such as that in Czechoslovakia, the likely paths of regime change, according to Linz and Stepan, are: "reforma-pactada, ruptura-pactada," interim government after the collapse of the regime, collapse and takeover by non-democratic forces, or collapse supported by an external hegemon (57-59).

Kitschelt, et.al. (1999) specify four general types of regime change, and identify each of three categories of communist rule (bureaucratic-authoritarian, national-accomodative, and patrimonial) with one of the types of regime change.[3] For countries with a bureaucratic-authoritarian communist regime (Czechoslovakia), the leadership of the regime holds on to power as long as possible, while opposition forces organize

[3] The fourth type of regime change, revolution, does not find a place in the transitions of Central and Eastern Europe and is thus excluded from the discussion.

underground until "the international situation becomes sufficiently favorable to wipe out the incumbent regime almost instantly" (31). This path of regime change is referred to as implosion, breakdown, replacement, or collapse in the transition literature. Particularly with regard to Czechoslovakia, the "domino effect" of the downfall of communist regimes in the rest of Europe created a favorable context for the implosion of the Czechoslovak regime.

The authors go on to sketch the likely course of developments after the collapse of the regime. Because the democratic opposition had been previously suppressed, the leaders of the new systems have little recognition with the public, and thus are more likely to support a democratic system that does not emphasize personality (proportional representation, parliamentary executive). "A rational logic underlies institutional choice" (Kitschelt, et.al. 1999, 32). These tendencies are not certain, however. While the authors argue that type of regime change certainly has some impact over the nature of the post-communist regime that emerges, a given path of regime change does not necessarily cause a given type of post-communist regime. The collapse of the communist regime means that former communists were unwilling to reform and thus the likelihood of renewed authoritarianism (as in Bulgaria) is unlikely. However constrained they are by path-dependency and the nature of the previous regime, there are always several choices open to the post-communist elites. This is the case in the two republics of the former Czechoslovakia: "...the collapse of the old regime left the shaping of the future in the hands of oppositionist politicians, but...the trajectories of the two republics diverged sharply" (Gill 2002, 40).

Number of and Space between "Cleavages" in Society

One of the leading theories in the study of political party systems and their changes has been the work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) which postulates that party systems in Western Europe are "frozen" along the deeply rooted socio-political divisions (cleavages) formed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and well established by the 1920s. The main cleavages are: center-periphery, state-church, land-industry, and owners-workers. The first two emerged with the various national revolutions and the latter two with the industrial revolution of the 19th century. The competing interests

represented in the cleavage structure gradually politicized and transformed into political party alignments. Since the political crystallization of the cleavage structures, there has been little (need for) change of the political structure.

Pennings and Lane (1998) have compiled arguments from various scholars maintaining that party systems have actually changed and developed in Western, Southern and Eastern Europe, and that the cleavage structures hypothesis is outdated. They argue that party system change, defined as alterations in the "competitive or cooperative relationships between parties in the electoral, parliamentary, or governmental arena," is evident particularly because the cleavage structures are no longer stable and deeply rooted, and are often "engineered" using short-term interests (*ibid.* 3, 13). Their volume uses other indicators and properties of party systems, including: volatility between elections, ideological polarization, effective number of parties and fractionalization, and lack of proportionality between votes and seats (*ibid.*, 5).

While the "freezing" aspect of Lipset and Rokkan's hypothesis is not entirely applicable to CEE countries, the idea of cleavage structures may in fact be relevant. Comparative theorists have found the cleavage structure to be a useful starting point for the study of emerging political party systems. Kitschelt, et.al. (1999) have reworked the specific cleavage structure to fit the case of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. This new structure of divides includes: social protectionist-liberal (economic), social libertarian-authoritarian, national closure-cosmopolitan opening, divides among ethnic groups, and supporters-opponents of the old (communist) regime. The authors note that the above should be considered as divides or dimensions which are transient, rather than cleavages which are more durable. Divides tend to become cleavages if they can be associated with socio-political or demographic groups (*ibid.* 64-9).

Neither in Western Europe nor in CEE do cleavages within a given polity *necessarily* or *automatically* develop into politicized debates or political parties. Jakub Zielinksi explores the formation of cleavages using game theory, and finds that coalition formation among actors in a political system affects the development of certain divisions into politicized cleavages and thus parties. As Zielinski (2001) warns, new party systems are able to develop into a diverse arrive of structures. Furthermore, a system with a given cleavage structure could end up with one of several possible party system outcomes.

Thus, while identifying cleavages within a society is important and can help to frame the development of a party system, the formation of political parties along every cleavage line in a given society does not always occur.

Thus the cleavage structure theory can be valuable even for unstable and developing post-communist regimes. The party system variable to which it most relates is that of ideologies of parties, however, it can also have implications for the number of relevant parties that develop within a system. A society with numerous and exclusive groups can be expected to have more parties which develop along these lines (Dawisha and Parrot 1997). This is especially true of ethnic cleavages in post-communist states. The redefined cleavage structure presented by Kitschelt, et.al. is the most useful characterization of the divisions in post-communist societies. Divisions do not naturally crystallize into political parties, but their existence can help explain the development of certain parties in the post-communist context.

Electoral System Type and Changes

Aside from historical experience and the social structure, the type of electoral system chosen by the new leaders is an important determinant of the structure of the party system. It has particular importance for states emerging from single-party or hegemonic-party rule: "Electoral institutions were also the principal means used to manage the dismantling of the monopolistic parties that had served as the main engines and structuring devices of the communist socio-political and economic systems" (Birch 2003, 8). Furthermore, given the instability of developing democracies, changes or amendments of the system are much more likely, further affecting the parties and the party system. The study of electoral systems is a discipline in itself and involves much more in-depth analysis of electoral law than is possible within the scope of this project.[4] Nevertheless, several major variables in the type of electoral system have been important in the development of the political systems in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Czech and Slovak Republics particularly.

The two primary institutional choices that must be made are the choice between presidential and parliamentary systems of government and majoritarian and proportional

[4] For a study on the effects of electoral design in post-communist Europe, see Birch (2003).

systems of representation. In post-communist Europe, parliamentary systems have been overwhelmingly favored over presidential systems (only Russia and Ukraine have chosen the latter) and both the Czech and Slovak Republic employ versions of proportional representation to elect the legislature. Therefore, in the context of this study, these need not be considered variables explaining differences in the party systems or their development. However, in the context of the initial institutional choice and attempts to change the system, the type of system is important, as they have consequences for the structure of the system. Parliamentary systems have been identified as "party-strengthening" (Millard 2004) as opposed to presidential systems, because parliamentary elections do not regularly produce an absolute majority, and thus often require coalition governments and some form of power-sharing (Linz 1990). Proportional representation systems are also identified with multi-party systems, and can minimize the bias towards large parties (Duverger 1954, Riker 1982). Thus attempts by major parties to shift away from parliamentary or proportional representation system might be read as attempts to alter the system (in favor of large parties).

Taagepera and Shugart identify district magnitude—the number of seats per district—as the most important variable in the study of electoral systems (1989, 19). Districts with higher magnitudes have a greater correlation between the number of votes gained and the number of seats in the legislature. The greatest difference is between states with a majoritarian system based on single-member districts (ex: the United States) and those with proportional representation for one district for the entire country (ex: Israel). Most systems fall somewhere in between. The relationship of district magnitude (M) to the proportionality of a system depends on the type of electoral system in place. For PR systems, a higher district magnitude creates greater proportionality, while for majoritarian systems, lower district magnitude leads to greater proportionality. However, when at very low district magnitudes, the exact value is crucial. For example, when M=1 or M=3, the distribution allocates a majority of seats to one party without a necessary majority of votes. This is referred to as a "manufactured majority" (*ibid.* 112-4). The choice of district magnitude in a newly established democracy can thus have ramifications for the formation of a political party system: at certain values of M, the system may favor certain parties or party system structures over others.

Once a list parliamentary system has been decided upon, a means of allocating seats must be determined. Formulas for seat allocation are based on either subtraction or division. The subtraction systems establish a quota (number or percentage of votes) which is then divided from the total votes received by a party each time that party is allocated a seat. The most obvious way to do this is the simple quota in which the total number of votes is divided by the total number of seats. Although the simple quota is the most neutral system, it generally leaves large remainders which must then be distributed. Probably the most widely-used quota system is the Hagenbach-Bischoff quota: the number of votes gained by the party (in a given district) is divided by the district magnitude plus one: $Q = V/(M+1)$. This quota gives somewhat of an advantage to larger parties than the simple quota, but is generally considered fairly neutral. The Imperiali quota [$Q=V/(M+2)$], which is slightly smaller than the Hagenbach-Bischoff quota, does tend to favor larger parties (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 30-1).

The other type of seat-allocation formula is based on division. In this system, a series of divisors are established, by which the total number of votes is divided each time a seat is allocated. The most common divisor formula is the d'Hondt rule, which is based on the successive divisors: 1,2,3,4, and so on. According to Taagepera and Shugart, "d'Hondt is relatively favorable to large parties (or alliances, where the law permits them)" (1989, 33). Thus the choice of seat allocation formula can have a small effect on the structure of the party system, especially if a formula which favors a certain kind of party is put into effect.

A final factor that has a more obvious, although less important, effect on the structure of the political party system is the level of the electoral threshold. A threshold is a given number or percentage of votes that a party is required to gain in order to be allowed into parliament. Because too many political parties is seen as confusing to voters and less than efficient, states employ thresholds to prevent excessive pluralism. The threshold value is therefore important especially for small or new political parties, which must fight to reach the set level. Thresholds in the post-communist states tend to be higher than in Western Europe (Birch 2003, 31). Another ramification of thresholds can be seen in voting behavior. Because voters want their vote to "count", they may be unlikely to support a party that is at or below the threshold level, because if that party

does not overcome the threshold, those votes are considered "wasted" (Birch 2003, 11). The possibility of vote wastage may further deter individuals from supporting a party that might otherwise be their first choice.

E. Political Party Typologies

In addition to characterizing the political party system, it will be useful to have a model through which to describe and categorize the political parties themselves. Many schemes have been devised in the comparative study of parties, and some are of more use than others, especially in the context of post-communist Europe. One of the most basic, and therefore most common, ways of categorizing political parties is based on their position on an ideological left-right spectrum. This type of divide, which also finds roots in the traditional cleavage structures raised by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) is generally accepted to apply for Western European political parties. The applicability of the left-right spectrum for political parties in the post-communist world has been called into question. Kitschelt (1992) characterized the ideological axes of Western Europe and CEE as aligned differently. In Western Europe, the axis places non-economic liberals with those against market economics on the left and pro-market forces with "authoritarian" non-economic views on the right. On the other hand, in CEE, the authoritarian views tend to align on the left with the anti-market forces, while the right is made up of pro-market and non-economic liberals.

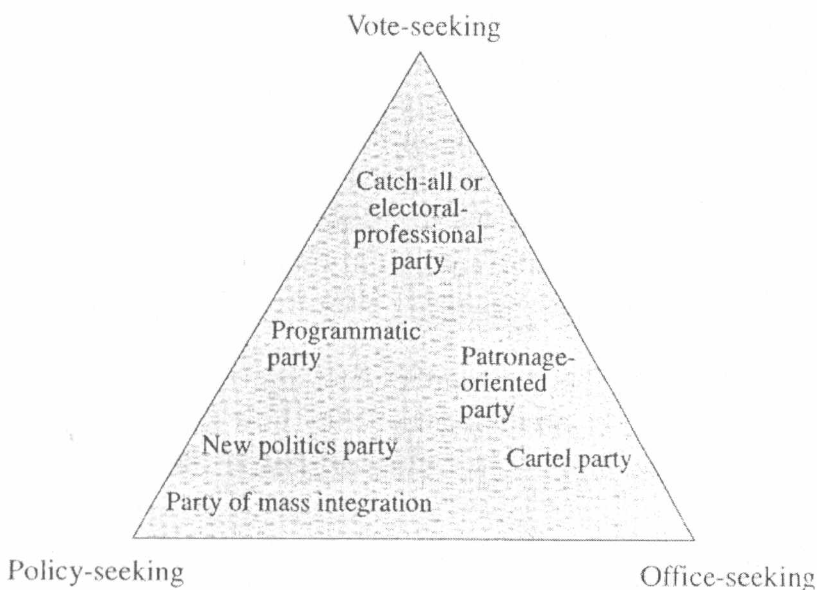
In the context of this paper, the left-right ideological axis is only partially useful. With regards to the Czech Republic, it has been argued that voters identify with and align themselves according to (although not exclusively) the left-right spectrum, although the liberal-authoritarian divide described above arguably gives it some different qualities than a similar axis in Western Europe (Matějů and Vlachová 1997). In Slovakia, the left-right divide is arguably less salient for voters. Rather, in the mid 1990s, Slovak political scientists argued for the judgment of Slovak political parties according to "how they play the game"—their respect for (Western-style) liberal democracy and its tenets. The scheme of "standard" and "non-standard" parties emerged as a means of distinguishing among the parties on both the left and right of the ideological spectrum (Učeň 1998, Mesežnikov 1999).

In addition to the traditional left-right axis, authors have developed more nuanced typologies which provide a richer and more accurate description of parties while allowing for categorization, thus facilitating comparison. One of the earliest typologies distinguishes between cadre and mass parties according to how the party is organized (Duverger 1954). *Cadre parties* were traditionally elite-based with very loosely organized information networks, while *mass parties* evolved with universal (male) suffrage and represented working-class interests with an intense organizational structure which relied on sheer numbers as a major resource. In contemporary usage, the terms have evolved to distinguish between loosely organized parties or those with low membership (cadre) and well-organized parties or those with large membership bases (mass) (Wolinetz 2002). Another dimension was added to this typology by Kirchheimer (1966): the *"catch-all" party*, a vague concept which has been variously interpreted as a leader-centered party, an opportunistic party seeking votes, or a party tied to interest groups. A final dimension is the *"cartel party"* (Panebianco 1988), a party looking to gain resources from the state, and willing to cooperate simply to gain power. This linear development model is not very useful for new and emerging party systems, however. It follows a much more prolonged period of development that occurred in partially before the establishment of universal suffrage and thus consolidated democracy. For developing parties, a more fluid and less linear model is necessary.

Wolinetz (2002) categorizes political parties into three groups based on "facets of parties' or factions' behavior and preferences" which reflect party organization and structure (149). The three types are: vote-seeking, policy-seeking, and office-seeking. Much as the names imply, vote-seeking parties are those that focus solely on winning votes and thus do not have a solid program and often have only the minimum level of organization needed to win on local, regional, and national levels. On the contrary, policy-seeking parties look to pass certain policies, whether they are well-defined, multi-faceted programs, or single issues. Policy-seeking parties have an active, but not necessarily a large membership. Finally, office-seeking parties emphasize getting into office, either through holding power alone or sharing it; office-seeking parties look to gain state patronage. Their main participants will be those holding or seeking office (149-153). These are only ideal types, as in practice most parties act to obtain more than

one of these goals. However, as party systems become more stable and institutionalized, the different priorities of each party should become visible. One of the main advantages of this approach is that unlike in Kirchheimer's model, party change in Wolinetz's model is not uni-directional. Movement among all three poles can be explained rather concisely through an analysis of shifting party priorities (see **Figure B**). A disadvantage is that Wolinetz structured the typology specifically for parties of Western European systems.

Figure B: The Wolinetz Model of Party Classification



Source: Wolinetz 2002, 161 *figure 6.2*

In a slight modification of Wolinetz's scheme, Millard (2004) lays forth a typology developed specifically in response to post-communist developments in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The major types of parties Millard proposes are: ideological, electoral, populist, and communist successor. Although the ideological parties initially had weak or unclear programs, they have developed into parties which fit the traditional left-right scheme, and are often included in international party organizations, further proving their acceptance of Western-style values and party structures. Electoral parties are of two types: "parties of power" and new umbrella

parties. While the former is seen only in Russia and Ukraine, the latter characterizes several formations in CEE, and the Czech and Slovak Republics in particular. It refers to parties which retained the non-ideological, non-programmatic nature of the initial "umbrella organizations" of the immediate post-communist era (see below). The final category is the populist parties which have reacted to the hardships brought on by economic transformation, and take on a broad (and often vague) appeal of "helping people" (Millard 2004, Ch. 3).

In categorizing post-communist parties, this paper will follow Wolinetz's typology, despite the existence of Millard's scheme, intended specifically for post-communist systems. Because Millard's study encompasses countries that have experienced much less stable democratization and institutionalization of the party systems that those of the Czech and Slovak Republics, such a broad approach is not necessary or particularly beneficial. I find Wolinetz's model more parsimonious, as it can be applied in cases where ideological ties are not binding, and it focuses rather on the organization and behavior of the parties. Thus for the Czech and Slovak parties, I will use a combination of ideological classification, the specific Slovak standard and non-standard division, and Wolinetz's 3-pronged model.

F. Methodology

This study is methodologically based on comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative aspects of the political party systems in two similar states from 1989 until the present. Comparative analysis can be conducted using the most-similar or most-dissimilar method. The former places very similar subjects, processes or models in comparison and seeks to explain the differences between them. This is the most appropriate method for this study. In describing and analyzing the development of party systems, established variables (outlined above) will be used: the number and relative strength of parties (measured by the percentage of vote gained and mandates within parliament), ideological positioning of parties, and their interaction (primarily through coalition-building). The sources for this study include primary sources (election results, public opinion polls, party platforms) as well as secondary analyses.

These two states were chosen particularly because of their shared historical context and their differences in the post communist era. Having been a single country for the majority of their post-war history, the two countries have a common contemporary history, struggle with communism, and similar cultures and languages. Although there were arguably separate political cultures even before the split of the country in 1993, they were governed as a functional unitary state, even after the designation of federal status in 1968. With such a common political and social history, one might expect a fairly similar turnout in the development of the political party system. This, however, is not the case. Therefore, I will concentrate on the differences in the communist era, the democratic Czechoslovak state, and the states since the breakup of the federation in 1993. The time period chosen covers the entire post-communist era, as well as a brief review of the communist regime. This allows for discussion of historical experience, institutional choices and their effects, as well as the development of socio-political cleavages, all of which affect the way in which party systems develop.

III. Analysis of the Czech and Slovak Political Party Systems

The following sections will describe and analyze the development of the party systems in Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The analysis is organized into sections based on electoral periods, as outlined in the Introduction. For ease of comparison, each subsection covers both states' development, rather than describing the entire development of one state and then turning to the other.

A. Hegemonic Party Rule: 1948-1989

In studying the development of post-communist party systems, it is important to first outline where the political system is developing from; that is, the nature of the communist regime and the role of political parties and institutions under communism. The type of communist regime is important for the developments in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. Kitschelt, et. al. (1999) have written extensively on the ways in which the pre-democratic regime type in this region affects the post-communist developments. According to them, the Czechoslovak communist regime was a *bureaucratic-authoritarian* system, meaning that the regime depended heavily on hierarchy, party discipline, and ideology in ruling. This type of regime is also marked by the absence of strong personalistic rule and the dominance of the professional bureaucracy. The party severely repressed any democratic opposition or extra-party civic mobilization. While the opposition under other types of communist rule gained negotiating power, the harsh repression of the Czechoslovak democratic opposition meant that groups outside the party had no power vis-à-vis the regime, and were not able to negotiate for change at all. Czechoslovakia is often considered one of the most repressive regimes in the satellite countries, along with East Germany.

Another characterization of the Czechoslovak regime is that of Linz and Stepan (1996, 316-321) in their study of democratization in Europe and Latin America. They classify post-1968 Czechoslovakia as a "frozen post-totalitarian" regime, emphasizing the changing nature of communist rule. The first twenty years of communist rule are considered totalitarian, characterized by ideological rule, strict repression, and late de-Stalinization. After the 1968 Soviet intervention, the regime outwardly continued its

ideological fervor, but the sincerity disappeared, and the regime "froze" into a careerist, survivalist, post-totalitarian mode. Although the zeal of the regime disappeared, its strict outward adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology precluded any reforms and led to its collapse.

The Communist Party System – The National Front

Before moving on to a more extensive discussion of the regime collapse and the start of democratization, it will be useful to examine hegemonic party rule and the nature of political representation in communist Czechoslovakia. In Marxist-Leninist theory, the central political actor in society should be the working class. Political parties serve as the representatives of different social classes, but in a socialist society, there is only one class (the workers). Therefore, there is a need for only one political party to represent the interests of the entire egalitarian society of workers (Millard 2004, 29-30). This is the theory that led to the development of single-party rule and the party-state. In practice, some states had more than one political party, as was the case with Czechoslovakia.

The Czechoslovak National Front was originally established in 1945. In the immediate post-war years (1945-1948), the National Front existed as the cornerstone of political life. Parties that were active in political life and wanted to gain representation in parliament were required to be members of the National Front. Only six parties were members of the system, and only the National Front could give permission for the existence and activities of its members (Balík, Hloušek, Holzer, and Šedo 2003). The system was based on consensus rather than opposition, but effectively led to limited pluralism. In February 1948, the National Front was taken over by its largest member party, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Českoslovenksa, KSČ). Soon after, the KSČ gained control of each of the other members of the National Front. The KSČ forced the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party (Československá strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD) and the Communist Party of Slovakia (Komunistická strana Slovenska, KSS) to merge with KSČ in 1948. The other parties: the Czechoslovak People's Party (Československá strana lidová, ČSL), the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (Československá strana socialistická, ČSS), the Slovak Freedom Party (Strana slobody) and the Party of Slovak Revival (Strana slovenskej obrody) were

allowed to survive. Despite the officially separate status of these parties, they must be considered satellites, as their actions were monitored and directed by the KSČ and their membership was reduced in some cases to just one-tenth of their pre-communist numbers. Non-communist and anti-communist groups were subject to strict oppression and most such groups were liquidated. From over 60,000 organizations, clubs and other groups, only about 700 remained after 1948 (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 102).

After the communist takeover, the National Front functioned to issue KSČ directives to the other parties and mass organizations, all of which were controlled by the party. The system was based on the principle of "democratic centralism," which required subordinate members and organizations to submit to the decisions of higher members and organizations. Despite the reality of single-party rule, and in order to lend the regime (at least artificial) legitimacy, elections for public office were held on a semi-regular basis.[5] Candidates for public office were nominated and then had to be approved by the National Front, although they were not officially required to be communist party members. In practice, the vast majority of public officials were communist and those who might not still acted on the orders of the party. "Elections without choice" meant that individuals were given a ballot with only one list of possible candidates for office (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 9-10). The only choice that could be made was not to fill in the ballot or not to vote at all. However, these actions often carried some form of castigation.

At the national level, officials were elected to the National Assembly. Although officially the legislative body, the Assembly rarely challenged the executive, and acted rather as a "rubber stamp" body (White, Gardner, and Schöpflin 1987). The post of deputy in the National Assembly was considered an honorary one, and deputies continued working in their normal jobs while serving as political representatives (Kubát 1961, 697). Millard (2004) identifies the fact that deputies kept their jobs as a central part of "representation" as conceptualized under communist rule—deputies remained working people, and could thus properly represent them. The other means of ensuring that deputies and other officials were representative was the possibility of their removal from office (which was usually only done in the case of disloyalty to the party).

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[5] However, elections never took place during periods of weakened party control, such as Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, or Poland in 1980-1 (White, Gardner, and Schöpflin 1987).

Relations between the Czech and Slovak Republics

Even though Czechoslovakia existed as a single state during the entire communist regime, there are important differences in the experiences of each republic under communism. When the communist regime came to power, the Czech lands were much more industrialized and modernized than Slovakia. Slovakia had stronger agricultural mobilization and worker base, as well as a more important place for the church, which set the stage for a different kind of communist regime than in the Czech lands. The KSČ had somewhat lower public support in Slovakia in the 1946 elections (28-30% as compared to 46%).

In the autumn of 1948, the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) was subsumed into the KSČ, although it continued to function as a regional organization of the KSČ without dramatic organizational changes (Balík, Hloušek, Holzer, and Šedo 2003, 148). The two other Slovak parties remained nominally separate. The Freedom Party remained part of the National Front, but its importance and influence greatly decreased from what it had been before 1948. Similarly, the Party of Slovak Revival had a very low membership from 1949 on, and its role was perhaps more symbolic than actual. During the reforms of mid-1968, the Party of Slovak Revival attempted to distance itself from Marxism and supported the Dubček-led reforms, but returned to its previous state by the end of 1968 (Lipták 1992, 293-301).

Kitschelt et. al. (1999) consider the type of regime in Slovakia to be *mixed bureaucratic-authoritarian-national accommodative*, because the leadership in Slovakia was more liberal, alternative, and autonomous than its Czech counterpart and at times it relied on its domestic opponents to broaden its support base. Perhaps one major reason was the struggle for Slovak autonomy, which may have dampened the zeal for the Czechoslovak socialist state. The post-1968 "normalization" era was much less harsh in Slovakia than in the Czech lands, which were the center for most of the Prague Spring dissent. However, many fewer dissident groups emerged in Slovakia, and their impact on communist politics was very limited, "thus contributing to the organizational unpreparedness of the Slovak opposition when communist rule collapsed" (Bugajski 2002, 282).

The Czech and Slovak Republics were governed by one regime throughout the communist period, and only in 1968 was the country officially recognized as a federation, rather than a unitary state. In 1968, the Constitution of 1960 was amended to include a provision that recognized Czechoslovakia as a federation of the Czech and Slovak Socialist Republics. The measure gave the Slovaks veto power in the Federal Assembly, but in practice unanimity continued until 1989 (Calda 1999, 4-5). One practice introduced to the constitution in 1968 was the "prohibition of majorization." This principle was to prevent Czech dominance over the Slovak representatives, and called for voting on certain issues to take place separately in the federal Czech and Slovak Houses of Nations, and in the upper House of the People. In order to pass a Constitution and constitutional law, as well as legislation on issues such as the election and recall of the President, the budget and economic plans, state borders, language and citizenship laws, a majority in both the Czech-dominated House of the People, and in the Slovak House of Nations was needed (Just 2006). Although communist deputies were loyal enough to the party that this measure never became a problem under the communist regime, it played some role in causing the breakdown of the federation after 1989.

Forty years of experience under a communist regime necessarily left legacies that are very relevant for the democratization process. The oppressive role of the hegemonic party-state has consequences for the ability of new political parties to form and compete for the trust of a polity that is widely skeptical of parties. The existence of separate Slovak parties, however small and unimportant under the hegemonic party system, foreshadows the construction of two separate party systems, also influenced by the government structure held over from the communist regime, as we shall see. Finally, differences in the experiences of Czechs and Slovaks previews the differing emergence political and democratic cultures.

B. Regime Change and Opposition Coalitions

Regime Change in Czechoslovakia

Kitschelt et. al. (1999) have characterized the post-1968 regime in Czechoslovakia as one that was harshly repressive towards the opposition and extremely resistant to change or reform. Their model of regime change builds on their typology of

the communist regime. This branch of regime change theory emphasizes path-dependency constraints on the rational courses of action available to elites. In bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, the elites held to power until the very end and repressed the opposition as long as possible. The opposition stays underground but is able to control enough resources to make a sudden leap for power, against which the old regime collapses. Kitschelt et al. identify this as implosion, but it has also been referred to as regime replacement or simply collapse.

Linz and Stepan outline why the other possible paths out of communist rule could not have occurred in Czechoslovakia: "In particular the hard-line regime gave no space for reformist moderates in the party state. Likewise, the opposition, while a great moral presence, had no negotiating capacity with the regime and indeed was not institutionally organized to conduct strategic and tactical negotiations" (1996, 321-2). This type of change happened much more quickly and thoroughly than in places where negotiations took place or the communist rulers agreed to reform, as was the case in most other CEE countries. After the collapse of the old regime, it was replaced with an interim government consisting mostly of members of the democratic opposition, but also some reformist members of the old regime.

The actual events of the collapse of the Czechoslovak regime have been described in detail from primary sources and personal experience elsewhere (Garton Ash 1990, Skalnik Leff 1998), and a repetition of the timeline of events would be unnecessary and redundant. This section will focus on the composition of the interim government, the institutional choices it made in the months leading up to the first elections, and their effects on later developments of the political and party systems.

In the Czech lands, the main opposition movement that emerged in late 1989 and early 1990 was the Civic Forum (Občanské fórum, OF), led by Václav Havel. Its counterpart in Slovakia was the Public against Violence movement (Verejnost' proti násiliu, VPN), founded in November 1989 (Bugajski 2002, 282). The existence of republic-level opposition movements led to the logical and immediate split of the party systems of the Czech and Slovak Republics after the collapse of the regimes in November 1989 (Cabada and Šanc 2005). More on the nature and activity of these two movements can be found in the following section.

The period from the collapse of the regime in November 1989 until the first elections in June 1990 saw the formation of an interim government consisting of both members of the old regime and members of both OF and VPN. In order to release the communist monopoly on power in the Federal Assembly, 120 deputies (40%) representing hard-core communist ideology were replaced with non-communist deputies. In the government, only 3 of 23 ministry positions were retained by communists. The sole objective of the interim government was to lead the country to the first elections. This required several institutional choices to be made, although the country still operated under the 1960 Constitution with some amendments until a new constitution could be passed in 1992. The major institutions that existed under the communist regime remained, but the processes to be followed would be democratic in nature.

Institutional Choices of the Interim Government

Some institutional changes and decisions needed to be made in order to deal with the new competitive institutions of democracy. I will outline those institutional choices which have a direct bearing on the political parties: the electoral system, seat allocation, and thresholds. Although a new constitution was not yet in place in 1990, the interim government did not plan to continue with the 1960 Constitution indefinitely. Rather, it decided that the first electoral period should last only two years and should have the purpose of designing a new constitution, and deciding on the status of the federation and relations between the two republics.

The electoral system chosen and imposed by the democratic opposition was not the one that would have been most advantageous for them. They chose proportional representation over a majoritarian system (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998). According to the theory of electoral systems, proportional representation leads most often to multiparty systems, while majoritarian systems are associated with the dominance of two parties (Duverger 1954, Riker 1982). Thus, the large anti-communist conglomerates of OF and VPN would have benefited from a system which favors large parties, but they chose a system more conducive to the formation of a multiparty system.

This choice at first seems unlikely and irrational; however, there can be several explanations. One might identify the choice as altruism or idealism in desiring a more

representative system. Millard argues that OF originally wanted a single-member district (majoritarian) system, and intended to change after the initial period: "many saw proportional representation as second best in terms of its representative qualities, but sought in the (provisional) electoral law to stimulate party development before reverting to a majoritarian system" (2004, 38). Furthermore, OF saw its main goal as ushering the country into the first elections, and many of its leading members had little intention of pursuing a place as a major political party, especially considering the anti-political leaning of some of its leadership. Finally, as Birch (2003) notes, the effects of institutional designs were quite uncertain for emerging democracies, and any choice had the potential to produce unintended or unexpected results.

The proportional representation system chosen originally called for 12 districts (8 in the Czech lands and 4 in Slovakia) and the number of seats allocated to each district depended on the turnout in the particular district. Elections for the federal level and the republic level were held at the same time. In order to somewhat personalize the electoral system, OF introduced the idea of semi-open lists, where voters could identify up to four individuals per party list. To allocate the seats, the Hagenbach-Bishchoff quota was used, making the number of votes needed to gain a seat in a given district slightly lower than with a simple quota system (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998, 113-4).

The final electoral choice that is considered important for the resulting party system is the use of thresholds for entrance into parliament. Electoral thresholds are used to discourage excessive plurality, which can be confusing for voters and destabilizing for the party system. The existence of a high threshold, however, does not indicate a stable party system. Birch (2003, 31) has observed that thresholds in the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe are in general much higher than those in established Western European democracies. In 2000, the average threshold for Western European parliamentary systems was 1.23% while in 20 CEE states, the average was 4.25% (*ibid.*). The initial thresholds in the Federal Assembly were 5% in either the Czech or Slovak Republic. For the Czech National Council, 5% was also required, while for the Slovak National Council it was reduced to 3% (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998, 116).

The Establishment of Political Parties

The period before the 1990 elections was also a time of formation of political parties, both new and renewed historical parties. After 40 years of single party rule, it is quite understandable that the initial post-communist period was characterized by a deep and widespread lack of trust in political parties. Potential parties were also constrained by a lack of resources. This made the large umbrella organization, Civic Forum (OF) a popular alternative, and many parties competed in the first elections as members of the OF.

Despite the hostility, new parties managed to form and organize in order to compete in the first elections. In the Czech lands, several new parties were formed in the months before the June 1990 elections: among them were the Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA) which competed as part of OF; the Christian Democratic Party (Křesťansko-demokratická strana, KDS); the Christian Democratic Union (Křesťanská a demokratická unie, KDU) which contested the elections as a coalition with the renewed Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL); several regional Moravian parties (Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii - Společnost pro Moravu, HSD-SMS; Moravské občanské hnutí, MOH; and Strana moravského venkova, SMV); the Green Party (Strana zelených, ČSZ); and the Republican party (Sdružení pro republiku - Republikanská strana Československa, SPR-RSČ). Several other parties were "renewed" historical parties, the most important of which is the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party (Československá strana socialně demokratická ČSSD) (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 108-113).

The only party that did not have to (or choose to) rebuild itself or establish a new organizational and electoral base was the Communist Party (KSČ). The Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) gained autonomy and split from KSČ relatively early, and soon after the 1990 elections KSČ changed its name to reflect the regional differences, becoming the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy, KSČM). While some obvious internal changes were made (the expulsion of the most hardcore members, distancing of the program from Stalinism, and decentralization), unlike communist successor parties in other post-communist countries, the KSČM did not

break with the past or reform completely (Grzymała-Busse 2002). More on the development of the KSČM can be found in section III.F.

In Slovakia, VPN served a similar purpose as OF did in the Czech lands, attracting smaller parties as members and gaining a majority of votes. However, as in the Czech lands, several new parties were able to gather organizational strength and resources to successfully compete in the first elections. These parties are: the Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie, KDH), two Hungarian parties that ran as the Party of Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalicie, SMK) and the separate Hungarian Independent Initiative (Maďarská nezávislá iniciatíva, MNI) which ran as part of VPN, the Democratic Party (Demokratická strana, DS), the Green Party (Strana zelených na Slovensku, SZS), and the right-wing, Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS). Finally, the regional Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) regained its autonomy from KSČ, although the two parties contested the first elections under as one coalition party, gaining approximately the same proportion of support in the Czech lands and Slovakia.

Results of the First Elections

Table 1 shows the results in percentages of votes and percentages and numbers of seats gained by each successful party in their respective National Councils in the June 1990 elections. Because of the federal system, the elections in 1990 were held on 2 levels: federal and republic. Consequently, three governments were formed: a federal executive government and 2 national-level governments. This can lead to some confusion in the discussion of coalition-building and governing. At the Federal level, the government was a coalition of the two largest parties represented in the Federal Assembly, OF and VPN. The Czech national government consisted of a coalition among OF, KDU, and HSD-SMS, with OF as the major coalition partner (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 118). The Slovak national government was formed by the VPN, KDH, and DS (Bučan 2004, 95).

Table 1 – Results of the 1990 Elections to the Czech and Slovak National Councils

Party	Percentage of Votes (National Council)	Number of Seats (National Council)	Percentage of Seats (National Council)
Czech Národní Rada			
OF	49.5%	124	62.0%
KSČ	13.2%	33	16.5%
HSD-SMS	10.0%	23	11.5%
KDU-ČSL	8.4%	20	10.0%
Slovak Národná Rada			
VPN	29.3%	48	32.0%
KDH	19.2%	31	20.7%
SNS	13.7%	22	14.7%
KSČ	13.3%	22	14.7%
SMK	8.7%	14	9.3%
DS	4.4%	7	4.7%
SZS	3.5%	6	4.0%

Source: www.volby.cz

Institutional choices can have an immediate effect on the results of elections and the party system, especially in newly forming democracies (Birch 2003). In the results of the first elections, several immediate effects of the decisions made regarding the electoral institutions are visible. First, the success of the communist successor parties, especially the non-reformed KSČM, is evident, and was arguably enabled by the choice of proportional representation over majoritarian system. It was further facilitated by the decision of OF leaders not to prohibit KSČ from running or to completely divest it of its finances and resources (Bugajski 2002, 230). Moreover, proportional representation stimulated party development. Although not entirely obvious from the results presented above, a great number of political and social organizations, groups, and movements sprung up in early 1990. Over 90 parties were able to gather the 10,000 signatures needed to establish a political party, and 23 qualified to run in elections, while 11 gained seats in one of the two national councils (and 9 at the federal level) (*ibid.* 232-3). The

lower threshold (3%) in Slovakia further contributed to plurality, allowing the inclusion of 2 parties that would not have succeeded with a 5% threshold.

Opposition Coalitions: Their Formation, Organization, Initial Success and Demise

After the fall of communist rule and during the initial election period in Czechoslovakia, the party scene was dominated by two major "opposition coalitions"—the Občanské fórum in the Czech lands and Verejnost' proti násiliu in Slovakia. These parties, typical of the initial post-communist period, have also been called "movement parties" (Ágh 1998), "forum parties" (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998), and "umbrella organizations" (Gill 2002). Each of these monikers describes a similar phenomenon, but emphasizes different aspects. The first focuses on the spontaneity associated with their organization and goals: "The cult of spontaneity was characteristic of [movement parties], since they tried to overcome the division between everyday life and politics, and this brought with it a domination of horizontal ties over vertical ones. …Their programs were vague, emotionally supported and directly connected with such actions as mass demonstrations." (Ágh 1998, 203). "Movement parties" strove to represent the ideal unity of society and reflected accurately the deep-seeded distrust in society of rigidly hierarchical political parties. Even in the names (forum, movement, etc.), one can identify the repulsion to parties, and some analysts do not consider them parties at all, but rather coalitions or conglomerations of the democratic opposition.

Elster, Offe, and Preuss's term "forum parties" places emphasis on the "non-political politics" philosophy of the leading dissidents who led the movements.[6] "Central to the idea of anti-political politics, conceptualized by V. Havel, G. Konrad, A. Michnik, and other dissidents was its concern for an autonomous civil society, which would be independent from the state rather than connected to it with parties as mediators" (1998, 132). The movements did not desire to create strong ties between citizens and the parties, but rather to act as loose intermediaries with a society that organized on its own, independent of the state. Finally, the term "umbrella organizations" calls attention to the fact that the movements were in fact very ideologically diverse and reluctant to transform

[6] An excellent discussion of the development of "anti-politics" can be found in Tucker, et al. (2000) "From Republican Virtues to Technology of Political Power: Three Episodes of Czech Nonpolitical Politics" in *Political Science Quarterly* 115:3. Autumn 2000, 421-445.

into coherent political parties. It also previews a reason for the short life span of the movements.

> But like umbrella organizations elsewhere, these were reluctant to transform themselves into political parties; there remained within them strong anti-organizational, anti-hierarchical sentiments, a lack of discipline, coherence, communication and accountability. But social movements cannot function effectively as governments, and under the pressure of having to make and implement decisions of national importance, these organizations began to fray. (Gill 2002, 37)

Thus it is clear that these opposition coalitions lacked firm organizational structure, programmatic goals, and even the will to carry on as true political entities. Their relatively early demise after their initial success in the first post-communist elections may not come as a surprise. Nevertheless, a more in depth look at their formations, and the cleavages that developed within both will help to set the stage for analysis of later party developments.

Občanské Fórum

Because of the repressive attitude of the Czech communist regime towards the democratic opposition, only very loose, informal groupings of dissidents were able to function. The origin of the Civic Forum was informal and spontaneous. It was composed of the "democratic opposition" of all colors (liberal, Catholic, leftist, humanist, etc.), with 14 different parts or factions in all (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 110). The leaders were against the idea of a strong organizational structure, or a hierarchy within the party. Rather than developing a specific program, the OF had one major governing objective, which was to get Czechoslovakia through the first free elections in 1990 (*ibid.*). Because of the short preparation time between the November 1989 fall of the regime, and the June 1990 elections, several would-be political parties joined forces with OF in order to gain representation in parliament. The most notable of these is the Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická aliance, ODA). Being the largest political organization (albeit informally organized), the OF did immensely well in the June 1990 election. The National Council results are available in Table 1 above. Additionally at the federal level, OF gained 53.2% of Czechoslovak votes in the Chamber of the People (amounting to 36.2% for the entire republic), giving it 68 of 150 seats available to Czech parties.

Even before the elections, factionalization began to occur within the OF. Bugajski (2002, 231-2) identifies two major ideological streams that emerged within OF: the "coalitionists" and the "partisans." The coalitionist group was associated with President Václav Havel and identified as liberals, hoping to retain the "original movement as a broad association spanning a range of political trends and ideologies" (*ibid.* 231). They were criticized by the partisans, such as Václav Klaus, who looked to develop coherent political parties, and argued that retaining the loose quality of the movement would hinder the development of a multi-party system. Those representing the coalitionist group adhered to the abovementioned descriptions of "umbrella organizations" while the partisans felt that OF had "outlived its usefulness once the new non-communist parliament was installed" (*ibid.*).

Although these two wings of the OF agreed to remain together through the elections, by January 1991, the Forum had decided to split into various coherent political parties (*ibid.* 232). The conservative, market-oriented partisan faction formed the Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana, ODS) while the coalitionist wing crystallized into the more left-liberal, loosely organized Civic Movement (Občanské hnutí, OH) (*ibid.* 234). Furthermore, the already formed ODA dropped its ties with the OF and became a separate entity before the 1992 elections. Thus from one major centrist organization emerged two key players on the right wing of the political spectrum: ODS and ODA, and a minor player, OH, that was to lose steam before the elections. With only the unreformed KSČM on the left, the dominance of the political right begins to be visible.

Verejnost' proti Násiliu

In much of the literature, VPN is considered the Slovak counterpart to the Czech OF. Much like the OF, the VPN included a wide assortment of very different personalities and ideological leanings. Liďák, Koganová, and Leška (1999) have identified six key groups comprising VPN: reform communists, Christian dissent, civil dissent, green and ecological movements, pragmatic and non-entangled communists, and artists and actors. Each of these groups is associated with different successor parties, some of which split or formed independently even before the 1990 elections (such as

some members of the Christian dissent group who formed the KDH). The governing ideology of the VPN was the rejection of communism and nationalism and support of market reforms and a federal state. VPN was not quite as successful in Slovakia as OF was in the Czech lands. It gained 32.5% of Slovak votes in the federal House of the People, amounting to 19 of 150 Slovak seats. The national level results can be found in Table 1. Unlike in the Czech lands, the VPN faced a major challenger in the KDH, which gained 19.2% of the votes at the national level.

Like its Czech counterpart, the VPN faced internal divisions soon after the first elections, during the rule of a VPN-led coalition (Slovak national) government. Učeň (1999) identifies two major groups within VPN: the "vision-bearers" and the "power pragmatics." The former consisted of moderate liberal democrats who ran the party from its headquarters, and the latter were those who had moved into state institutions. The power-pragmatics were associated with Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar. The main conflict between the two groups, according to Učeň, was not the ideological stance, but rather the manner in which politics should be carried out. To some extent the divisions in OF also fell along these lines, but within VPN, the contrast was much more extreme: "[The power-pragmatics] showed rather strong bent towards an aggressive and non-consensual political style, the use of extra-legal pressure (blackmail, manipulation with files of the secret police), and the employment of misinformation and incitement of an atmosphere of crisis and emergency in order to tamper with and exploit public opinion" (*ibid.* 87). In addition to the power struggle within the VPN, several policy or ideological cleavages existed. One of these, which the Mečiar group adopted and used as a platform for nationalist populism, was the desire for greater Slovak autonomy within the federation.[7] Another point of contention was the type and speed of economic reforms, as the economic transition had much harsher social repercussions in Slovakia from an early date (Lid'ák, Koganová, and Leška 1999). The power-pragmatic group used the social discontent about the economic reforms to promote "economically grounded nationalism" (Učeň 1999, 87).

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[7] Although the eventual outcome of this struggle was two separate states, Meciar's initial plan for Slovakia was not full independence, but rather a mixed form of autonomy and cooperation with the Czech Republic (Just 2006).

The attempts of the Mečiar-led power-pragmatic group to gain more power within VPN culminated in the formation of the "Za demokratické Slovenska" faction. By the spring of 1991 the faction had formed a new political party: the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, HZDS), shortly after Mečiar was asked to leave VPN in hopes of keeping it together (Učeň 1999, 87; Bugajski 2002, 284). An anti-Mečiar faction also emerged from the remains of VPN—the Civic Democratic Union (Občianska demokratická únia, ODÚ), which supported the maintenance of the federation and aligned itself with the values of the Czech ODS (Rose and Munro 2003, 127). A third party that left the VPN was the Hungarian Civic Party (Magyar Polgári Part-Mad'arská občianska strana, MPP-MOS), which had already formed before the 1990 elections, but contested them as part of VPN. As a result of the breakdown of VPN into several smaller parties, the KDH became the largest party in parliament, with 31 seats (Bučan 2004, 95).

Why Did Opposition Coalitions Emerge?

There are several reasons why the immediate post-communist political system may have been predisposed to the emergence of large, loosely-organized political movements such as OF and VPN rather than coherent political parties. The first of these is perhaps obvious. In the six months between the fall of the communist regime and the first free elections, there was simply not enough time for political groups (that had been severely repressed before November 1989) to form coherent programs, ideologies, or organizations. Often the first "parties" were simply groups of people with similar opinions, but very few material resources (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998). Secondly, the first election in most post-communist states was essentially a referendum or plebiscite for the new, non-communist system (Millard 2004; Bugajski 2002, xx). As such, the primary political divide was democracy vs. communist. In many cases, individuals, even leaders of political movements, knew that they wanted a democratic system, but democracy was simply defined as "not communism" (Holý 1996) so programmatic differences between the various anti-communist groups were marginal in the early months of party formation. The importance of a second division in the Slovak context is clearly visible: the debate over federation or independence in part led to the split of VPN.

A final reason for the popularity of large, non-party formations was the lingering lack of trust in political parties, conditioned by the experience of 40 years of single-party rule (Cabada and Šanc 2005).

Evaluation of the Party System, 1989-1992

Before launching into a formal evaluation, it will be useful to note one important feature of the development of the Czech and Slovak party systems. Although during this time period, Czechoslovakia remained intact, I talk about separate party systems, because in effect, the parties that were most successful in the first two elections were those that found their base in one republic or the other. Leff notes that parties concentrated on the republic level because organization was much easier at that level, and parties would be in a position to contest both federal and republic elections (1998, 134). While perhaps the most efficient means of organizing politically, the republic-level party systems, as will be argued later, helped to seal the fate of Czechoslovakia.

Major Divides

The divisions present in Czechoslovak society during the initial electoral period are relatively few. By far, the most important cleavage was that between supporters and opponents of the communist regime. Following the descriptions of the first post-communist elections as merely a plebiscite on the legitimacy of the old regime, most of the newly formed parties identified simply with an anti-communist platform. This is true in both the Czech and Slovak party systems—where the KSČ stood for the old regime and the rest of the parties were against communism. In Slovakia it is also possible to see the beginnings of cleavages that will become more salient in the following electoral periods. These are based especially around ethnic cleavages and the national closure-cosmopolitan opening divides. The ethnic divide between Czechs and Slovaks, while not important in the Czech lands, became of great significance among Slovak parties, leading each party to articulate a stance either for or against the federation. The SMK represents the major ethnic cleavage within Slovakia: the Slovak majority and the Hungarian minority. The SNS also reflects the ethnic divide as well as the desire to protect the nation.

Classifying the Systems

Following Ware's (1999) criteria for evaluation of a political party system, I will briefly analyze four major aspects of the Czech and Slovak party systems during the initial post-communist period. The first criteria is the number (and relative strength) of parties in the system. In the case of both systems, many more parties contested the elections than won seats in the National Councils: of 13 Czech parties, only 4 received seats, and of 23 Slovak parties, 7 entered parliament (Birch 2003, Rose and Munro 2003). The relative strength of the parties at such an early stage is an irrelevant indicator, especially considering the lack of cohesion of the dominant parties in each republic (OF and VPN) and their subsequent split into several parties of varying strength. With hindsight, it is rather easy to evaluate the relevance of parties, and it can be said that in the Czech National Council, three of the initially elected players can be considered relevant (OF, KDU-ČSL, and KSČ), while the regional HSD-SMS is largely irrelevant. Because of its failure to stabilize, and the untimely death of its leader during the first electoral period, HSD-SMS was unable to integrate into the Czech party system and gathered no votes in the next election (Springerová 2005). In the Slovak system, the Green party, which barely passed the 3% margin, can also be considered irrelevant. The communist successor parties—the reforming KSS and the unreformed KSČM, running as one party in 1990—in an election based largely on the rejection of communism, managed to receive a fair percent of the vote (just above 13% in both National Councils), but remained a party without coalition potential (and perhaps without blackmail potential) in the first electoral period.

The second facet of evaluation is the stance of the parties towards the legitimacy of the regime. Several anti-system parties emerged: most notably the Slovak National Party, and the Czech Republican Party (which received only 1%). The Czech Communist Party can also be considered an anti-system party in this period as it rejected the change to democracy, although it played by the new rules. Ideologically, in the Czech lands, a clustering of parties on the right of the political spectrum is visible, especially after the breakdown of OF, with its largest component being the rightist ODS. The Slovak party, emerged with a similar situation, although, as we shall see the left became more diverse. Finally, it is clear that the penetration of society by political

parties is extremely low in this period. Again, the distrust in parties and residual "anti-politics" can be cited as evidence. Low party penetration of society also enabled new parties to emerge and splintering to occur within newly established parties. During the period from 1989 to 1992, the party system was neither stabilized nor consolidated. Rather the period was marked by a great plurality of new political movements, and the initial, but important split of the opposition coalitions into more traditional political parties.

Because of the high degree of fragmentation and the relatively low degree of ideological differentiation among the parties, the political system in the Czech lands during the first period might be considered *segmented multipartism*. However, this categorization does not imply the stability which Sartori's model imparts to it, because of the newness of the system. Rather the low ideological difference is a result of the lack of time and resources the parties had available in order to differentiate themselves from each other and create coherent programs. The Slovak system comes closer to Sartori's model of *atomized multipartism*, which is characterized by a very high degree of fragmentation, with 15 or more parties. While not quite that many Slovak parties made it into parliament, the number was much higher and the dominance of the movement party was much lower than in the Czech Republic. Alternately, the system might be categorized as *polarized multipartism*, due to the high fragmentation and high ideological difference with centrifugal competition.

C. Beginnings of the Party Systems: 1992-1998

The 1992 Elections and the Disintegration of the Federation

The first electoral period was intended only as an interim government with the primary goals of establishing a new constitution and deciding on the new shape of the federation. However, the decision to limit these tasks to a two-year period is now widely considered to be one of the biggest mistakes in the building of the Czechoslovak democracies (Pithart, quoted in Horský 1993, 12). While the state of the federation grew to be perhaps the most important political issue in Slovakia, it remained relatively unimportant in the Czech lands, where economic and market reform took center stage in the 1992 election campaigns (Leff 1998, 131). The largest political players in each

republic were also the largest splinter groups that formed from the former opposition coalitions: ODS (from OF) and the HZDS (from VPN).

The splintering within the party system prompted the desire of the larger parties to amend the electoral law to have stricter thresholds for parties and even higher thresholds for coalitions of more than one party. The Slovak National Council raised the single party threshold to 5% (from 3% in 1990); coalitions of two or more parties had to reach 7% and large coalitions 10%. The Czech National Council required each party to gain 5%, two-party coalitions to gain 7%, three-party coalitions 9%, and four or more parties 11%. "Introducing higher thresholds seemed justified in order to create fewer and stronger parties (or party coalitions) thereby improving the preconditions for better government" (Elster, Offe, and Presse 1998, 117). However, it also became clear that those parties in favor of raising electoral thresholds were those who expected to pass those levels in the 1992 elections.

Table 2 – Results of the 1992 Elections in Czech and Slovak National Councils

Party	**Percentage of Votes (National Council)**	**Number of Seats (National Council)**	**Percentage of Seats (National Council)**
Czech National Council			
ODS	29.7%	76	38.0%
KSČM (Levy Blok)	14.0%	35	17.5%
ČSSD	6.5%	16	8.0%
LSU	6.5%	16	8.0%
KDU-ČSL	6.3%	15	7.5%
ODA	5.9%	14	7.0%
SPR-RSČ	6.0%	14	7.0%
HSD-SMS	5.9%	14	7.0%
Slovak National Council			
HZDS	37.3%	74	49.3%
SDL'	14.7%	29	19.3%
KDH	8.9%	18	12.0%
SNS	7.9%	15	10.0%
SMK	7.4%	14	9.3%

Source: www.volby.cz

As can be seen in **Table 2**, the Czech party system after the 1992 elections looks quite different than that elected in 1990, with the addition of several new parties, and the first election of ODS and ODA, and the merger of the KDU and ČSL. A coalition government was formed by ODS, led by Václav Klaus, who became the leader of the new governing coalition, with the smaller ODA, KDU-ČSL, and Christian Democratic Party (Křesťanskodemokratická strana, KDS[8]) as junior coalition partners. In opposition on the left, ČSSD emerged, passing the 5% threshold by 1.5%, adding a new dimension to the Communist-dominated left. The other newcomers to parliament were the Liberal Social Union (Liberálně sociální unie, LSU), and the right-wing, anti-system Association for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro Republiku-Republikanská strana Československa, SPR-RSČ), led by Miroslav Sládek. Finally, the Moravian regional parties continued their representation in parliament with 14 mandates.

Two main changes characterize the Slovak party system between 1990 and 1992. The first and most important is the split of VPN which gave rise to Mečiar's HZDS, which gained nearly 50% of the parliamentary mandates in 1992. Secondly, the reform of the KSS, visible through the name change to Party of the Democratic Left (Strana demokratickej ľavice, SDĽ), the rejection of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the embracement of liberal democracy. With the rise of HZDS, which gained 37.3% of the National Council votes, KDH lost some of its electorate, dropping from nearly 20% to under 10%. Due to a modified electoral law, the threshold in Slovakia was raised to 5%, excluding at least 2 parties (ODÚ and DS) that might have otherwise gained seats in the Slovak National Council. This somewhat decreased the plurality in the Slovak Council, although had little effect on Czech parties.

Within weeks after the 1992 elections, the struggle over the shape of the federation was in full swing. The elections had not brought any statewide parties into parliament, so debate was naturally divided according to the interests of the individual republics. One of the major issues of the time was economic reform, which had a much harsher social impact in Slovakia, and was capitalized on by the HZDS and SNS, along with the idea of a confederation beneficial for Slovakia. The victory in Slovakia of

[8] The KDS was founded in 1990, and in the 1990 elections ran with KDU-ČSL. In the 1992 elections it ran as a coalition with ODS, and eventually merged with ODS in 1995.

parties supportive of independence or greater autonomy "propelled forward the process of federal dissolution" (Bugajski 2002, 286). Parties favoring autonomy represented 89 of 150 seats (HZDS – 74 and SNS – 15), even though public opinion polls showed that the Slovak public favored the federation (*ibid.*).

Because neither the Czech nor the Slovak population favored the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, the reason must lie elsewhere. Some authors propose that it was primarily the inability of elites to compromise on the shape of the federation that caused the split:

> The elections thus produced clear winners in each republic, but different and incompatible winning coalitions in each case. Klaus's commitment to wholesale economic reform and tighter federation was greatly at odds with median Slovak preferences. Mečiar's decentralized confederation was totally unacceptable to Klaus. Without conscious effort to destroy Czechoslovakia, the two electorates, by focusing on republic-level concerns had nonetheless elected leaders who could not, and did not, reach agreement on how to continue the state. (Leff 1998, 131)

The inability of elites was exacerbated by an underlying institutional problem. Earlier I mentioned the principle of "prohibition of majorization" that was introduced in the 1968 amendments to the 1960 Constitution, which after the 1992 elections was still the official Czechoslovak constitution. Effectively, this law gave the Slovak part of the Federal Assembly veto power over any constitutional proposal at the federal level (*ibid.* 133). The only government at the federal level that would be able to gain majorities in the federal Council of Nations was an ODS-HZDS coalition (Just 2006). The trouble with this is, as captured in the quotation above, is the vast ideological differences between these two parties and the consequent inability of their elites to reach an agreement on the shape of the federation. After failing throughout the summer and fall of 1992 to set out a federal framework, an agreement on the division of Czechoslovakia was passed on 25 November 1992, effective 1 January 1993.

While the Czech and Slovak party systems were separate entities from the early days of the democratic regime, the disintegration of Czechoslovakia still had some indirect effects on the party system. Although new constitutions were formed in each

republic, many laws, including the basic electoral[9] and governmental structures remained intact. The federal assembly and government were simply dissolved, leaving the National Councils and the republic-level governments as the legislative and executive authorities of each new republic. Slovakia remained a unicameral legislature, while the Czech Republic's new constitution called for a Senate, although the first elections for the Senate were not held until 1996 ambivalence over bicameralism (Rose and Munro 2003, 136).

The Breakdown of Opposition Coalitions and Formation of Political Parties

The next period in both the Czech and Slovak party systems is the establishment and initial consolidation of "normal" political parties. I have already discussed the formation of the successor parties of the opposition coalitions. This section will deal with the next two electoral periods covering a span of about six years (1993-1998). In both states, early elections were held due to the breakdown of government following scandals. While the 1992 elections dramatically changed the map of party systems in both states, the following period saw changes rather in the structure of competition and ideological space. The major parties in each system seemed to be heading towards consolidation, but the party systems remained in flux during this time. In Slovakia, the period was also marked by the irregularities and semi-authoritarian nature of PM Vladimír Mečiar and the ruling HZDS.

Developments in the Czech Party System, 1992-1998

Between the breakup of the federation in 1992 and the elections of 1998, the party system of the newly founded Czech Republic was dominated by the rightist ODS party. This was in part due to the popularity of early economic reforms that effectively brought a market economy and competition with relatively few negative social impacts. Many citizens therefore supported reform. However, the ODS dominance was also caused by the weakness of the political left. The presence of anti-system parties on both the right (SPR-RSČ) and left (KSČM) of the political spectrum meant their exclusion from

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[9] Both new republics continued using the district structures and seat allocation formulas that were chosen before the disintegration: the Czech Republic had 8 multimember districts and Slovakia 4; each used the Hagenbach-Bischoff method of distributing seats (Rose and Munro 2003)

coalition politics "and thus delineated very narrow space for competition between governmental coalition and the rest of the opposition" (Kunc 1999, 157).

Table 3 – Results of the 1996 Czech Elections to Poslanecká Sněmovna

Party	Percentage of Votes	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats
ODS	29.6%	68	34.0%
ČSSD	26.4%	61	30.5%
KSČM	10.3%	22	11.0%
KDU-ČSL	8.1%	18	9.0%
SPR-RSČ	8.0%	18	9.0%
ODA	6.4%	13	6.5%

Source: www.volby.cz

Under the leadership of the controversial and charismatic Miloš Zeman, the Czech Social Democratic Party (Česká strana sociálně demokratická, ČSSD) rose from 6.5% of votes in the 1992 elections to 26.4% in the 1996 elections. ODS still had a plurality of votes and formed another coalition with ODA and KDU-ČSL, but this time it had was a minority government, with only 99 (of 200) seats. The major increase in vote share for ČSSD meant not only greater representation in parliament, but that ODS needed its tacit support in order to govern as a minority government, and that ČSSD officials gained important parliamentary seats (e.g. Zeman became the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies) (*ibid.* 159).

Emerging on the right of the political spectrum in 1992 was the Republican Party (SPR-RSČ), which gained 6.0% of the votes in 1992 and 8.0% in 1996. This party represented an extremist right-wing and ethno-centric position and is generally considered an anti-system party. Thus, despite its representation in parliament, it was excluded from any multi-party cooperation, including coalition-building negotiations. Even more so than KSČM, SPR-RSČ represents a party which is unwilling to accept the practices of liberal democracy, and has even engaged in criminal acts (Vlachová 1997, 47 *footnote*). While one of the major axes of the Czech political debate is economic affairs, the SPR-RSČ does not maintain a coherent economic program, but rather is extreme in terms of "authoritarian, racist, anti-European, and anti-democratic ideas" although it views itself and its voters as centralist (*ibid.* 50). However, the Republican run in parliament was rather short-lived, as they failed to reach the 5% threshold in 1998.

Categorization of Parties in the Czech Republic

As mentioned in the Theory section, it is often difficult to apply one of the traditional means of categorizing parties—ideology—to political parties in the post-communist world. Nevertheless, it has been argued elsewhere (Vlachová 1997, Matějů and Vlachová 1997, 1998) that the left-right divide is fairly salient in the Czech Republic, so I will employ it as one means of describing the parties. As a second, wider model, I will employ Wolinetz's scheme of vote-seeking, policy-seeking and office-seeking parties.

The starting point shall be the dominant party from 1993 to 1998, ODS. This party can be considered rightist, or right-wing, because of its stance towards economic reform, supporting rapid and efficient transition to a market economy through voucher privatization, support of entrepreneurs, and free competition. It also carries a rather conservative social stance. At the other end of the spectrum (after 1996) is the ČSSD, which represents slower economic growth and a socialist economic model. While there are factions within the party representing the "third way" of the Blair Labour Party, and the more traditional social democratic stance, the party is certainly leftist, both economically and socially. ČSSD and other leftist parties also tend to attract those voters who see themselves as the "losers" of the transition process or who do not fully trust the new system (Matějů and Vlachová 1998). KDU-ČSL and ODA during this period occupied the center of the political spectrum. Finally, on the extremes are the unreformed KSČM and the right-wing extremist SPR-RSČ. Fiala and Hloušek (2003) argue that from 1996-1998, the left-right profiles of Czech parties mirrored the dominant socio-economic conflict lines in Czech society (in Cabada and Šanc 2005). Thus from the point of view of ideology, the Czech system was approaching consolidation and stabilization during this period.

Using Wolinetz's three categories of organization, behavior and structure, it is at times difficult to classify actual parties as one of the ideal types. Nevertheless, I will try to identify which type fits each party best. The ODS and ČSSD as large parties with substantial organization at national, regional and local levels, and well-defined programs can be considered policy-seeking parties. At the same time, because each party is large

and attempts to attract a wide range of undecided voters in the center of the political spectrum, ODS and ČSSD both have aspects of vote-seeking parties as well. The two center-right parties, ODA and KDU-ČSL display characteristics of policy-seeking parties. During this time they cooperated with ODS, a party with similar ideology, and they remained fairly small parties, KDU-ČSL with a more coherent electoral base than ODA. Finally, the two anti-system parties might be considered policy-seeking parties, even though neither party had set forth a very coherent program. Before 1993, KSČM shunned reforms to its program that would have allowed it to appeal to a wider electorate, and concentrated only on its members. (Grzymała-Busse 2002, 145). Both KSČM and SPR-RSČ depended on protest votes in order to retain their parliamentary seats.

Developments in the Slovak Party System, 1993-1998

Upon Slovak independence in January 1993, Vladimír Mečiar became prime minister of Slovakia and formed a minority government with the support of the right-wing SNS and the communist successor SDĽ. However, because one of the major divisions within Slovak society had disappeared (the independence-federation divide), Mečiar faced a growing popularity problem. The platform on which his party had been elected had been fulfilled, and it became clear that the more pressing issues of consolidating the new state, which faced difficult economic problems (Leff 1998, 148). In the first few months, the new government faced its first major crisis over the selection of the president, which took weeks to resolve. Several members of the HZDS and the junior coalition partner SNS objected to Mečiar's nominee for president (Roman Kováč, a former Slovak Communist Party member). As a result of this and other personal disputes, several HZDS members formed their own club. SNS withdrew its support for the government in March 1993, leaving HZDS without a majority. It took another 6 months before HZDS was able to form another government in November 2003 (this time an official coalition with SNS), but this coalition received a vote of non-confidence (initiated by the Parliament) in March 1994 (Leff 1998, Simon 2004).

The first Mečiar government was followed by a short coalition government (KDH, SDĽ, and the DÚ—formed by HZDS defectors) led by Josef Moravčík took Slovakia through to the early elections held on 30 September and 1 October, 1994 (see

Table 4). Several new formation are visible, namely the Association of Slovak Workers (Združenie robotníkov Slovenska, ZRS), a communist party that had separated from SDL', and the coalition called Common Choice (Spoločná voľba). The formation of ZRS slightly destabilized the left of the political spectrum, and SDĽ contested the 1994 elections under the name Common Choice in coalition with the Social Democratic Party, the Movement of Slovak Peasants (Hnutie podohospodarov Slovenska, HPS), and the Green Party (Strana zelených na Slovensku, SZS) (Rose and Munro 2003, 154-5, www.statistics.sk). Common Choice received 10% of the vote in 1994. In addition, both KDH and SMK improved their positions slightly over the last elections. However, Mečiar and the HZDS ran the campaign with the most resources and easily came out with a majority, though smaller than in 1992.

Table 4 – Results of the 1994 Slovak Elections to Národná Rada

Party	**Percentage of Votes**	**Number of Seats**	**Percentage of Seats**
HZDS	35.0%	61	40.7%
Common Choice	10.4%	18	12.0%
KDH	10.1%	17	11.3%
SMK	10.2%	17	11.3%
DÚ	8.6%	15	10.0%
ZRS	7.3%	13	8.7%
SNS	5.4%	9	6.0%

Source: www.statistics.sk

HZDS gained 35.0% of votes, but with only 67 seats, it found coalition-building a more difficult process than before and Mečiar announced the new government only in December 1994. The new coalition was comprised of HZDS, SNS, and the newly formed ZRS. While this extreme left-right coalition seems unlikely, it should be viewed in the context of Slovak politics, in which the traditional left-right ideological divide is less applicable than in Western Europe or even the Czech Republic. Učeň (1999, 95) sees the joining of these three parties as based rather on the conduct of politics than on policy or ideology.

Mečiarism

Slovak politics has been characterized throughout the post-communist era by the personalization of political conflicts. This seems to have intensified after the split of the federation. Leff argues: "In fact, whereas Slovak politics had previously revolved around relations with the Czechs, it now appeared to have become an intensely personalist politics that revolved around Mečiar himself" (1998, 151). The growing controversy surrounding Mečiar and his way of conducting politics attracted some and repelled others, dividing Slovak politics.

During the first Mečiar government, "Mečiarism" emerged as a specific style of post-communist authoritarianism. This term describes the heavy-handed style with which Mečiar ran the HZDS and the government, often ignoring or bending the accepted norms of liberal democracy. One example has already been mentioned, in the way in which he handled the selection of the first president by parliament. Mečiar incorrectly assumed that his party members would go along with his choice, but an internal faction took advantage of the secret balloting to support candidate Michal Kováč. Mečiar demanded the resignation of his foreign minister, Milan Kňažko, after Kňažko publicly challenged Mečiar (Leff 1998, 148). During the 1994 campaign, Mečiar contested his 1994 dismissal, and later as prime minister initiated formal parliamentary investigations against President Kováč for his involvement. He also repeatedly cut the presidential budget and other powers.

Mečiar started court proceedings against the MPs who had left HZDS in protest in 1993 to form DÚS, challenging the legality of their remaining in parliament (*ibid.* 151-4). Even more alarmingly, in August 1995, Kováč's son was kidnapped and taken to Austria where he was held on the basis of a warrant in an embezzlement case. The incident was later tied to the Slovak Information Service led by Ivan Lexa, a Mečiar loyalist (*ibid.* 155). These examples show that Mečiar's vision of how politics can and should be run in a post-communist democracy did not match that of established liberal democracies in the West. Mečiar became a sort of thorn in the side of those in the West looking forward to a democratic Slovakia, especially NATO and the EU. To that extent, Mečiar is quoted as stating "We will turn to the East if they do not want to have us in the West" (Simon 2004, 168).

In response to the aggressive tactics of the HZDS government, the opposition found solidarity and public support. In 1996, public support for HZDS fell to below 30% while support for the parties of the opposition was well above 50%. That year, the opposition parties KDH, DÚ, and DS had formed the so-called "Blue Coalition" led by KDH. This coalition "profiled itself as a center-right democratic opposition block prepared to cooperate with other democratic parties, including leftist parties and those of the Hungarian Coalition" (Mesežnikov 1999, 123). The coalition continued to enjoy higher levels of support than HZDS, bringing it troubles from the ruling party, especially in the lead-up to the 1998 elections.

Categorization of Slovak Parties

Unlike the Czech system, Slovak parties are characterized by a lower salience of the traditional left-right ideological divide, and have seen, as mentioned above, a divide over the conduct of politics. When applicable, I have noted the ideological bent of the various parties, but the categories of "standard" and "non-standard" indicate more within the Slovak context (Učeň 1999). Simply stated, those parties associated with Mečiarism and that actively cooperate with the HZDS can be considered non-standard—HZDS, SNS, and ZRS. The rest of the parties, KDH, SMK, SDĽ, and DÚ are standard parties that abide by the accepted standards of liberal democracy. This divide will become even more important in the analysis of the 1998 elections.

Employing Wolinetz's model, one finds examples of each party. HZDS can be considered a vote-seeking party, especially because of its lack of specific program and focus on winning at all levels in order to dominate politics. Mečiar has been known to employ populist, leftist, and conservative rhetoric in order to gain support. The HZDS coalition partners, ZRS and SNS can be considered office-seeking. ZRS especially looks primarily to gain office and the resources that come with it—otherwise, a left-wing communist party would have trouble remaining in coalition with parties like the HZDS, which is not consistently ideologically identifiable, and the SNS which is strictly right-wing nationalist. Among the "standard" parties, KDH can be considered policy-seeking, along with SDĽ. Although KDH originally emerged as a non-confessional mass movement, it gradually took on a more coherent conservative platform and a stable

electoral base (Bučan 2004. 108). Finally, the Hungarian SMK can be considered an ethnically specific vote-seeking party, especially after the merger of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Party, Coexistence, and the MOS in 1994.

Evaluation of the Czech and Slovak Party Systems, 1992-1997

Major divides

In contrast to the first electoral period, the number and salience of divisions among the electorate increased in the period from 1992 to 1997. In the Czech lands, the social and economic divisions became arguably the most important, and defined the lines of competition for the parties. As Kitschelt, et.al. have argued, the economic liberal generally aligned with the socially authoritarian view, while the economic protectionist and social liberal position tended to align. After the 1996 elections, in particular, the ODS and ČSSD came to represent these two major economic and social alignments. The national closure vs. cosmopolitan opening divide grew in importance with the debates over entrance into NATO and the EU. However, during this period, the differences among political parties were not very marked with regard to this divide. Of fading importance was the division among supporters and opponents of the old regime, mostly because the only remaining defenders of the old regime were the KSČM, who had been largely isolated within parliament. Finally, ethnic divides have been minimal among the Czech population and are not reflected in the party system.

In Slovakia, the division that had previously dominated society—Czech vs. Slovak—disappeared almost overnight with the disintegration of the federation. This somewhat disoriented the major parties, especially HZDS, which had built itself on the struggle against Czech centrism. The ethnic divide between Slovaks and Hungarians remained salient, and the steady representation of the Hungarian parties indicate this. The economic and social divides were not as clearly defined as in the Czech lands. While the protest against Czech-led economic reform was part of the reason for the disintegration, the position of HZDS on the economic and social divides is less clear. Rather, Mečiarism took advantage of the fears of cosmopolitan opening and international pressure, clinging to a national-closure position and also playing somewhat upon the Slovak-Hungarian ethnic divide. Finally, as in the Czech Republic, the divide among

supporters and opponents of the old regime quickly faded, especially because of the prominence of former communists in positions of leadership (Mečiar, Kováč, Ľupták, and others).

Aside from the cleavages covered above, personality became an important means of creating divisions within Slovak politics. Specifically, this applies to Mečiar, whose controversial means of conducting politics became a point of contention among the Slovak electorate. The divide between supporters and opponents of Mečiar is at least as relevant for the 1990s as any of the other divides discussed above, especially after the creation of an independent Slovakia. Leff argues: "In fact, whereas Slovak politics had previously revolved around relations with the Czechs, it now appeared to have become an intensely personalist politics that revolved around Mečiar himself" (1998, 151). This divide continues today, even after Mečiar's losses in parliament and in two bids for the presidency.

Classifying the Systems

From the 1992 elections until 1997, both the Czech and Slovak party systems saw some shifts in the number and relative strengths of the parties in the system, as well as in the ideological structure and the extent to which the parties penetrated society. From the 3 relevant Czech parties identified in the last period (OF, KDU-ČSL, and KSČ), 6 parties can be considered relevant in the next two electoral periods. This includes all the parliamentary parties, of which the two anti-system parties (KSČM and SPR-RSČ) had blackmail potential, and the rest carried coalition potential. SPR-RSČ was probably the least relevant, especially considering its failure in 1998. The unreformed nature of the KSČM also affects the competition structure: "the differences between the KSČM supporters and their nearest neighbor on the left-right axis, the Social Democrats (ČSSD), were greater than between any other two neighboring parties…" (Grzymała-Busse 2002, 143).

Although quite a few parties are relevant, the relative strengths begin to make a difference in this time periods. The most drastic example is the ČSSD, which emerged as a minor party in 1992, with 6.3% of the vote, but grew by 1996 into the second largest party with 26.4%, creating a system of two large parties with several smaller parties. By 1996, ODS and ČSSD represented the major right and leftist parties in the system, with

extremist anti-system parties occupying either pole of the ideological spectrum, and several smaller parties in the center. Finally, although the penetration of parties remained quite low during this period, it can be said that their infiltration of society increased over the previous period, as the ideological positions somewhat solidified. However, the parties remained much less ingrained within society than in Western Europe.

The party system in the Czech Republic can be said to reflect Sartori's model of *polarized multipartism*, since there is high fragmentation among the parties, as well as fairly large ideological differences among the parties, especially on the left of the spectrum. This type of system is also characterized by centrifugal competition, driving the parties away from the center—visible in the rising importance of ODS and ČSSD representing the major poles. At the same time, the anti-system parties encroach on the competition space and somewhat prevent further polarization.

In Slovakia, the party system emerged rather differently from the first electoral period than in the Czech Republic. Seven parliamentary parties succeeded in the first elections, and in 1992, the number decreased to 5. Again in 1994, 7 parties or groupings entered parliament. During the entire pre-1998 period in Slovakia (after independence), the strongest party was HZDS, qualifying it as a system dominated by one party, with several smaller parties also succeeding. Unlike in the Czech Republic, where the anti-system parties had no coalition potential, the anti-system SNS became part of the HZDS-led coalition.

The ideological structure of the Slovak party system is much less clear than in the Czech system. The dominant HZDS during this time occupied the center or center-left of the political spectrum. Mečiar used rhetoric and supported policy that claimed at once nationalist, populist and leftist goals. The HZDS coalition partners took on similarly confusing goals, although claimed an extreme leftist and the other a rightist-nationalist perspective. This made the ideological competition structure difficult for the other parties. Nevertheless, the "standard" political parties can be placed somewhat more easily on the political spectrum. On the right one finds KDH, DS, and DÚ, and on the left the SDĽ represents social democratic goals, similar to its West European counterparts. Handl and Leška find that the competition structure with HZDS occupying the center-left position throughout the 1990s made it difficult for SDĽ to appeal to a

broader spectrum (2005, 111). The Hungarian Coalition Party finds a place in the center-right, although its appeal is limited to the Hungarian minority. As in the Czech Republic the extent to which parties penetrated Slovak society was presumably quite low. The amount of splintering which occurred within these electoral periods testifies to this: "The less penetration there is, the easier it will be for new parties to emerge and compete with existing parties" (Ware 1999, 150).

During the period of HZDS domination and government, the Slovak party system fits Sartori's model of extremely *polarized multipartism*. The controversial style of the "non-standard" parties created centrifugal competition that led to a high degree of fragmentation. Despite the ideological ambiguity of the HZDS and other parties, it is clear that large differences between the parties existed, due to the style of politics conducted by the "non-standard" parties.

D. The 1998 Elections – A Turning Point

The 1998 elections in both the Czech and Slovak Republics mark important turning points. Both systems experienced a shift of power from the party that had been dominating to a newly emerged party or coalition. The coalitions formed in both states serve as interesting points of analysis. The "hidden silent grand coalition" (Klíma 1999) in the Czech Republic was formed as a result of the elections, and marks the beginning of unstable electoral coalitions in the country, and the anti-Mečiar, EU-determined coalition in Slovakia formed before the election in order to oust the leading HZDS from power. At the same time, the governments installed in 1998 achieved electoral reforms in both states with consequences (major and minor) for the systems.

The Czech Republic – A "Hidden Silent Grand Coalition"

While the ODS enjoyed a fair margin of support throughout the early 1990s, it began to lose its grip with the rise of ČSSD, accompanied by the beginning of economic troubles associated with market reform, and a rash of financial scandals, tied primarily to the ODS, but also involving other parties. Minor scandals in 1994 had helped boost ČSSD's popularity at the expense of ODS, but the major irregularities associated with

privatization were revealed in 1997. On 28 November 1997 ODS was accused of receiving 7.5 million Kč from a privatization deal and Prime Minister Václav Klaus was asked to resign by two fellow ODS members (Jan Ruml and Ivan Pilip) (Simon 2004, 60). During the subsequent months, until early elections could be held in the spring of 1998, Josef Tošovský became prime minister and his government was supported by KDU-ČSL, ODA and some ODS members (ČSSD also voted for confidence with the promise of early elections). Thirty-two members of ODS (out of 69), led by Jan Ruml, quit the party and formed the new Freedom Union (Unie svobody, US) (*ibid.* 61). Much like the splinters from the early opposition coalitions, US became a parliamentary party before contesting elections. ODA was also affected by the scandals, as the leader, Jiří Skalický, resigned in 1998 when more financial scandals were aired. Several members of ODA also joined US.

Cabada and Šanc (2005) see the 1998 elections as a shift to the left of the general Czech electorate, with the success of ČSSD and the disappearance of the extreme right-wing party. As expected, the Social Democrats gained more votes than the ODS for the first time. However, the ODS still managed to win 27.8% of the vote, despite the financial scandals plaguing the party leadership and reputation. While four parties remained in parliament from the previous electoral period, two parties, ODA and SPR-RSČ lost their mandates entirely. ODA's downfall has been discussed, but the reason for the Republicans' loss is not directly connected to the 1997 scandals. A look at the voting trends of Czech voters, specifically supporters of SPR-RSČ finds that those who support the Republicans tend to be extremely opposed to the ODS, but rather sympathetic, or at least apathetic to the Social Democrats (Vlachová 1997). Thus, perhaps some of those who had previously supported the Republicans turned to ČSSD in 1998 in order to deprive ODS of its dominant parliamentary role. This procedure is known as strategic voting and has been identified as important within Central and Eastern Europe, especially when voters feel that none of the parties represent their needs (Millard 2004).

Table 5 – Results of the 1998 Czech Elections to Poslanecká Sněmovna

Party	Percentage of Votes	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats
ČSSD	32.4%	74	37.0%
ODS	27.8%	63	31.5%
KSČM	11.1%	24	12.0%
KDU-ČSL	9.0%	20	10.0%
US	8.6%	19	9.5%

Source: www.volby.cz

I have already mentioned the imbalance of left and right in the Czech system, caused partially by the existence of extremist anti-system parties on both the right and left. Although the Republican Party disappeared in 1998, the Communist Party retained seats in parliament and remained unreformed, and thus an unacceptable coalition partner, even for the leftist Social Democrats. Coalition-building for ČSSD was limited by the ostracization of KSČM, as well as other ideological and personal conflicts among the parties. Discounting the participation of KSČM, several governments were possible: a right coalition of ODS, KDU-ČSL, and US would have gained 102 seats (out of 200), a right-left coalition of ČSSD, KDU-ČSL and US would gain a majority of 113, a grand coalition of the two leading and opposing parties would have produced a stable majority of 137 mandates. The first possibility was not raised, since ODS was not asked to form a government, although it would have proved impossible due to past rivalries between Václav Klaus and KDU-ČSL and US members who had been in coalition during the recent financial scandals. Both KDU-ČSL and US also refused to participate in a government with ČSSD for ideological reasons. Finally, the "grand coalition" was rejected by both ODS and ČSSD on ideological grounds.

The result of the 1998 coalition negotiations was a ČSSD minority government with the tacit support of ODS. Klíma calls this coalition the "hidden silent grand coalition": "grand" because it consisted of the two largest parties, "silent" because the ODS held no direct ministerial appointments, and "hidden" denotes that the ODS was actually a hidden coalition partner, because it got special privileges for its cooperation, while the other remaining parties represented the true opposition (1999, 139-40). This rather strange coalition formed among the two parties with the least coalition potential can be said to mark the end of stable coalition government for the Czech Republic,

continuing through late 2005. Its logic becomes rather clear when considering the limitations discussed above, and perhaps because each of the 2 strongest parties shifted slightly towards the "office-seeking" pole of our model, the coalition agreement (referred to as the "opposition agreement") was signed in record time: "The elections took place on June 19 and 20, 1998, on June 30 [ČSSD] received the offer from [ODS], oral agreement was reached on July 3, and on July 9 the agreement was signed" (Klíma 1999, 139).

The minority government, led by Miloš Zeman, was both ambitious and unstable. If the opposition agreement stalled progress on issues over which the parties clashed ideologically, the arrangement did allow the two parties to exercise power, without being able to achieve any of their stated pre-election goals. With 137 of 200 seats, the "coalition" of ČSSD and ODS were able to change the constitution (which required 120 votes). Klíma (1999) calls this use of power "negative coalition potential," which the two parties used to pursue constitutional changes in their favor.

In reaction to this, the opposition parties (KDU-ČSL and US) along with two non-parliamentary parties (ODA and the Democratic Union, DEU) formed the "Four-Coalition" (Čtyřkoalice, 4K) for the 1998 Senate elections (held after the parliamentary elections). The 4K won enough open Senate seats to prevent a constitutional majority of ODS and ČSSD, and to become largest force in the Senate. Nevertheless, in 2000, the "grand coalition" passed major electoral changes that would have shifted to a more majoritarian system and curtailed the power of the president. The new law increased the number of electoral districts from 8 to 35, each with a district magnitude of 5 or 6 (versus the previous 20 or more). The law also would have changed the seat allocation formula to a modified d'Hondt formula.[10] These changes were obviously designed to support the larger parties and make it more difficult for smaller parties to retain seats in parliament. The more majoritarian system would have also precluded the need for coalition-forming in many cases.[11] They were justified with the reasoning that a system with too many parties is unable to consolidate and thus democracy cannot be consolidated. The logic

[10] The modified d'Hont formula established the following series of divisors (1.42,2,3,4,...). In contrast to the standard d'Hondt formula (discussed in Secion II), the modified formula would have increased the bias towards larger parties (see also Taagepera and Shugart 32-5).

[11] For example, had the 1998 elections been conducted with the 35 smaller electoral districts, rather than 8, the ČSSD would have won a majority and would not have needed to form a coalition (Just 2006).

behind his reasoning is faulty, as many Western European democracies have as many parties as the Czech Republic had at that time.

The 4K was not successful in preventing the passage of the 2000 electoral reforms, but was able to contest them in the Constitutional Court. Proceedings took half a year, and the ruling was in favor of the opposition and the President. All of the changes to the President's power were struck, and the parliament was asked to revise the electoral formula to include a lower number of districts, and more proportionality (Just 2006). The result of long and difficult negotiations was the current electoral system. Fourteen electoral districts follow the already-established self-governing administrative districts, with 14 or 15 seats per district. The seat allocation formula was changed to the standard d'Hondt formula, decreasing the bias towards larger parties.

The 1998 elections can therefore be considered a turning point for Czech politics, because they ushered in a leftward shift of the electorate, saw a decrease in the number of parties and the disappearance of an extremist party, and opened a new era of less stable coalition politics. At the same time, the beginnings of consolidation of the Czech party system are visible, with the major parties continuing and pursuing fairly coherent ideological positions. The years since these elections have seen relative stability in the ideological and competition structure of the Czech party system.

Slovakia: Anti-Mečiar Coalition

In Slovakia the party system and the political system in general are much less stable than in the Czech Republic. The 1998 elections in Slovakia can be considered a turning point, but did not bring the system any closer to stabilization or consolidation. Rather the elections brought out newfound solidarity among the opposition parties, as they combined to attempt to disrupt the power structure. New players were introduced and became important parts of the political spectrum, if only temporarily.

The difficulties facing the opposition party in the era of Mečiarism continued through 1998. Presidential elections (in Parliament) were scheduled for January 1998, but they failed after several months to come to a decision, and nearly brought the government to a standstill. President Kováč called for direct presidential elections, heightening the conflict between him and Prime Minister Mečiar. Also in 1998, the

HZDS-led coalition successfully changed the electoral law, changing the entire country into a single district for PR seats, raising thresholds for coalitions of parties, and excluding some media from broadcasting (Rose and Munro 2003, 151-2). Each of these measures favored the governing party: the single district increased proportionality, but its benefits for smaller parties was decreased by the 5% threshold for single parties, and the requirement that coalitions gain 5% for each member party (two-party coalitions needed 10%, 3-party 15%, etc.). The exclusion of private media from reporting on the campaign and airing campaign advertising heavily favored the HZDS, which controlled public television as the governing party.

The outcry against these changes came from many fronts. The opposition parties were not only upset, but also found solidarity in the need to fight against the leading coalition, in order to displace HZDS and Mečiar. Objections to the new electoral law also came from the OSCE, the EU and the US (Simon 2004, 184-5). The raised thresholds were apparently intended to block the Hungarian Coalition Party (Strana Mad'arská koalice, SMK) and the recently formed "Blue Coalition." The former consisted of the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (Maďarske křestanskodemokratické hnutie, MKDH), Coexistence (Egyuttélés), and the Hungarian Civic Party (MOS-MPP). It became a single party, integrated on the national, regional, and local levels in 1998 in order to clear the thresholds added for coalitions. The SMK provides an example of the salience of ethnic voting in Slovakia, as the Hungarian parties cover different ideological standpoints, but united in order to fight against the nationalist sentiments of the HZDS government. In addition to the initial 3 parties in the Blue Coalition (KDH, DÚ, and DS), the Slovak Social Democratic Party (Sociálne-demokratická strana Slovenska. SDSS) and the Green Party of Slovakia (SZS) also joined forces, leaving the leftist Common Choice coalition under which they had run in the previous elections.

The "Blue Coalition" registered officially as the Slovak Democratic Coalition (Slovenská demokratická koalícia, SDK) with Mikuláš Dzurinda of the KDH as the new leader of the party. In 1997 SDK appeared able to gain enough votes to clear the 25% threshold that would be needed for a 5-party coalition. In attempts to weaken the opposition, Mečiar proposed an amendment of the new electoral law, requiring each party

in a coalition to gain 5% of the vote—an effective ban on coalitions. When SDK successfully registered as a party[12] in August 1998, Mečiar complained to the Constitutional Court that the SDK was not a party but a coalition, and should thus answer to different rules (Simon 2004, 123-5). Clearly, the uniting of the opposition was seen as a threat by the HZDS.

Table 6 – Results of the 1998 Slovak Elections to Národná Rada

Party	Percentage of Votes	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats
HZDS	27.0%	43	28.7%
SDK	26.3%	42	28.0%
SDĽ	14.7%	23	15.3%
SMK	9.1%	15	10%
SNS	9.1%	14	9.3%
SOP	8.0%	13	8.7%

Source: www.statistics.sk

The importance of the 1998 elections was not lost on the public—the turnout rate for the parliamentary elections was 84% (Simon 2004, 185). HZDS still gained the most votes, however, the SDK coalition of right and left parties initiated specifically to pose a viable challenge to HZDS achieved its goal, trailing by only 0.7%. A further result of the pre-election anti-Mečiar sentiment was that coalition building for HZDS became quite difficult, first with the disappearance of ZRS, its former coalition partner, and second with the unwillingness of any previous opposition party to cooperate. On the other hand the incentives for coalition building among the "anti-Mečiar" parties were quite high. A right-left governing coalition was formed, consisting of SDK, SDĽ, SMK, and the Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občanského porozumenia, SOP) and led by SDK chairman Mikuláš Dzurinda.

A comparison of the Slovak party system in 1998 with that in 1994 finds a similar structure with several "new" players that are actually renamed groups or coalitions of already existing parties. The Common Choice coalition split up again into its member parties, with SDĽ being the only one to enter Parliament on its own. The other members,

[12] SDK registered as a single-party, requiring the representatives of its member parties to become SDK members, and by converting membership in the member parties to dual-membership with SDK.

as mentioned, had seats as part of the newly-formed SDK. The major difference in the Slovak party system between 1994 and 1998 are the power and competition structures. Before the 1998 elections, the Slovak party system was undoubtedly dominated by the HZDS, and it could be considered a system with one large party and several smaller ones. After the pivotal elections, the structure of the system changed and if the parties within SDK are considered as separate parties, rather than as a single coalition, then the Slovak system began to appear as a more even multiparty system.

The new coalition had several goals that transcended the ideological differences between the member parties. First was the need to resolve the deadlock that had occurred over the selection of the president. In reaction to the failed 1997 referendum, a constitutional amendment was passed providing for the direct election of the president for a 5-year term (with a maximum of 2 terms). The president could no longer be recalled by the parliament, but only by the Constitutional Court or by referendum.[13] Furthermore, the powers of the president were extended to include the dissolution of parliament, if the body is unable to make decisions or the government loses a majority (Simon 2004, 190). The first presidential elections were held on 15 May 1999 and the 2 leading candidates, Mečiar and Rudolf Schuster, faced a second round in which Schuster was victorious (*ibid.* 205).

The governing coalition had several other important goals to accomplish. High on the list was EU entrance, which had been stalled under Mečiar. This required the passage of a language law in fitting with EU standards, and the extremist SNS was successfully blocking the effort. The proposed draft law was met with disapproval by the Hungarian Coalition Party, a coalition member, as well as the opposition HZDS. Simon notes that "the language law challenged the coalition from within, from the opposition, and from institutions outside Slovakia" (193). Another task facing the government was the investigation and eventual prosecution of the irregularities that occurred during the previous government (*ibid*, 191-2).

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[13] The Slovak referendum method of recalling the president is rather unique. Parliament initiates the referendum for recall by a 3/5th or constitutional majority. The referendum is then presented to the public, where it must receive a majority of *all eligible voters* to become effective. If this majority is not received, it is considered a vote of no-confidence in the Parliament, which is then dissolved. This setup is designed to prevent the misuse of the presidential recall referendum (Just 2006).

The 1998 elections were important for the development of the Slovak system, in that one sees the cooperation of opposition parties of various types uniting in order to displace the previous government. The opposition coalition might be portrayed as office-seeking, but since the goal of the parties for this term was not so much to gain government patronage, but to overcome the Mečiar government, which was seen as corrupt, damaging to democracy and the international reputation, and increasingly nationalist and populist. Furthermore, the change to direct election of the president indicates a step towards preventing further governmental crises, although the powers of the president as the executive were not significantly extended, and the major executive power still lies with the government and prime minister. While the ideological positions of the major parties remained somewhat stable, the competition structure and relative strengths of the parties changed quite dramatically in this election period.

The 1998 elections in both countries marked the beginning of a new period in the party systems for each country. Both the Czech and Slovak systems witnessed a change of power from the previously dominant party to the opposition for the first time since the dissolution of the federation. For the Czech Republic, this mean the beginning of consolidation of the party system as the two main parties found stabilized ideological positions and electorates, while instability is centered around the smaller parties. In Slovakia the change of hands from the semi-authoritarian HZDS to a wide coalition government aimed at recovering Slovakia's international image marks a turnaround in the way politics is conducted. However, Slovakia in 1998 was not facing stabilization in its party system or the decline of personalized politics, as we shall see in the following sections.

E. Final Period: 1999-2006

The final period to be examined here covers the developments from 1999 until just before the 2006 elections. Both the Czech Republic and Slovakia faced elections in 2002, and in both cases the governments changed composition, but retained the leading parties. A new feature in the party systems of each state is also the elections to the European Parliament in 2004. Although thus far only the national elections to the legislative have been discussed, I will include some analysis from the results of the EP

elections because it can be useful for projecting expected results of the next elections, which in both cases are expected in the summer of 2006. I will argue that this final period in the Czech Republic can be seen as the stabilization and consolidation of the political party system, but in Slovakia, consolidation of the party system is still far off, given the high degree of splinters and new party formations.

Stabilization of the Czech System

The 2002 elections were contested by the same major parliamentary parties as competed in 1998, with the exception of the Four-Coalition. The member parties of 4K had formed a coalition within parliament as early as 1999, in order to fight the changes in the electoral system. In October 2001 US and DEU merged to form one party—US-DEU. However, in early 2002, an internal crisis ensued when KDU criticized ODA for not paying its debts, and ODA eventually left the coalition. The remaining parties, KDU-ČSL and US-DEU, formed the Coalition (Koalice), pooling their strength for the 2002 elections. There were also internal changes within ČSSD, as Zeman was replaced as party leader by Vladimír Špidla, although Zeman remained prime minister until after the elections. While several new non-parliamentary parties formed on the right of the spectrum (including the Association of Independent Candidates, Sdružení nezávislých kandidátů, SNK), the left of the spectrum remained dominated by ČSSD and KSČM.

In the elections, the same four parties gained seats in the Chamber of Deputies, with ČSSD doing surprisingly well, considering the falling level of support throughout the previous government. ČSSD led the election with 30.2% of the vote, while ODS trailed with 24.5%. The
Coalition also faced disappointment, due in large part to its unstable electorate and unclear program. As a result of the open-list system, KDU-ČSL candidates constituted over two-thirds of the Coalition's elected candidates, and US-DEU faced extinction (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 142-3). Another surprise of the 2002 elections was the success of the Communist Party, which gained 18.5%, up over 7% from the previous election. KSČM was the only party to improve upon its 1998 performance. This might be explained by the role of KSČM as a protest party for those dissatisfied with the performance of the more mainstream left choice, ČSSD. The ČSSD-ODS opposition

agreement "left the Communist Party as the only serious option for those wishing to express their dissatisfaction with these signs of a party 'cartel'" (Millard 2004, 147). None of the extra-parliamentary parties running received more than the needed 5% to enter parliament. Thus, the number of parliamentary parties decreased by one and ideological distance between them remained similar to previous elections.

Table 7 – Results of the 2002 Czech Elections to Poslanecká Sněmovna

Party	Percentage of Votes	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats
ČSSD	30.2%	70	35.0%
ODS	24.5%	58	29.0%
KSČM	18.5%	41	20.5%
KDU-ČSL/US-DEU	14.3%	31	15.5%

Source: www.volby.cz

A Series of Ill-Fated Governments

Although the party system can be considered in the process of stabilization, the stability of government cannot be (and was not) guaranteed. The Czech Republic saw three changes of prime minister between July 2002 and April 2005, all from ČSSD and without early elections. The coalition possibilities after the 2002 elections were again limited: a ČSSD-ODS grand coalition was refused outright. Špidla did not share Zeman's respect for Klaus and the ODS and was unwilling to consider such an option. Cooperation with KSČM was also rejected as unacceptable by the majority of ČSSD deputies. ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, and US-DEU eventually formed a coalition with a bare majority (101 seats) and laced with ideological differences. Like the previous minority government, there were some within ČSSD who disagreed with this coalition, and the coalition agreement among the governing parties was less than stable (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 144). The conflicting ideological positions of the government parties made work on their program difficult: of the major goals set out by the government only those required by the EU for entry were able to pass. Even the two more rightist coalition members were unable to agree on some areas. Deputies from US-DEU were particularly unsatisfied with the coalition performance, and two deputies left the party (Dvořáková 2004).

The 2004 European Parliament elections were crucial for the fate of the Špidla government, especially the ČSSD and US-DEU. After a poor showing within the Coalition in 2002, the latter had feared that a poor showing in the EP elections would be the end of the party. It gained no seats in the EP and despite its continued presence in the government, is not expected to gain any parliamentary seats in the 2006 elections. The EP election results were also very disappointing for ČSSD. Špidla had tied his own fate to the EP elections, promising that if ČSSD did not perform well, he would resign from his position. ČSSD gained only 2 seats, far fewer than the ODS and even the KSČM. However, unlike the US-DEU, the ČSSD is still considered a major competitor in the 2006 elections, so the EP elections were not nearly as detrimental to the ČSSD as to the Špidla government as such. After the elections, Špidla called for a vote of confidence within ČSSD and received only 66 votes of support, while the up-and-coming Stanislav Gross gained 106 votes of support (Dvořáková 2004). Špidla resigned as party leader and prime minister in August 2004 and Gross assumed the positions, becoming the youngest prime minister in Europe.

Table 9 – Results of the 2004 European Parliament Elections, Czech Republic

Party	**Percentage of Votes**	**Number of Seats**	**Percentage of Seats**
ODS	30.0%	9	37.5%
KSČM	20.3%	6	23.1%
SNK-ED	11.0%	3	12.5%
KDU-ČSL	9.6%	2	8.3%
ČSSD	8.8%	2	8.3%
Independents	8.2%	2	8.3%

Source: Dvořáková (2004)

The EP elections signaled another success for the KSČM, as it became the second largest representative, with 20.3% of the vote. While the KSČM has not completed reform, its participation in the European Parliament may bring it to into cooperation with international party organizations, and reform may be inspired from the outside. However, many of its votes were likely gained as a protest against the ČSSD during a particularly difficult time in its governance: unpopular public finance reforms were underway, Špidla had been unable to connect with the electorate, and negative images of the party infighting were abundant in the mass media (Dvořáková 2004). A non-

parliamentary rightist party which emerged in the previous electoral period also gained seats in the European Parliament—the Association of Independent Candidates-European Democrats (led by former ODS member Josef Zieleniec), SNK-ED.

The Gross government consisted of the same parties as under Špidla, ČSSD as the major coalition partner and KDU-ČSL and US-DEU as minor partners. This government also had troubles from its beginning. A new sentiment had risen within ČSSD that a more proper coalition partner would have been KSČM, leading to a divide within ČSSD between the pragmatic "third way" group (associated with Gross) and the more traditional leftist wing (led by Zdeněk Škromach) (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 146-7). However, the demise of the government was tied more personally to Gross and questions over his financial affairs, particularly an apartment and the real estate dealings of his wife. The scandals involving the prime minister drew criticism from the two coalition partners, who demanded Gross's resignation. When the ČSSD conference in March 2005 reaffirmed Gross's leadership of the party, the KDU-ČSL left the governing coalition. In the following days, ODS initiated a vote of no-confidence, which failed due to the abstentions of the members of KSČM and US-DEU (*ibid.* 147). Gross resigned in late April and was replaced by Jiří Paroubek who continued with the same coalition as under Špidla, and managed to win back public support for ČSSD. Paroubek resembles Zeman in his pragmatism and charisma, and has been the first post-communist prime minister to open cooperation with the Communist Party (Handl 2005b). Partially because of this rapprochement, the Paroubek government has succeeded in holding together through the normal election period, at a time when many predicted a fall of the coalition and early elections (*ibid.* 15).

The 2000-2005 political system in the Czech Republic can be characterized by its lack of stable coalitions, and the relatively fast turnover of prime ministers. The same government coalition continued throughout the period, but it cannot be considered stable, as new negotiations took place after each change of leadership. Birch (2003) reminds us, however, that coalitions governments in some Western European countries take a long time to form and can be unstable, so even greater instability and difficulties in forming governments in the newly established democracies should be expected. In addition, as previously discussed, although the left has gained votes and power, it is still inhibited by

the unreformed nature of the Communist Party, although with Paroubek, that has begun to change, however slightly. Unstable governments do not necessarily mean unstable parties, and the parties in the Czech Republic have remained fairly stable in terms of ideology, behavior and relative power.

Categorization of the Party System

After the 2002 elections, the Czech party system can be considered consolidated (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 150). The ideological composition of the system remains stable with one major rightist party (ODS), the centrist KDU-ČSL, and a stable left comprised of ČSDD and the anti-system KSČM. Although the US-DEU may disappear after the next parliamentary elections, as a small center-right party, it may perhaps be easily replaced with a new parliamentary party (*ibid.*).

Using Wolinetz's model, the tendency towards cross-ideological coalitions provides some insight on the shifting of party behavior, especially within KDU-ČSL and US-DEU. While in 1998, both parties had refused to support a ČSSD-led coalition, they each modified their stances in the following electoral periods. Each of these two parties entered a government led by an ideologically opposed party, although both smaller parties tend toward more centrist positions. For this period, KDU-ČSL and US-DEU tend towards more office-seeking parties, although KDU-ČSL also emphasizes policy. While ČSSD and ODS remain primarily vote-seeking parties, perhaps similar to the "catch-all party" model, aspects of office-seeking behavior characterized their actions from 1998-2005. ODS supported the ČSSD minority government, against its own ideology and policies, but in exchange for certain concessions and positions. ČSSD has been willing to accept support from the formerly antagonistic party. KSČM has remained throughout the time a mix of policy-seeking and vote-seeking, as it does not clearly delineate its program in order to attract a large electorate, but also maintains clear positions opposing aspects of the current system, attracting a protest vote.

Continued Instability in the Slovak Party System

The Slovak party system has been much more dynamic and unstable than the Czech system in the most recent time period. A new rightist government was formed in

2002, led by many of the same individuals under different party names. Several major changes can be identified from 1999 until 2005: the rise of Direction (Smer), a new political party; the crisis of the Slovak left; and the split of the ruling SDK into two parties. At the same time, the role of the HZDS has decreased, making way for new challengers and signifying that the era of Mečiarism is coming to an end, but that populism still remains integral to Slovak politics. It is clear from the number of splits occurring in the most recent era that parties in Slovakia have not succeeded in anchoring themselves to coherent electorates and remain unstable, perhaps because of the lack of left-right cleavages in society.

Table 8 – Results of the 2002 Slovak Elections to Národná Rada

Party	**Percentage of Votes**	**Number of Seats**	**Percentage of Seats**
ĽS-HZDS	19.5%	36	24.0%
SDKU	15.1%	28	18.7%
Smer	13.5%	25	16.7%
SMK	11.2%	20	13.3%
KDH	8.3%	15	10.0%
ANO	8.0%	15	10.0%
KSS	6.3%	11	7.3%

Source: www.statistics.sk

As seen in **Table 8,** Mečiar's HZDS (renamed ĽS-HZDS) again emerged with a plurality of votes, although smaller than in previous elections. However, a rightist government was formed consisting of the two successor parties of the SDK (SDKÚ and KDH) along with the SMK, and the newly formed Alliance of the New Citizen (Aliancia nového občana, ANO). This marked the second government led by Prime Minister Dzurinda. As in the 1998 elections, the 2002 elections ushered in several new parties while 3 parties from the previous term failed to enter parliament. The right-wing SNS, the leftist SDĽ, and Rudolf Schuster's Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občianskeho porozumenia, SOP) all failed to overcome the 5% hurdle. The new parties in parliament were Smer, ANO, and the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS).

The new political formation, Smer, founded by former SDĽ official Robert Fico in 1999 quickly gained public support with its anti-ideological "third way" stance. Within its first year, Smer gained 20% of public support, including a swath of former

HZDS backers jaded by the party's corruption and downfall. Fico claims that his party is non-ideological, and indeed, the party is difficult to categorize (Haughton 2002). Bugajski has called Smer's stance a "populist position" which relies on "soft xenophobia" among its supporters (2002, 305). Smer has built itself on criticism of both the Mečiar and Dzurinda government, and attempts to connect with those who view themselves as losers of the recent economic reforms of the Dzurinda government.

Since the 2002 elections, and especially in the months before the 2006 elections, Smer's orientation has become increasingly socialist. It has signed an agreement with the Slovak Trade Unions Confederation (Konfederácia odborových zväzov, KOZ) ("Smer Remains Ahead…" 2006). The party has also associated itself with the EU Socialist bloc: "Fico emphasised that Smer is very receptive to the Socialist faction attitudes and recognises them in the party's policies, adding that this connection will continue after the election." ("Smer to Change Budget…" 2006). In the most recent public opinion polls prior to the 2006 elections, Smer was expected to win a plurality of seats, with over 30% of the vote ("Slovensku na prahu…" 2006). Smer's increasing political popularity shows that traditional ideological cleavages, so important in Western Europe, are becoming somewhat more relevant as parties like HZDS and Smer align themselves with particular stances, but ideology is still less important than in Western Europe or the Czech Republic

While the Slovak communist successor party, SDĽ appeared rather successful in the 1990s with its reform efforts, and even participated in the SDK-led coalition, its days were numbered. Internal polarization between conservative socialists and modernizing elements was exacerbated by socio-economic hardships and the disappointment of the SDĽ electorate with the party and democracy in general (Handl and Leška 2005, 112). The departure of Robert Fico (the most popular SDĽ politician) and the formation of Smer marked the inability of the party to compromise with one if its largest factions, and Smer subsequently drew a fair amount of the former SDĽ electorate away from the party. Mikovič (2004) notes that further divisions became visible after the opposition called for a vote of no-confidence in the Dzurinda government in April 2000. This vote split SDĽ into a "hard-line" or radical socialist camp (led by chairman Josef Migaš, Pavol Koncoš and Ľubomir Andrássy) and the modernizing camp (represented by founder Peter Weiss, Brigita Schmögnerová, Milan Ftáčník, Pavol Kanis and others).

The final split occurred just prior to the 2002 elections, when Weiss and Ftáčník formed the Social Democratic Alternative (Sociálne-demokratická alternative, SDA), which failed to gain seats in the 2002 elections. The remaining core of SDĽ also ran in 2002, but received only 1.4% of the vote (Rose and Munro 2003). The Communist Party (KSS) also gained from the faltering of SDĽ. Although it had been around since 1992, representing the hardcore of unreformed communists, KSS had not gained a seat in parliament until the 2002 elections, when it captured 11 with 6.3% of the vote. Like HZDS, KSS is able to play upon populist rhetoric to gain support (Handl and Leška 2005, 112). Thus, the SDĽ s position within party system was *de facto* filled by Smer and KSS. However, they represent another step away from the consolidation of a left-right axis in Slovakia, playing rather on the Mečiar-anti-Mečiar divide (*ibid.*).

Not only did the left of the political spectrum have troubles prior to the 2002 elections, but so did the rightist ruling coalition, SDK. This is perhaps more understandable as the SDK was formed from five different parties into one single party for the purpose of overcoming the obstacles thrown in the way by the Mečiar government. Discussions over the future of the SDK and KDH began almost as soon as the 1998 elections were over (Bučan 2004, 105). The major divide that formed within the SDK was between the Prime Minister, Dzurinda, the deputy leader of KDH and Ján Čarnogurský, the KDH chairman. Like many other divides in Slovak politics, this one became a fight of personalities as much as politics. In January 2000, Dzurinda announced the formation of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia, SDKÚ). The other member parties of the coalition retreated back to their pre-1998 forms. Only KDH's representation had been affected by the split of SDK. Once again, a new party formed during the electoral period—SDK's parliamentary seats were divided amongst the member parties, with SDKÚ gaining the largest share, followed by KDH, and the smaller members (DS, DÚ, SDSS and SZS) (*ibid.* 106). In the 2002 elections each of the former member parties of SDK ran separately, and the two largest splinters, SDKÚ and KDH, gained seats.

Not even HZDS survived the pre-2002 election period without changes. In 2000 the party reevaluated its platform,[14] but that did not salvage its declining popularity. Mečiar's popularity had been waning throughout the late 1990s, and by 2002-3 it hovered between 12 and 15% (Minarovič 2004, 51). As a reaction to entering the opposition in 1998, the party began to reevaluate itself. In a conference in 2000, the party included in its name Ľudová Strana (People's Party) to become ĽS-HZDS. Although the party's website notes that the March 2000 conference opened a new chapter in its history as a center-right party, Minarovič argues that the program is not closely followed and that some articles since added mirror those of the pre-2000 party (2004, 43-4).

The lead-up to the 2002 elections saw more infighting within the party, and an attempt of the Mečiar-led center to retain power, particularly through last-minute manipulation of its candidate lists, which caused some of the most important and popular members to leave the party only two weeks before the elections (Minarovič 2002, 45). Ivan Gašparovič, a fervent Mečiar supporter and chairman of the parliament under Mečiar, broke away from HZDS and formed his own Movement for Democracy (Hnutie za demokraciu, HZD) in 2002. "Gašparovič's political views differed so little from Meciar's that his new party received an almost identical name, the Movement for Democracy (HZD), and espoused the same vague centrism that HZDS has long championed" (Williams 2004). Although the party won no parliamentary seats in 2002, Gašparovič triumphed over Mečiar in the 2004 presidential elections, in part due to the support Gašparovič gained from nationalist groupings and Smer (*ibid.*). The continuance of Mečiar' HZDS in opposition in the 2002-2006 electoral period as well as Mečiar's defeat may signal the decline of Slovakia's most controversial politician, a sign that many welcome as a signal that the political system may begin consolidation soon.

[14] The party website notes that from March 2000, it has begun a new chapter in its history—that of a people's party (Ľudová strana). In the subsequent elections, HZDS has contested under the name ĽS-HZDS ("Historia strany" at http://www.hzds.sk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6&Itemid=28).

Table 9 – Results of the 2004 European Parliament Elections, Slovakia

Party	Percentage of Votes	Number of Seats	Percentage of Seats
SDKU	17.1%	3	21.4%
ĽS -HZDS	17.0%	3	21.4%
Smer	16.9%	3	21.4%
KDH	16.1%	3	21.4%
SMK	13.2%	2	8.3%

Source: www.statistics.sk

The European Parliament elections in Slovakia arguably played a less important role than in the Czech Republic, especially due to their extremely low turnout. Only 17% of voters participated in the 2004 elections, a result of what some have called "electoral fatigue" after two rounds of presidential elections and a referendum all in 2004 ("Electoral Behavior…" 2004). Perhaps the low turnout was also due to a perception that none of the parties are stable enough to successfully represent voters' needs. The EP elections saw no complete surprises, however, with four of the most popular parties gaining three seats and the Hungarian SMK gaining two.

The government formed by Dzurinda in 2002 initially had a majority of 78 seats. However, starting in 2004, the government began to falter, starting with the defection of ANO and several SDKÚ deputies from the coalition (Williams 2004), and ending with the fall of the government in early 2006 and the call for early elections. The first parliamentary challenge to the government came in July 2005, when Smer initiated a vote of no-confidence. There was not sufficient support for the movement and the Dzurinda government stayed in place. The governing coalition eventually collapsed after the resignation of 3 ministers: interior minister Vladimír Palko, justice minister Daniel Lipšic and education minister Martin Fronc, all of the KDH. Early elections are to be held on 17 June 2006, three months earlier than originally scheduled.

Classification of Slovak Parties, 1998-2005

With the formation of three entirely new political entities, and numerous other splinters and changes in the Slovak party system during this time period, any consolidation of Slovak political parties is difficult to defend. The competition structures on both the right and the left make it difficult for parties to settle into a coherent program.

The ideological shifting and ambiguity of parties like Smer and HZDS makes it difficult for other parties which might otherwise find an ideological niche in the system to settle and compete. Since 2000, however, both Smer and HZDS have enunciated ideological stances, a signal that after 8 years of a coherent rightist government, the parties and electorate are identifying with the left-right spectrum. It is quite clear that the right of the political spectrum consists of KDH, SDKÚ, and SMK, while KSS is certainly on the left. The positions of the other parties are more difficult. Smer could be placed on the center left, due to the abovementioned socialist leanings, and the self identification of most of its voters on the left or center ("Slovensko na prahu volebného roku" 2005, 6). However, a study published in 2005 by IVO asked party supporters to place themselves on the left-right spectrum. The results for ĽS-HZDS and SNS were quite interesting. ĽS-HZDS supporters placed themselves overwhelmingly in the center or left of the spectrum, with only 14% self-identifying as rightist. SNS, despite its extremist nature, finds the majority of its supporters identifying in the center and left of the spectrum (*ibid.*).

The "standard"/ "non-standard" model, on the other hand, has become somewhat less salient, as parties, even Mečiar's HZDS, infamous for its manipulation of the system, have espoused more liberal democratic goals and methods. Thus the most relevant model for classifying the parties becomes the three-poled Wolinetz model. Smer and HZDS, the early favorites for the 2006 elections can both be considered vote-seeking parties. HZDS has consistently been classified as a vote- and office-seeking party because of its ideological ambiguity and reliance on various rhetorical streams. In its most current program ĽS-HZDS claims both Christian and socialist roots ("Politický Program, HZDS). Smer, though increasingly aligning itself with socialist goals, can also be seen as a vote-seeking party with elements of an office-seeking party, considering Fico's statements that he will consider any alliance ("Smer Remains Ahead…" 2006). The other new party formed in the last period is the neo-liberal ANO, founded by Pavol Rusko, owner of the private Markíza television station. Newly formed parties can be difficult to categorize, as their priorities have not been settled (Wolinetz 2002, 161-2). However, the top-down structure and unstable electorate that characterize ANO lead to the preliminary classification as an office-seeking party. Shortly after joining parliament

and the governing coalition, the party lost its importance after quarrels with coalition partners and left the government in 2005 (Diovcos 2004).

Of the former government parties, KDH can be seen as a policy-seeking party, which has had a very stable electoral base and Christian democratic program with minimal divisions since its founding (Diovcos 2004). Throughout the last electoral period, its priority on policies has become even clearer: "Thus, the party sets itself apart from other political parties and presents its opinions even at the cost of evoking a controversial social debate" (*ibid.*). The SMK, perhaps the most stable party in Slovak politics, remains an ethnic-based vote-seeking party, which combines several ideological and policy viewpoints to push for policies benefiting or sympathetic of the minority populations. Diovcos (2004) also notes that although differences of opinion exist in the party, the leadership knows the importance of maintaining a united outwards front, in order to continue pressing for change in their favor. The KSS during its first session in parliament was relatively isolated and can be considered a policy-seeking party.

Evaluation of the Party Systems, 1998-2005

Major divides

From 1998 to 2005, in the Czech Republic the economic and social axes of divisions remained the most relevant, as the two major political parties solidified their stances on either side of the divides. The "grand coalition" formed after the 1998 elections indicates that policies are not always the highest priorities for the parties, and that they were willing to look past the differences in order to retain their power. The EU accession in May 2003 and the referendum on the constitution indicated that the national closure vs. cosmopolitan opening divide remains, with the ODS taking a Euro-skeptic stance, informed by President and former chairman Václav Klaus. ODS finds an unlikely ally in the KSČM, which has recently manifested aspects of liberal conservatism and Euroskepticism (Handl 2005a, 131). The rift between supporters and opponents of the previous regime remains relatively marginal, although the increasing presence of the KSČM may increase its salience with the voters. KDU-ČSL represents the most anti-communist stance, along with ODS. Finally, the ethnic divide is not relevant to the political party system in the Czech Republic.

In Slovakia, after the ouster of HZDS from the government, the economic and social divides have become more salient, particularly because of the liberal economic reforms passed by the Dzurinda governments. Smer finds its place on the economic social protectionist and social liberal alignment, while HZDS might be said to represent economic social protectionist and rather more social authoritarianism, although both parties are ideologically ambiguous. In place of the reformed SDĽ, the more orthodox KSS could represent a return of the divide between supporters and opponents of the communist regime. As mentioned, the SMK represents perhaps the most stable party within the Slovak system because of the steady importance given to the ethnic divide from the perspective of the minority. As in the Czech Republic, EU and NATO accession brought forth a struggle between national closure and cosmopolitan opening. The anti-Mečiar coalition supported a cosmopolitan opening and made membership in both organizations a top priority. The more populist HZDS remains more nationalist, and the continued presence of SNS around the 5% threshold indicates that this last divide is still relevant in Slovakia.

Classifying the System - Czech Republic

In the last period analyzed, the Czech party system saw almost no major shifts in the number and relative strengths of the political parties. The formation of a coalition among KDU-ČSL and US-DEU, and the subsequent decrease in importance of US-DEU counts as perhaps the most dramatic change, and considering US and DEU's representation of only approximately 9% of the vote in 1998, and their status as new parliamentary parties in 1998, the loss of the parties cannot be considered as destabilizing for the system. All parliamentary parties can be considered relevant in this period, although KSČM's relevance remained largely "blackmail" potential. KSČM is also the only party which continues to question the legitimacy of the regime, although its methods of pursuing its goals fall within the accepted standards of liberal democracy, including participation in the European Parliament, and as part of an international leftist organization. Above I classified the Czech system after the 1996 elections as a multi-party system consisting of two larger parties and several smaller ones. The system continues to follow Ware's model:

> The two largest parties are much larger than any of the others but neither of them can hope to obtain parliamentary majorities for themselves, and, moreover, post-election coalition building will usually involve several of the smaller parties, and not just one of them. … The leading parties stand for very different traditions, policies, or values which makes for intense rivalry between them, and that rivalry gives considerable leverage to the smaller parties in extracting concessions during the formation of coalition governments.
> (Ware 1999, 166).

Ware's description, based on Western European political systems, accurately describes the Czech party system as it has stabilized during the last two electoral periods. While the number of smaller parties will no doubt continue to fluctuate, and new parties can be expected to emerge as others fade away, the basic two-party dominance of the system will likely continue.

The ideological structure of the Czech system also remained fairly stable from 1998 until 2005. On the left, the major player is the ČSSD, with the KSČM continually posing a problem for left-left coalitions. On the right side of the Czech political spectrum, ODS remains the dominant party. ODS, KDU-ČSL and US-DEU all belong to the liberal ideological stream. ODS and US-DEU are rather more conservative, while KDU-ČSL represents the Christian democratic view (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 152).

Despite the consolidation of other aspects of the party system, the extent of penetration of society by the political parties remains quite low. This does not necessarily indicate a failure of the system, but can increase future instability, as individuals do not feel attachments to parties and vice-versa, lowering the costs for the formation of new parties or splinters from the existing ones. Party membership in the Czech Republic, as in most post-communist states tends to be quite low and of the four major parties, only ČSSD reported increasing membership, but only by 5000 members (Mansfeldová and Kroupa 2005, 61, Table 3.1). In polls conducted by CVVM, around 20% of the Czech electorate does not know or prefer any party. In another series of studies done by CVVM on the level of satisfaction with the behavior of political parties between 1998 and 2002, the level of dissatisfaction (number of respondents answering somewhat or very dissatisfied) was between 64% and 74% ("Reflexe stranického systému…" 2002). A 2006 study by the same institute found that most Czechs do not believe that the four parliamentary parties are able to solve problems efficiently ("Image

politických stran" 2006). More generally, Czechs also seem to be dissatisfied with the political situation as a whole. While between 9 and 18% of respondents denoted they were satisfied or very satisfied with the political situation, between 46 and 57% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.[15] Similarly, voter turnout has decreased in recent election years, as people become more dissatisfied with the political situation or simply withdraw into private life. (See **Table 10**).

Taking into account these factors, the Czech party system in the two most recent electoral periods is more difficult to classify according to Sartori's model (Cabada and Šanc 2005, 150). There is a moderate to high level of fragmentation as are the ideological distances among the parties. The KSČM continues to pose a problem for the classification of the party system, as it continues to represent an anti-system attitude and a leftist position that is quite far from that of the next closest party, ČSSD. The system can thus be classified between *polarized multipartism* and *moderate multipartism* using Sartori's model.

Table 10 - Voter Turnout, Czech and Slovak Republics, 1990-2002

Year	Czech Republic (Poslanecká Sněmovna)	Slovakia (Národná Rada)
1990	95.5%	93.2%
1992	83.7%	81.8%
1994 (Slovakia)	---	74.2%
1996 (Czech Republic)	75.8%	---
1998	73.3%	83.5%
2002	58.7%	69.2%

Source: Rose and Munro (2003)

Classification of the System – Slovakia

Unlike the Czech party system, the Slovak party system cannot be considered consolidated or stabilized. Major changes in the relative strengths of parties within the system occurred in the last electoral period. These have been outlined above. While the previous electoral period saw the continuance of a multi-party system dominated by one party, the 1998 and 2002 elections changed the composition to a more equal multi-party

[15] Compiled from CVVM analyses between May 2003 and June 2005. Complete results available at www.cvvm.cas.cz.

system, with several parties gaining between 10 and 20 percent of the vote, and several smaller parties.

The ideological structure and distance among parties remains difficult to characterize. However, two parties appear to be pursuing somewhat populist or anti-ideology ends: HZDS and Smer. Despite their similar electoral appeals, the two parties are at odds and cannot be expected to participate. HZDS, reformed as ĽS-HZDS, claims a center-rightist position. Smer places itself on the left of the spectrum, is considered a replacement of the communist successor SDĽ, and has gained support from other European leftist parties.[16] Smer is slotted to gain a plurality of votes of over 30% in the 2006 elections, far outweighing its main competitors. As the final party on the left, the KSS has hovered around the 5% threshold for parliamentary seats throughout the pre-election period. The Slovak right is somewhat more consolidated as SDKÚ-DS and KDH pursue traditional conservative and Christian democratic programs. KDH sees itself as the "oldest and most stable party in Slovakia" (KDH Program 2006), SDKÚ, led by Dzurinda, and the leading coalition partner until February, has lost some of its support, and has had similar public support levels to KDH. SDKÚ's electorate seems fairly unstable, although it depends on "a high number of critical supporters, for whom it is a "common sense" option" (Diovcos 2004). The neo-liberal ANO that had formed part of the governing coalition imploded after its leader, Pavol Rusko, was ousted from the government. The salience of traditional right and left party identification appears to be increasing in Slovakia, and most parties seem to identify themselves with a particular position.

The extent of the penetration of parties by society remains somewhat low. Voter turnout has been decreasing (with the exception of the crucial 1998 elections), especially at the regional, local and EU levels. Party membership is quite low and people remain skeptical of parties and their role in society. According to a poll conducted by MVK in Slovakia in January 2006, 65% of the respondents had never been a member of any political party, but 71% of those surveyed also believed that party membership comes with advantages ordinary voters do not receive ("Party Membership Seen as Advantage"

[16] Among the parties that have pledged support for Smer (and ČSSD) are Blair's Labour Party and the European Socialist Party ("Blair gives Czech ally pre-election boost" (2006, March 13) *Yahoo News*. http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20060310/wl_uk_afp/czecheupolitics_060310213032)

2006). As in the Czech Republic, public levels of trust in political parties are also quite low. In a November 2005 study by IVO, the only party with a level of trust higher than 50% was Smer. The new Free Party was second with 36% of voters voicing their trust. The most distrusted parties were ĽS-HZDS and SDKÚ in which 76% of respondents voiced distrust ("Slovensku na prahu..." 2005). The Slovak polity thus has a low level of identification and loyalty towards political parties, indicating that the parties have failed to penetrate society.

The Slovak party system from 1998 to 2005 continues as system of *polarized multipartism*. The fragmentation, measured by the number of and relative strengths of the parties remains high and quite volatile. The enunciated ideological differences among the parties are also quite high. An example of the attempts of parties to distinguish themselves ideologically can be seen in the 2006 dissolution of the SDKÚ-KDH coalition government. After the fall of the coalition, the SDKÚ, which had previously aligned itself with Christian values began to assert a more neo-liberal stance, reaching out to a new electorate. Furthermore, Smer and HZDS have in recent years placed themselves on the left and center-right of the spectrum, indicating the increased salience of ideological position within Slovak politics.

Prospects for the Future

This paper was written during the months leading up to the 2006 elections and finished just prior to the elections in both states. Thus any prognosis for the future can only be limited. Furthermore, predictions based on public opinion data are difficult due to the unreliable nature of such data, the tendency for election results to differ significantly from polls published in the months before the elections, and the potential of opinion polls to affect, rather than reflect public opinion. However, I will cite public opinion polls as a means of indicating the support levels of the various parties in the months before the elections. This final section, then, should not be considered a prediction of what will happen in the election, but rather tentative projections for the party systems of the Czech Republic and Slovakia based on the preceding analysis, further developments within and among the parties during the pre-election period, as well as levels of support indicated in opinion polls.

Let us begin with the Czech Republic. It is unlikely than any radical changes in the relative strengths of the parties or ideological structure of the system will take place in the near future. The system has been fairly stable since the 1998 elections. There will no doubt be the replacement of some minor parties with new parliamentary parties. One probable change on the left of the political spectrum is the rise of the Green Party (Strana zelených, SZ). In public opinion poll prior to the 2006 elections, SZ was expected to pass the 5% hurdle, which could bring a new potential partner into the picture on the left of the spectrum. The Green Party leadership has been rather ambiguous as to their potential coalition partners after the election, stating that it will cooperate with any party that does not depend on KSČM support (Alda and Skochová "Small parties…" 2006). If the party gains seats, there is a high chance that it could be asked by either of the largest parties to form a coalition.

It was mentioned earlier that the ideological distance between ČSSD and KSČM is greater than that between any other two parties in the Czech system. These differences have decreased and may continue to do so after the 2006 elections. ČSSD had not shown signs of willingness to cooperate with KSČM until late 2005, when Prime Minister Paroubek hinted at the possibility and engaged KSČM in cooperation on some legislation. While many in Czech politic and society at large view KSČM as totally unacceptable, ČSSD representatives (such as David Rath) have stated that they see it as a democratic party (*ibid.*). If the more pragmatic or traditional socialist streams within ČSSD gain power over the anti-communist left, then more cooperation and engagement with KSČM can be expected, although the possibility of a coalition still seems rather far off.

After the marginalization of US-DEU within the Coalition in the 2002 elections, US-DEU is expected not to re-enter parliament in 2006. The party is attempting to remake itself as a libertarian party through their Nové Unie svobody campaign, [17] but is not expected to reach 5% of the vote. Although SNK-ED (Association of Independent Candidates - European Democrats) gained some representation in the European Parliaments, public opinion polls do not show them as gaining more than the needed 5%. Thus a new contender on the right of the spectrum will most likely not emerge in the next

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[17] See the party's website that follows its poster campaign: www.its-legal.us.

electoral period. The loss of US-DEU would not necessarily mean a large change in the competition structure, however, and might be compared to the situation of ODA after the 1998 elections.

Changes in the number and relative strengths of parties as well as their ideological positioning can be expected in Slovakia. Smer has risen to become the most popular party in opinion polls, with support upwards of 30%, although many do not expect the final result to reflect such high numbers (Just 2006). Even so, Smer shows significantly higher support in polls than ĽS-HZDS, which shows support of up to 14%, and KDH, SMK or SDKÚ, all of which hover around 8-11% of the vote ("Volebné preferencie…" 2006).

Two other party formations on the right of the spectrum could figure in the 2006 elections. The first is the Slovak National Party (SNS) which lost its parliamentary seats in 2002. SNS has shown up to 9% support in polls. The second is the Free Forum (Slobodné fórum, SF), founded in 2004 by former SDKÚ members (led by Zuzana Martináková). SF attracts some former ANO voters and is expected to pass the 5% threshold. To this end, it has also added three non-parliamentary parties (DÚ, DSS and SZS) to its list in order to boost its support and gain seats ("Free Forum Ties Knot…" 2006). The last party that may gain seats is the KSS, which also stands just above the 5% threshold. With such uncertainty, it is difficult to predict in which direction the Slovak polity will turn in June 2006. Smer has an advantage in that they have distanced themselves from both Mečiar and Dzurinda, as has SF and its smaller parties. If either of the extremist parties (SNS or KSS) gains parliamentary representation, it is likely that they will be isolated. Given the amount of volatility in the party system even in the past 6 months or year, the Slovak party system cannot be considered stabilized, and the prospects for its stabilization even within the next electoral period are slim. This is also due to the fact that there are quite a few new parties to the system (as opposed to new parliamentary parties that have existed), and the parliamentary parties have experienced a high degree of splintering.

The extent to which parties penetrate Czech and Slovak society will most likely not change in the near future. Building trust and loyal electorates is a long-term process, and can be much more difficult with the skeptical electorate in the post-communist states.

The mere fact that parties are more stable in the Czech Republic may led it to quicker penetration, however, deep penetration of society by parties does not occur in many democracies, so the process should not be taken for granted. Because of the frequency of splitting, disappearance and reformation among Slovak parties, deep connections between citizens and parties cannot be expected. In this case, the lack of connections is much more detrimental to the party system, as accountability and responsibility are uncertain and citizens may grow even more skeptical of parties and the political system as a whole.

IV. The Special Case of the Communist Successor Parties

Within the study of post-communist party systems, the communist successor parties have gained a place as one of the most discussed phenomena, for several important reasons. The communist successor parties (CSPs)—the legal successors of the former ruling communist parties—found themselves in a very unique position after 1989. Unlike ruling parties in other types of non-democratic systems, the communist ruling parties, especially in bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, had built extensive, rigid hierarchies. Loyalty to the party, its ideals, and the party structure had formed the basis for the government. The collapse of government in 1989 spelled the ouster of these parties from ruling positions, but not necessarily their demise altogether. This left the CSPs in a exceptional position. Though they were discredited in the eyes of the public and the democratic opposition, the CSPs retained resources unavailable to most emerging political parties and movements. They were often divested of financial resources, but retained other resources—especially extensive communication, mobilization, and outreach networks that spanned the country and reached otherwise disconnected areas.

The cases of the CSPs in the Czech and Slovak Republics are especially interesting because of the extremely different paths the parties took after the 1990 elections. The two republic-level successors of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the KSČM and SDĽ, could hardly have turned out more different. The KSČM has remained a fairly orthodox communist, anti-system party, isolated by the rest of the parties, while SDĽ rapidly and decisively transformed itself into a modern leftist party, enabling it to cooperate with other parties and enter the government coalition before its disappearance. This short section will review the reform strategies of the two parties, and will attempt to show why they ended up so differently. It will also analyze how these differences in roles and structures of the CSP have affected the party system.

Initial Reform

Grzymała-Busse (2002) analyses the transitions of several communist successor parties in East Central Europe, including the KSČM and SDL'. She sets forth several requirements for the successful transition of a CSP into a modern left party. The

transformation model is elite driven and focuses on three major transformation strategies: breaking with the communist past, centralizing the party organization, and rapid implementation of programmatic and policy reform (*ibid.* 9). Breaking with the past (by changing the name, cleansing the party of pre-1989 radicals, and acknowledging the failures of the past regime) is important for the parties to be able to regain credit and thereby become an accepted player in the system. Centralization, is key because it puts control of the party in the hands of elites, facilitating change. It also denotes the party's ability to respond to voter preferences, compete in campaigns and promote party discipline in parliament. Finally, "early, rapid, and decisive" transformation of the program and policy in line with the mainstream leftist parties must follow organizational reforms (*ibid.*).

The Czech KSČM, 1989-1993

According to Grzymała-Busse's analysis, the KSČM's transition failed to fully centralize and break with the past, two steps that might have caused a shift toward a more central-left or social democratic stance. After November 1989, the KSČ in the Czech Republic adopted some transition strategies, but overlooked others. For example, although it requested the pre-1989 leadership to leave party ranks, it did not require their resignation. In the subsequent Central Committee elections of October 1990, 48 of 109 members were party leaders from before 1989, who continued to exercise power over party decisions (Grzymała-Busse 2002, 84). The party also did not require members to reregister. Conservative factions within the party pushed for further decentralization to give local party organizations even greater power, as this level consisted of the most conservative members (many of whom were "normalizers" of the post-1968 period) (*ibid.* 84-5). During the first electoral period (1990-1992), heated debates over the future of the party took place between modernizing, reformist elements within the party and the conservative, orthodox Leninist members. The dominance of the latter caused early reforms to be reversed, and sealed the KSČM's fate as an unreformed communist party.

These conservative elements also played a role in the failure of the KSČM to break with the past. Until 1993, the party retained much of its reading of history, continuing to see the decades of communism as a positive developmental force for

Czechoslovakia, although it apologized for the 1968 (Shafir 2000, 4). Of more symbolic importance was the debate over the name of the party. While other parties in the region sought to quickly change their names to reflect more modern, democratic views, the Czech party held a referendum in which 76% of voters chose to keep the communist name, changing only the regional signifier: Komunistická Strana Československa (KSČ) to Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (KSČM).

The final factor in transformation is the party program. Handl notes that it is difficult to classify the programmatic changes within KSČM; while they obviously opted for a "strategy of leftist retreat," the program cannot be identified as strictly orthodox or neo-communist (2005a, 129-30). Handl also argues that the program has been quite malleable over the years of development. The early transformation of the party was somewhat based on models from other European hard-left parties (such as the Italian PCI), but also retained much of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and rhetoric, familiar from the pre-1989 party (*ibid.* 131, 134-5). Still, some aspects of the KSČM's program are unheard of in mainstream European leftist parties.[18]

The "survival strategy" of KSČM seems to have served it well in the first few years of transformation, as the party remained one of the most stable (in terms of votes) in the system. KSČM gained 13% of the vote in 1990. In 1992, the party dominated the Left Block coalition of leftist parties, which gained 14%. Although the KSČM agreed to "play by the rules" of democratic competition, it is considered an anti-system party because its program rejects the capitalist and liberal democratic system in favor of an ambiguously defined socialism.

The Slovak SDĽ, 1989-1993

During the first post-communist elections in June 1990, the KSČ officially ran as one party, although the Slovak Communist Party had gained autonomy from the Czech party before the elections. KSČ won a similar share of the vote in Slovakia as in the Czech lands—just over 13%. Despite the common bid for elections, the transformation

[18] Perhaps the most striking example of the communist orthodoxy of the KSČM's program is its policy towards communist-led states. The party openly admires states such as North Korea and Cuba. In 1992-3, the orthodox wing of KSČM, led by Miroslav Stěpan, took inspiration from the North Korean model (Grzymała-Busse, 2002, 89).

of the Slovak party had begun as early as November 1989, when a new Action Committee was formed of reformist members of the Marxist-Leninist Institute. These individuals (especially Peter Weiss) were young and heavily reform-minded, and thus were able to form a strong elite base for the transformation and modernization of the party (Grzymała-Busse 2002, 93). With reformers in place at the head, the Slovak party was able to rapidly centralize the leadership, break with the past and amend the program. Weiss, the new leader of the party commented at the time: "either we will quickly and thoroughly change the ideology, organization, and obviously, the name, to a modern left party with its own original identity [or we] will then change into a sect, which will lose real influence in society" (Weiss in *Pravda*, 25 January 1990 quoted in Grzymała-Busse 2002, 95).

Crucial to the success of the party transformation was the re-registration of all members in the fall of 1990. Although the membership decreased to 45,000 (from over 400,000), many young members who favored reform were retained, contributing to the impetus for change (*ibid.* 96). Remaining conservatives within the leadership of the party were also eliminated by 1991, and some formed the more orthodox but less influential Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS). Unlike the KSČM, the new SDĽ kept conservative former members from returning after the first elections. This prevented any retreat to orthodox views and aided SDĽ's ability to break with the past, respond to voters and amend its program.

"It is telling that while reformists in the KSCS were pushed outside the party's ranks, in Slovakia conservatives ended up leaving the SDĽ" (Shafir 2000, 3). Clearly, the lack of a strong elite-driven transformation in the Czech party deeply influenced its lack of clear, decisive reforms. On the other hand, in Slovakia, the more dynamic and reformist elites who rapidly took control of the party succeeded in cutting it off from the past and communist orthodoxy.

The Next Two Electoral Periods, 1993-2000

KSČM Stagnation

After the breakup of Czechoslovakia, KSČM continued to play a small but important role in Czech politics. As mentioned in previous discussions of the ideological

structure of the Czech party system, KSČM occupies a significant place on the left. Because of its radical positions on some issues, the distance between it and the Social Democratic party is large. In the three elections between 1993 and 2000, KSČM continued as a parliamentary party, albeit an isolated one. 1993 marked the return of the neo-Stalinist Miroslav Štěpán to the party after serving time in prison for his reactions to the demonstrations of November 1989. This meant an even more decisive triumph of conservative elements over reformists. The leader of the reformist wing, Jiří Svoboda resigned. Štěpán was eventually expelled from the party and set up his own radical party in 1999 (Shafir 2000, 4-5). The dominance of the conservatives was further ensured by leader of the party, Miroslav Grebeníček, a centrist who depended on the support of the conservative wing to remain in power (Handl 2005b, 7).

In spite of the dominance of the conservatives, the party continued to gain a modest portion of the vote throughout the 1990s. Where does its support come from? The party relies on its members for votes, and communist voters appear to be quite loyal. Membership in 1989 was around 1.25 million, but has been decreasing ever since, with 200,000 in 1992 and 125,000 in 1999 (Grzymała-Busse 2002, 82). The membership base is rather unstable, especially because of the large proportion of elderly members (according to Handl, in 2003, the average age of KSČM members was 68) (2005a, 131). Increasingly, the party relies on non-members—Handl also notes that the ration of members to non-members voting for KSČM in 1990 was 1:2.5, while in 2002 it was 1:7 (2005b, 6). The lack of a clear program and anti-system nature of KSČM in this era means that many of its votes from non-members were likely protest votes, especially in the aftermath of the 1997 financial scandals over privatization. Having distanced itself from privatization, KSČM gained 11% of the vote in 1998. The party continues to rely on its position as a protest party, a strategy which has perhaps even increase its representation. However, during this period the party continued to be ostracized by other parties in the parliament and had no hope of joining a government.

SDĽ Participation in Government

The SDĽ gained a significant share of the votes in the 1992 elections. Grzymała-Busse notes that in the scramble for power in the Slovak parliament, "both sides of the

political cleavage sought SDĽ as a coalition partner" (2002, 245). As a result of its reform, the party was in a position to unite with the rest of the opposition in a move against the HZDS-SNS government to push for early elections in 1994. The move was successful and the SDĽ served in the short coalition government with the Christian Democratic Union. This cooperation with a rightist party led to the loss of some of the loyal electorate (*ibid.* 203). In 1994, the SDĽ, like its Czech counterpart, contested the election as the leading member of a coalition—Common Choice (Spoločná voľba, SV). However, as Handl and Leška note, the SDĽ leadership "overestimated the party's supporter base" and gained only 10.4% of the vote in 1994 (2005, 111;). Another factor that may have contributed to this loss was the formation of the ZRS by former SDĽ deputy Ján Ľupták in March 1994, which gave voters a socialist-communist alternative (Bugajski 2002, 310). ZRS gained 7.3% of the vote.

During this period, the SDĽ proved that programmatically, it was also a mainstream European leftist party. It took inspiration from Socialist International, and the Party of European Socialists and found its place amidst European soft-left parties: "The political programme of 1996 was particularly important as it established the programmatic compatibility of SDĽ with Western social democracy" (Handl and Leška 2005, 116). At the same time, however, the 1996 replacement of reformist chairman Peter Weiss with Jozef Migaš brought to the front the more conservative socialist wing of the party, and caused tension within the party "to such an extent that the conservative socialists often attacked their own government in parliament" (Handl and Leška 2005, 112). Grzymała-Busse argues that the party also faced difficulties maintaining a stable electorate: "...the party's support remained narrow both because its candidates could not convincingly articulate their message and because the party changed its addressed constituency from year to year" (2002, 204).

The SDĽ regained its lost votes in the 1998 elections, helped by the discreditation of the ZRS within the controversial Mečiar government, and its own efforts to demonstrate its commitment to democracy (Grzymała-Busse 2002, 248). It again received 14.7% of the vote and was invited to join the left-right (anti-Mečiar) ruling coalition. In spite of this success, the party had been rife with internal struggles since the 1994 elections. SDĽ had managed to reform and become part of mainstream politics, but

the selfsame reform created internal tension that contributed to the eventual splintering of the party.

The Final Period, 2000-2005: KSČM Stability, SDĽ Decline

The period before and after the 2002 elections marks a somewhat ironic twist in the lives of the Czech and Slovak CSPs. The party more successful in transforming itself into a mainstream leftist party disappeared from the political scene while the outdated, unreformed party even increases its reputation without significant reform or programmatic turnaround. This seems to defy Grzymała-Busse's hypothesis regarding the conditions for success of communist successor parties.

It has been shown that the KSČM's strategy of adopting a hard-line stance towards capitalism and the system courted some of the frustrated electorate. Frances Millard has drawn attention to this strategy: "Though seeking recognition as a 'normal political party', in parliament the KSČM remained largely isolated. However, in 2002, the communists' role as the 'party of protest' gained them some 18 per cent of the vote" (2004, 57). Perhaps paradoxically, the KSČM has found that the status as a protest party gains them electoral support despite their practical isolation within parliament. Yet programmatic reform is also visible: Handl notes a "dramatic shift to social democracy" while maintaining a social revolution at the core of its identity (2005b, 5-6). The party's 2002 success may also have been helped by "the one-dimensional form of party competition evident in the Czech Republic"—the economy (Handl 2005a, 130).

A further success for the party were the 2004 European Parliament elections, in which it gained 6 seats to become the second largest Czech party in the EP. Within the context of the EP, the KSČM has joined the GUE-NGL working group, which could contribute to its adapting policies from Western European far-left parties. But the conservative wing of the party still retains a negativist, Euro-skeptic attitude, putting it more in line with President Klaus and the ODS than with other leftist parties. Programmatically and in terms of its behavior, the KSČM remains an anomaly in Czech politics. Although the strict isolation within parliament is thawing, the change is slow and gradual, reflecting a high level of distrust even after 16 years. The KSČM is expected to gain a slightly lower percentage of the vote than it currently has, so it will

most likely remain a player within the government. As much depends on the development of relations between KSČM and ČSSD as on internal developments within the Communist Party.

The widespread programmatic reform carried out by the SDĽ in the late 1990s also raised latent tensions within the party. Two primary groups arose within SDĽ, conservative socialists and modernizers:

> The main body of the party was able to live with the 'democratic socialism' of the Western social-democratic and socialist left of the late 1980s and early 1990s. It became alienated, however, by the shifts in the socio-economic programme and the policies of those advocating a 'third way', as well as by security issues, such as NATO enlargement, which the party's modernizers endorsed. (Handl and Leška 2005, 122)

The splintering of SDĽ reflected this division. The various factions that emerged from SDĽ were described in Section III.E, but a brief review will illustrate this point. The first split occurred in 1999 when Robert Fico left to form Smer, a populist social democratic party, which has increasingly become the favorite in public opinion polls before the 2006 elections. With the support of the trade unions and a strong anti-Mečiar, and anti-Dzurinda rhetoric, Smer claims to represent the "third way." The modernizing elements of the party (led by Weiss) formed SDA, while the conservative non-communist social democrats contested in 2002 as SDĽ. Of rising importance was the Communist Party of Slovakia, a group of hard-line communists that were forced to leave the party in 1990 and had never gained parliamentary representation. Thus of the many leftist formations that entered the elections in 2002, only Smer and KSS managed to gain seats in parliament. These two parties *de facto* replaced SDĽ, although they do not at all resemble SDĽ or its policy goals.

The Role of CSP Development in Party System Development

It can be said, then, that the differences in development in the Czech and Slovak CSPs were caused primarily by decisions made in the first few years of transformation. The stagnation of KSČM as a conservative communist and anti-system party was visible as early as 1993, when orthodox elements gained control of the party and early reforms were toppled. Although the possibility for reform is still there, it is doubtful that the

party would survive drastic reform, if it took place at all. The Slovak party, on the other hand, quickly and decisively revamped its image, ideology, and policy, gaining both support and a place in the government. Precisely this reform, however, led to factionalization of the party and its downfall.

How did these two parties in turn affect the party systems within which they operated? The Czech party, it can be argued, used the resources available (large membership, local-level networks, established party newspaper) to maintain its ideological position even after communism had been discredited. The unchanged ideological position caused (and continues to cause) troubles for the Czech left, significantly reducing the space for competition on the left of the spectrum. This perhaps helped the formation of the rather unstable minority and then left-right governments that have characterized Czech politics since 1998. Although it still carries an underlying anti-system ideology, the KSČM does not seem to pose a threat of the return of communist totalitarianism, although its ideological position helps contribute to the instability of the political system. Within the party system, KSČM has remained a stable small party. Nevertheless, it relies on the protest vote, meaning that its support base is unstable.

On the other hand, the Slovak SDĽ established a firm place for itself as a modernized, social democratic party, in line with similar parties in Western Europe. In this sense, it utilized some of its resources, but eschewed others, such as the large membership base (which it decreased through re-registration). It became the major player on the left side of the political spectrum, as is the case with CSPs in other post-communist countries. The dissolution of the SDĽ also spelled the destabilization of the Slovak left, with several different parties cropping up in its place. The *de facto* replacement of SDĽ by KSS and Smer may cause the Slovak left to resemble the Czech left, with the presence of a social democratic party that is not a communist successor and an extremist communist party.

The major influence that the CSPs have had on their respective party systems has been through affecting the ideological structure and thus the structure of competition within the system. Although their influence has probably not been stronger than other medium-sized parties, they provide an interesting point of analysis because of their unique position as former ruling parties with greater access to resources. The party

which utilized its resources to remain a conservative communist bastion has maintained its place within the party system, but the party that remade itself as a mainstream social democratic party faced its eventual collapse.

V. Conclusion

In the section on theory, I argued that political party systems are a crucial aspect of evaluating the consolidation of democracy. Integral to such an evaluation are the number and size of parties in a system, the change or volatility within the system, the extent to which parties penetrate society, and the presence of anti-system parties. In the subsequent sections I described the development of the political party systems in the Czech and Slovak Republics since the fall of the communist regime in 1989. Along with the descriptions, I have attempted to analyze the developments considering these four major factors, as well as an overview of the types of political parties present, according to ideology and behavior (using Wolinetz's model).

The general conclusion is that the system of political parties in the Czech Republic is characterized by stability among the major parliamentary parties, the presence of a somewhat influential anti-system party, and somewhat irregular coalition building. I agree with earlier conclusions (Cabada and Šanc 2005) that the Czech party system is consolidated, although the interactions among parties as well as the low penetration of society, especially in government-forming do not indicate a fully stabilized political system. The situation in the Slovak Republic is somewhat different. Although as of the 2002 elections, the major political players appear to have accepted democratic norms, the party system cannot be considered consolidated for several reasons. From the point of view of the number and strength of the parties, there is still quite a high level of volatility with new parties or party formations cropping up before each election. Ideological positioning is just beginning to solidify, although it is unclear whether parties will reach a higher level of penetration in society.

This study has explored several different factors that contribute to the development of party systems and their differences. In the case of the Czech and Slovak Republics, some factors have been more important than others in determining the shape and structure of the party systems in the first 15 years of democratization. One factor that has been quite important in contributing to differences in the party systems is the structure of socio-political divides within the country, loosely referred to as the "cleavage

structure."[19] Social and political divisions also contribute to the ideological positions taken by parties. Of underlying importance for the initial structure of the party systems have been the institutional decisions made at the outset of democratization. Finally, historical experience may be a mitigating or aggravating factor in party system development. The only variable within party systems that does not seem to influence democratic consolidation is party type.

Cleavages

Despite their original existence as one country there have been considerable differences in their development, both during the Czechoslovak era and as separate republics. These differences can be explained through a number of means. One is the different cleavages that have existed in each society. The cleavage structure determines which issues are most salient for society, and in turn which issues politicians pick up in their bids for office. Whether or not these are the most pressing in terms of successful democratization is not always of primary concern, and indeed the importance of certain cleavages, especially ethnic divides can be harmful to a country.

While the predominant cleavages that have been important in the Czech Republic have been economic and social, Slovak society has struggled with ethnic divisions, nationalist/cosmopolitan, as well as a specific cleavage over personality and the conduct of politics (Mečiarism/anti-Mečiarism). The nature of the cleavages in Slovak society is not necessarily conducive to productive discussion of democracy and its consolidation. Rather, nationalism and Mečiarism can be seen as forces which drove back democracy, especially between 1994 and 1998. Economic and social cleavages have a growing importance in Slovak politics, especially with the recession of Mečiarism. It remains to be seen, however, if the establishment of economic and social divides will lead to stronger, more durable political parties and a consolidated party system.

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[19] I use the term "cleavages" more generally than Lipset and Rokkan (1967), to describe divisions or lines along which political society is divided. This does not imply a deep history and formation. However, it is possible that as years go by these divisions will indeed become cleavages in the sense meant by Lipset and Rokkan. Freezing along these lines could be possible, especially in the context of the Czech Republic, where parties (and democracy) seem to be much more stable and consolidated than in the Slovak Republic. However, it is difficult to imagine the same type of development of cleavages in post-communist Europe as occurred in pre-war Western Europe.

In contrast, internal ethnic divisions have hardly entered the political discussion in the Czech Republic. Scandals that disrupted the government were more likely to fall along economic or financial lines, as in 1997 and 2005. The clearest socio-political divisions are economic and social, and the rhetoric of the major parties follows these lines. Causation is not necessarily one directional: the Czech system may be consolidated because the primary dividing lines are economic and social, or the reverse may be true. It is likely that causation occurs in both directions, and certainly other factors also play a role.

Institutional decisions

Like cleavages, institutional decisions have an important effect on the structure of the party system. The main institutional structures of the government and the party systems in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia have remained fairly stable, while minor changes have been common. The original decisions for proportional representation in both states likely boosted the formation of multi-party systems. The minor changes have involved electoral law: particularly district magnitude, thresholds and seat allocation formulas. These changes have had a much more muted effect, except for the most drastic changes that took place around the 1998 elections—most of which were subsequently reversed. Thus we can say that institutional decisions had an effect at the beginning of party development. Since there have not been any drastic alterations in institutional design, the structures of the systems have been stable in that they have not shifted from multipartism to bi- or single-partism, or other such drastic changes.

Historical experience

Historical experience plays a much smaller role than the previous factors, but the differences between the Czech and Slovak Republics under communist rule cannot be ignored. Because the communist rule in Slovakia after 1968 was not as harsh and oppressive as that in the Czech Republic, the post-communist divide between supporters and opponents of the regime was not as strict, allowing former (moderate or reformist) communists to play a role in the post-communist regime. This may have increased the likelihood of semi-authoritarian tendencies in Slovakia. This is especially true of the

Mečiar governments, under which the country more closely resembled post-communist states where the communist leadership reformed and remained in power (i.e. Bulgaria and Romania) than the imploded former regime in the Czech lands. Historical experience cannot be considered a main cause, but should rather a secondary reason leading to the more prominent role of former communists in the political life of Slovakia than the Czech Republic.

Types of parties

Throughout the analysis, I attempted to categorize the political parties according to ideology and to a three-pronged model based on Wolinetz (2002). The model was developed for Western European parties, but was applicable in most cases to the post-communist parties. Party type seems to be a variable that does not have much or any influence over the development of the party systems in the Czech and Slovak Republics. In each time period analyzed, at least two types of parties were identified, and in many cases parties showcase qualities of more than one party type. It cannot be said that a government consisting primarily (or even exclusively) of policy-seeking, or vote-seeking, or office-seeking parties will be more conducive to democracy. Indeed, there is no relation between party type and democratic stability even in established democracies. There will most likely continue to be all three types of parties in the Czech and Slovak system and parties can be expected to change priorities as the system, the society, and their own needs develop.

One aspect of party system type that does appear to be important for democratization is the stance of the parties towards the regime. Although anti-system parties in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are not an outward threat to the regime (because of their relatively low support), they can cause troubles for stable party interaction and competition. The clearest example is that of the Czech Communist Party.

The Consolidation of Democracy

Many have speculated on the consolidation of democracy in these two states and an analysis of the party system exclusively cannot provide a definitive evaluation. However, if a competitive, institutionalized, and consolidated system of political parties

is an integral part of democratic consolidation, then the evaluations of democracy in the Czech and Slovak Republics will reflect the above assessment of their respective party systems. From the party politics perspective, then, the Czech democracy is well on its way to a consolidated democracy, marked by the competition and fairly stable nature of its party system. Slovakia somewhat lags behind. Despite the progress it has made economically in the past two electoral periods, its party system is not well-entrenched or consolidated. From this point of view, neither is Slovak democracy. This is quite obviously a one-sided appraisal of democracy. Nevertheless, hopefully it has become apparent how important political parties and the party system are to fully-functioning democracy. Continued observation and analysis of these aspects of the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe will be crucial to further study of democracy in this region.

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