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The development of political parties and the party system

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The development of the political party system in the Czech Republic since November 1989 has not yet been fully mapped or analyzed. Therefore, in this chapter we will offer a brief description and analysis of the main political parties, and attempt to capture the main phases of the development of the party system and the important trends within its framework. Our analysis is based on the definition of those phases, which have had a determining impact on the development of the party system as a whole.

The main phases of development were as follows: 1. November 1989 until June 1990 the foundation of the system; 2. June 1990 until June 1992 - the period of system formation; 3. June 1992 until June 1996 - the period of system stabilization; 4. June 1996 to the present-day - the period of the balancing of forces. These periods are based mainly on elections, which are the primary events in the party system and have continued to have an impact on the functioning of the system. To mark the individual phases, we have attempted to grasp the prevalent trends of each period, while it is of course natural that in each given phase processes with other characteristics also occurred.

The events following November 1989 were decisive to the creation of the new party system in the Czech Republic. The previous state is characterized by the National Front as an artificial alliance of 'sister' political parties ostensibly governing together with the Communist Party. Although this state has also been described and classified in political science studies (Box 12.1), the relationship between it and the present party system in the Czech Republic is very loose. Despite the fact that some of the parties from the previous National Front continued to be active even after November 1989, from the system perspective, they are two completely different functional mechanisms and have different means of power sharing, therefore there is little sense in comparing them.

Another drawback is that we will discuss only the Czech party system, even though until the end of 1992 Czech political parties operated within the framework of a Czechoslovak Federation. This problem is actually rather minor, because with the exception of the Communist Party (KSČ, later KSČS), which during 1990 was transformed into a federal union of KSČM and SDL, and several minor subjects (e.g. Czechoslovak Movement for Mutual Understanding), the activity of the parties and movements on the Czech political scene was limited exclusively to the Czech Republic. To the objection that the coalition or 'blackmail' potential of individual parties was important at the level of the Federal government in 1989-1992, we have a rather intelligible response. The subsequent dissolution of Czechoslovakia serves as proof that it had no basic impact on the functionality and internal relations of parties operating in the Czech lands. To give an example, the difference in the number of parties which succeeded in the 1992 elections to the Federal Assembly and the Czech National Council was of no importance due to the short life of the Federal Assembly. Therefore, even during the existence of the Czechoslovak Federation, Czech political parties created an autonomous system and thus may be evaluated as such.

Box 12.1 The classification of party systems

According to surveys made by Giovanni Sartori, and with the use of numerical criteria which here have the function of the main distinguishing criterion, it is possible to define seven classes of party systems: 1.The one-party system, where no other party subject exists; 2. The hegemonic party system, where the predominance of one party leads to its near absolute supremacy (e.g. Mexico); 3.The dominant party system, where one party repeatedly and over a long period gains a considerable majority; 4. The two party system, characterized by bipolar competition; 5. Limited pluralism, 6. Extreme pluralism and 7. Atomized pluralism. According to Sartori, the boundary for distinguishing between limited and extreme pluralism is the five party system; in the case of atomized pluralism, the number of political subjects is naturally much higher, yet due to the other mechanism of its functioning, this is not an important factor. The main contribution of Sartori is that he developed further the previous three party classification (one, two, and more party systems), and that on the basis of this classification he introduced a corresponding typology. While it functions much better than the simple classification in describing party systems, due to its intricacy we do not have the space to consider it here (Sartori, 1976).

Our aim in this chapter is not only to outline the main points and trends in the development of the party system, but also to propose an analytical assessment of the above-mentioned phases of development. In addition we intend to point out their characteristic aspects which may not necessarily be obvious at first glance. In the sections of the chapter where we will discuss the theoretical basis, we make use of generally recognized and widely utilized political science studies which can be used for the study of the Czech Republic's party system. In the majority of the text we have analyzed data from primary sources concerning individual political subjects as well as newspapers.

12.1 Establishing the foundations: November 1989 - June 1990

The transformation of the Czech party system, which began in November 1989, was from the beginning characterized by a considerable increase in the number of parties and movements attempting to establish themselves within the framework of the new system. They were often of a very different character, but in general three types of parties or movements characterized the development of the party system in the

Czech Republic: 1. Those active before November 1989 and continued afterwards, such as the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS), Czechoslovak People's Party (ČSL), and Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ); 2. Those who had resumed their activity or linked with groups already active in the pre-November period (see Novák, 1997) such as Social Democrats (ČSSD) and Club of Committed Non-partisans (KAN), but also the Czechoslovak Democratic Initiative and Civic Freedom Movement; 3. Entirely new subjects, such as the Republican party (SPR-RSČ) or Movement of pensioners for Life Guarantees (HDŽJ).

The Civic Forum (OF) was a very special type of subject, and there were two conflicting views concerning its classification. From a legal standpoint (according to Law No. 15/1990) OF belonged to the already existing parties or movements: 'the already established political parties are the Czechoslovak Peoples' Party, Czechoslovak Socialist party,...Czechoslovak Communist Party...Civic Forum...are political movements according to this law'. From the political science point of view, OF belonged to the newly established subjects, despite the fact that it also included organizations which cannot be classified in the same way, such as *Klub Obroda* (Revival Club - association of reform Communists acting in secret already before November 1989).

Generally we can say that during the whole first phase, the existence and character of the OF were to a considerable extent predetermined by the events on the Czech political scene as well as the direction of the emerging party system. OF, established on November 19, 1989, from the beginning declared itself to be a non-political and civic organization, whose main purpose was the reconstruction of society. OF would therefore play the role of an 'umbrella' organization, providing space for all whose shared its interest in the renewal of society as a whole. The logical consequence of this perception was that OF became the point of confrontation of many currents of often opposing opinions (e.g. KAN and Revival Club met here under one roof.

The existence of the OF was obviously not the only specific element in the first phase of development. The rapid increase in the number of political subjects was also symptomatic. According to the list of parties and movements registered at the Ministry of Interior, there were 35 by June 8, 1990 (the first day of parliamentary elections), but only four attained major significance including the renewed KAN, HSD-SMS, the Agricultural Party, and Movement of Pensioners for Life Guarantees (HD□ J). These are of course only estimates. It is said that there were 66 subjects in the whole Federation (Dvořáková and Kunc, 1996:57), but 85 parties and movements had been established between 1989 and 1990 (*Budování státu*, October 1990).

The great number of parties and movements, typical for party systems in the early phases of development, was not in itself of great significance. Otherwise we must consider two other aspects of the system, the establishment of the Christian element in politics and the rather strong emergence of the 'Moravian' movement. The popularity of calls for greater Moravian autonomy was totally unexpected, but the influence of these parties did not last for more than a year and they were no longer playing a major role by the time of the parliamentary elections in 1992. By contrast, the Christian element, supported by the existence of a traditional 'people's party' voter base located mainly in South and Central Moravia (Jehlička and Sýkora, 1991), in time came to be a permanent component of the Czech party scene.

The first parliamentary elections after November 1989 were held in June 1990 and the ballots for elections to the Czech National Council (ČNR) included 13 coalitions, parties and movements. The absolute winner was OF, which gained 49.5 % of the votes and 63.5 % of seats. KSČ, HSD-SMS and KDU also entered the ČNR. Not even the ambitious Socialist Party (ČSS), the Social Democrats or the Green party made it, despite their high expectations for electoral success at the beginning of the spring (according to data of the Institute for Public Opinion, their election preferences between March and May was around 10 %). The election results, contained in Table 12.1, show the overwhelming predominance of the OF.

Table 12.1 Results of elections to the Czech National Council in 1990 (%)

Party	***Votes***	***Seats***
Civic Forum (OF)	49.50	63.5
Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ)	13.24	16.0
Movement for Autonomous Democracy-Association for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS)	10.03	11.0
Christian-Democratic Union (KDU)	8.42	-
Alliance of Farmers and Country (SZV)	4.11	-
Social Democracy (SD)	4.11	-
Green Party (SZ)	4.10	-
Czechoslovak Socialist Party (ČSS)	2.68	-
Free Block (SB)	1.04	-
All-People's Democratic Party (VDS) + SPR-RSČ	1.00	-
Electoral Grouping of Interest Associations (VSZS)	0.84	-
Friends of Beer Party (SPP)	0.61	-
Czechoslovak Democratic Forum (ČSDF)	0.33	-
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**

Source: Election results 1990, CSO.

The constitutive and unifying role of the OF is characteristic for the first period of the development of the party system in the Czech Republic. It was perceived as a guarantee of the right direction for the further development of society, a situation which could perhaps be described as an atomized pluralist system (Fiala and Mareš, 1997:106), even though it is not clear whether it deserves the label 'system'. While there were many individual elements which should have influenced the functioning of

the system at the beginning, neither the intensity nor the direction of their mutual interaction was clear. In addition, the hierarchy of power was not apparent. On the other hand, the actual representations of certain subjects (above all OF and KSČ) gave clear evidence that there were real differences based on their specific character. In other words - a real party system with the appropriate attributes was first established in the course of elections.

1. 'Non-political' character. For this entire period, many Czechs shared the opinion that political parties must be considered with a certain distrust because of their activity as political subjects, and that the political will of citizens could be equally well served by a broad civic movement. This was both a rather irrational reaction to the concept of the political party, which was until this time identified almost exclusively with the Communist Party, as well as an opposition to the fact that practically all normal political parties are based on some ideology, which was a highly discredited term. In general, it is true that these opinions were closely linked to the existence of the OF, which rapidly lost influence with its dissolution.

2. The origin of major movements and parties. Leaving aside subjects originating from OF which were established during the second phase of development, the vast majority of all important parties and movements today already existed in the first period. Parties or movements formed after this point were, with only few exceptions (e.g. DEU), not entirely new, but born through renaming, merger, or affiliation.

3. The early appearance of non-standard subjects. This phenomenon has several distinct aspects. First, it concerns parties and movements which were specific in their narrow focus as Election Configuration of Interest Groups (VSZS) or The Friends of Beer party (SPP), and this also applies to the OF. The existing subjects practically without exception did not correspond to the trend prevalent in European party systems - i.e. they were usually not 'mass' parties. This aspect in particular was decisive to the character of the Czech party system in its first period of development.

The Czech party system thus entered its second phase of its development in a situation where its basic pattern of stratification, determining the boundaries of future development, was already in place, and where there was already a nucleus of standardized interactions between individual subjects.

12.2 Formation of the system: June 1990 - June 1992

All of these facts allow us to specify the following three characteristic signs of the first phase of development:

The second period was characterized by the final constitution of the basic character of the system, and by the decisive choice of a political *party* as the basic element of mediation of the political will of citizens and interests of social groups. The dissolution of the OF also played an important role, which divides this period into two rather discrete phases. In the first phase, internal tension within the OF increased, and the framework and foundation for other parties and movements was established. Another characteristic of this phase was also an attempt at organizing the party system into a specific form (i.e. defined in the right-left space). The second phase is then distinguished by the development of the relationship between individual subjects.

Two distinct methods are most advantageous for the evaluation of the development of the party system during this period. Regarding the first phase we shall discuss mainly the development of the OF, before turning to events linked to other subjects. For the second phase, we shall monitor separately the formation of movements in various parts of the party spectrum and divide them to facilitate orientation, into the right-wing, center and left-wing (see Sartori, 1976:337).

The parliamentary elections in June 1990 confirmed that the primary factor influencing the future shape of the Czech party system would again be the development of the OF, for no other subject had enough importance to exercise any significant impact on the system. Inside the OF, the climate had become polarized, and the elections played the role of a catalyst in speeding up the natural differentiation of opinions. Two important currents were born within the OF - first the right-wing, classical, liberal moderately conservative current, and the second a centrist, rather socially liberal (see characteristics for 'classic' and 'social' liberalism in Box 12.2). The right-wing trend was formed under pressure from regional organizations, whereas its counterpart had its main support from the intellectuals in the OF leadership (e.g. P. Rychetský or P. Pithart), who enjoyed the support of the President and those around him. The right-wing trend based its program on the opening of the market economy and on individual values, while the centrist trend aimed at maintaining the movement's unity with the simultaneous coexistence of various currents, defending its non-political and civic character.

An important, if only partial milestone was the establishment of the Inter-parliamentary Club of the Democratic Right in September 1990, from the initiative of D. Kroupa (one of the founding members of ODA). Initially, 66 deputies from the Federal Assembly and Czech National Council belonged to this club, but 208 deputies from both legislative bodies had become members. One might say that its establishment formed the 'right wing' within the OF, for it was its members that had called for a firm organizational structure for OF, as well as a clear and precisely defined program to acquire the character of a political party.

The OF convention in October 1990 was decisive for its future development, during which the representative of the right-wing current, Václav Klaus, was elected as chairman. Despite the fact that it elected a twenty member collegium in which the representatives of the centralist group held the majority, this vote very much strengthened the conservative-liberal trends within the OF. Further developments would lead more clearly towards a split inside the OF. Already by the end of October 1990, the OF Council had announced that the Left Alternative and the Revival Club were no longer a part of the OF. The centrist contingent responded to this right-wing offensive with the creation of the OF Liberal Club in December of the same year,

stressing the fact that the market economy was not the goal but a tool, thus emphasizing human values and the quality of man.

Box 12.2 Comparing the values of 'classical' and 'social' liberalism

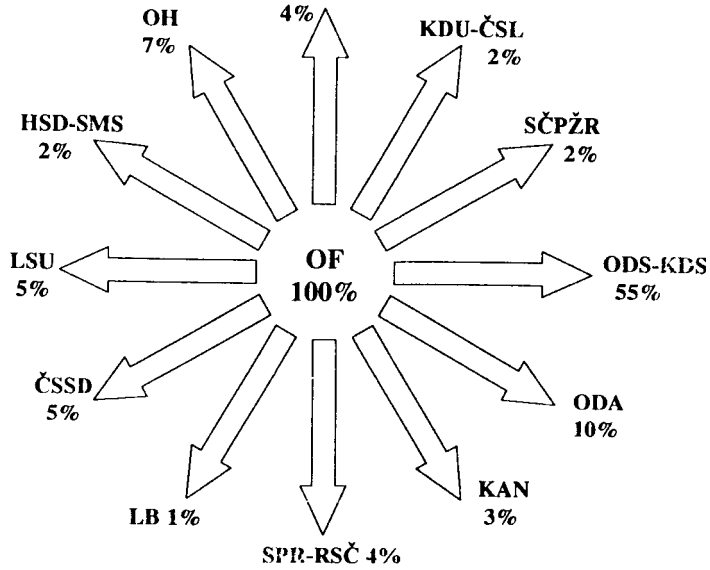
It is possible to say that original liberal values, which were established mainly in the 18th century, have today become more or less normal attributes of all non-extreme parties, and we may thus argue that in this sense liberalism is a fundamental ideology. One can consider liberal values from two angles: the important role was played by individualism, egalitarianism (in regard to the ethical value of humans), universalism and meliorism (Gray, 1986); and specifically, classical liberalism is *the belief in individual freedom and the market economy, in the sanctity of private property; 'new' liberalism adds to these values the belief in the active, if not omnipotent role of the state (welfare state) and social justice. 'Social' liberalism is generally considered to be the doctrine behind the modern European form of the welfare state and the basis of the social-market economy.*

The development in the other section of the party spectrum did not have much bearing on the system's character, as in the case of the OF, but it was not without interest. From a long-term perspective, the most important events appear to be internal developments within the people's party (ČSL). Its central committee voted in July 1990 to give a vote of confidence to its chairman Bartončík, who was accused just before the elections of having collaborated with the former state security service. This vote did not stop internal disputes within the party. The solution came first at an extraordinary convention in September 1990, with the surprise election of a new leader, the rather unknown agricultural engineer Josef Lux.

This last event, which would be of some importance regarding the development of the party system, represented an attempt to cooperate on the left side of the political spectrum. By the end of 1990, the only important force remaining besides the KSČM was ČSSD which, thanks to cooperation with several leftist parties, left-center and HSD-SMS, the actual closeness of these subjects was revealed. The municipal elections in November 1990 also give a picture of the individual subjects on the Czech party scene. The most successful was the OF, followed by the KSČM, ČSL and ČSSD, while independent candidates obtained 10.6 % of the votes.

The first phase of the second period ended with the dissolution of the OF. In January 1991, in addition to the two existing OF clubs, the Club of Social Democrats was established and the antagonism between the individual currents grew. The ratio between the strength of support continued to worsen for the Liberal Club, due to a certain mood in regional organizations, and was strongly in favor of the right-wing current. During the dissolution of OF, the ratio was 3:1 in favor of ODS (Krejčí, 1994:218). In February 1991, an agreement was signed between right-wing supporters and the Liberal club on the split of the OF into two autonomous subjects, and following further disputes was confirmed at the so-called Farewell Convention by the end of the month.

Picture 12.1 Votes of former voters of the Civic Forum



Source: IWM.

Following the dissolution of the OF and the parliamentary elections in 1992, during the second phase of this period the main role was played by subjects who originated within the OF or were closely linked to it (above all ODS, but also OH and ODA). The establishment of OF successor subjects happened immediately after its dissolution. Already at the beginning of March 1991, the OH was officially registered and shortly followed by ODS. This was accompanied soon after by a change in the orientation of former supporters of the OF. Due to the wide range of opinions within the OF, it was only logical that its members and supporters would be drawn to many different parties and movements (e.g. the second largest number of OF voters later supported ODA).

Picture 12.1 provides us with a more concrete view of the benefits gained by subjects on the existing political scene following the dissolution of the OF. The data

on the transfer of voter sympathy between the elections of 1990 and 1992 is shown in Table 12.3. It appears that nearly three-quarters of OF voters had chosen parties declaring themselves to be right-wing (ODS, ODA, KAN, SPR-RSČ and even SČPŽR). This also means that this phase was a signal of the emergence of a clearly defined right-wing. Even the right-wing subjects perceived this themselves and at that time their activity was focused in two directions. To outside it was the greatest possible enforcement of the liberal economic reforms, and to inside it was to utilize mutual contacts and cooperation. This aspect of their development had become apparent in the number of negotiations for various types of coalitions and in the rather intense level of cooperation.

The leading subject in the newly developed right - ODS - was the most closely linked to ODA. This relationship was greatly weakened by the events of September 1991, when ODS managed to obtain the position of Mayor of Prague, much to the detriment of ODA. Consequently, ODA responded by announcing that it was no longer willing to remain in the coalition with ODS and that it had decided to seek out closer contacts with Václav Benda's Christian Democratic Party (KDS). A certain improvement of the relationship between ODS and ODA brought about their November agreement, which emphasized mutual tolerance. In any case, this arrangement was the extent to what the two parties were able to agree upon. The first ODS convention in November 1991 in Pilsen confirmed its efforts to form a wider organization of right-wing forces. This was expressed in the announcement of cooperation with the KAN, but more importantly in the agreement on the creation of a pre-election coalition with the KDS. The 'Christian element' certainly played a role here, i.e. ODS's attempt to gain more influence among Christian voters and especially to broaden its policies, which had only emphasized the economic dimension.

After the rupture with ODS, ODA also made efforts to approach other parties. Following unsuccessful negotiations with the KDS, it began to integrate with the LDS and, in the beginning of February 1992, ODS announced the signature of a preliminary coalition agreement with the newly-formed Party of Czechoslovak Entrepreneurs, Tradesmen and Farmers – SČPŽR. The outcome of both proceedings was rather unfortunate. In November 1991, LDS has split into two factions, one of which merged in March 1992 with ODA, the second one, however, continued its activity as a very minor subject. Cooperation with SČPŽR was terminated in mid-April 1992 due to attacks from both sides.

Movements of integration and differentiation also marked the relationship of the two relevant 'Christian' parties - the KDS and ČSL. The ČSL's attempt at integrating with the subjects grouped in KDU coalition (especially with KDS) failed due to mutual misgivings, and the 'Christian' coalition was subsequently dissolved. Later, in June 1991. ČSL initiated the birth of a widespread movement, which took the name KDU - allegedly due to the fear of abuse of their 'trademark'. The KDS subsequently began the process of approaching ODS, while ČSL was mainly busy with its internal problems. In spring 1991, the ČSL concluded an agreement concerning its post-election cooperation with ODS, which substantially strengthened its position while at the same time securing a final merger with KDU and the establishment of a new party called KDU-ČSL.

Despite attempts at closer cooperation to bring together all parties declaring an inclination to the right side of the political spectrum, the final situation at the end of this phase was not much different than at the beginning. Also, the power ratio remained unchanged, characterized by the strong position of ODS, the slightly weaker one of both KDU-ČSL and ODA, and a minority position of all other parties. The only exception was the KDS, which, upon joining the coalition, gained an important position, and coalition potential, which was better than the strength of its support. The SPR-RSČ was left in a system-isolated position, although the party gained strong support from certain groups in the population.

The activities in ČSSD were the most important ones for future development on the political left. In April 1991 at its 25th convention, ČSSD decided to accept the Revival Club into its ranks, which confirmed the ever-stronger inclination of the party towards the left despite opposition. Declared by a part of its membership, a dispute erupted between its leaders and the group around R. Battěk which eventually led to his expulsion from the party. Of no less importance was the fact that after the dissolution of the OF, some of its deputies (among them V. Komárek and M. Zeman) joined the Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) which thus became a parliamentary party despite its failure in the elections.

The ČSSD took advantage of the isolated position of the KSČM and the weak position of the other left parties, and gradually became the main force of the so-called constructive left, despite internal disputes in the leadership. Partial calm came with the proximity of the elections, however several sub-groups within ČSSD still coexisted, grouped around strong party personalities - Horák, Komárek, Fišer and Zeman. In January 1992, it was Miloš Zeman who came forward with the project of the so-called Realist Block which associated the opposition forces of the left and the center and became a counterweight to the government coalition. Meanwhile, the personal strengthening of ČSSD continued to the detriment of the OH with the acquisition of deputies Z. Jičínský and P. Kučera.

The consolidation of the position of ČSSD was also assisted by the developments within the KSČM. The efforts of some members to lead the party out of isolation and to bring it closer to the social democratic platform resulted in the issuing of an internal party referendum, whereby members were to decide whether they would agree with an eventual change in the name of the party, leaving out the term 'communist'. The negative result of the vote had two consequences. First, the KSČM would remain at the left margin of the party spectrum, thus leaving a wide space for the further expansion of ČSSD, and over the long term, it resulted in the departure of those members who did not agree with this orientation.

At the political center, the formation of political subjects was the most pronounced. The first step occurred in May 1991, when an election coalition was

established under the name Liberal Social Union (LSU), the members of which were joined by the Agricultural Party and ČSS. In September, the Farmers Movement and the Czech Land Organization of the Green Party joined the LSU, which proved to be a successful move. Participating parties were indeed below the required 5 %, but the simple calculation did not fail this time and the election preference gave them the combined support of 7-8 % of voters. The LSU had the ambition of becoming a strong grouping of the left-center, appealing to voters unhappy with the government's policies, but also unwilling to support the traditional left. This actually occurred and in the 1992 elections it became a parliamentary party. The success was helped also by a fortunate legal development: its registration as a movement generated a strong reaction from right-wing parties that made a brisk but unsuccessful attempts to have this change revoked.

The integrative tendencies linked to the establishment of the LSU also affected the fading 'Moravian' movement HSD-SMS. The difficulties of this party began with internal disputes, which peaked in the beginning of 1991 when the management decided to leave the government coalition, a move opposed by its representative in the government, Minister of State Control B. Tichý. A month later he left the government, but the previous disputes resulted in an internal split within the movement. The HSD-SMS situation was further complicated in May 1991 by the sudden death of its chairman B. Bárta, a dominant personality in the movement. His successor J. Kryčer attempted to integrate HSD-SMS with other left-center parties, but the possibility of a certain form of involvement of this movement in LSU failed in February 1992 due to opposition from the Green Party.

There were two results of this process at the center of the political spectrum. First they helped to make the situation in this part of the spectrum clearer, resulting in the creation of three relevant parties (also OH in addition to LSU and HSD-SMS. This, however, did not interfere with changes in the party spectrum) and it prepared the conditions for cooperation by future centrist parties with ČSSD. However, the development after the 1992 elections was such that this possibility was never taken advantage of.

The results of the 1992 parliamentary elections, which are reported in Table 12.2, completed in practice the formation of the rough profile of the Czech party system. With certain exceptions, they determined which parties would have a relevant role in the following period and defined the space for their movement. The elections confirmed the development of the second period, i.e. the crystallization of the right and center parties and the basically stable position of the left. They also confirmed the importance of those parties which were in some way tied to the former OF and which could more or less be defined as its heirs for the shaping of the whole party system. It is worth noting that in addition to these parties (and with the exception of OH), only subjects which had either existed independently already before the 1990 parliamentary elections were somehow interconnected (LSU), managed to enter the Czech National Council (ČNR) and may be characterized as compounds (e.g. HSD-SMS or ČSSD).

Table 12.3 gives a more detailed answer to the question of to what extent the dissolution of the OF contributed to parties who participated in the 1992 elections, and where voters went, who in the previous elections had voted for unsuccessful parties. The distribution of votes between the 1990 and 1992 parliamentary elections show that ODS, ODA and OH drew the great majority of their voters from OF. A relatively small number of OF voters opted for SPR-RSČ, for whom this source represented nearly a half of voters. These trends were also confirmed by the fact that in the 1992 elections ČSSD obtained a full 42 % of its votes from previous OF voters. In contrast, the KSČM retained its voters as did KDU-ČSL and to a certain extent the HSD-SMS. It is thus apparent that the dissolution of OF was of decisive influence to the future shaping of the right-wing of the party system and also had a strong impact on the development at its center. At the same time it opened the door for shifts in voter preferences on the spectrum as a whole, from the extreme right to the left center, and made space for the refinement of opinions and values within the parties and movements.

Table 12.2 Results of elections to the Czech National Council in 1992 (%)

Party	*Votes*	*Seats*
Civic Democratic Party +		
Christian Democratic Party (ODS-KDS)	29.73	38.0
Left Block (LB, KSČM+DL)	14.05	17.5
Czechoslovak Social Democracy (ČSSD)	6.53	8.0
Liberal Social Union (LSU)	6.52	8.0
Christian- Democratic Union –		
Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL)	6.28	7.5
Association for the Republic- Republican		
Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ)	5.98	7.0
Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA)	5.93	7.0
Movement for Autonomous Democracy-Association for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS)	5.87	7.0
Civic Movement (OH)	4.59	-
Movement of Pensioners for Life Guarantees (HDŽJ)	3.77	-
Party of Czechoslovak Entrepreneurs, Tradesmen and Farmers (SČPŽR)	3.15	-
Club of Commited Non-partisans	2.69	-
Independent Erotic Initiative (NEI)	1.37	-
Friends of Beer Party (SPP)	1.30	-
Movement for Social Justice (HSS)	1.08	-
Democrats 92 for a Common State (D92)	0.58	-
Romany-Civic Initiative (ROI)	0.26	-
Party of Republican and National Democratic Union (SRNDJ)	0.17	-
National Social Party-Czechoslovak Party of National Democracy (NSS-ČSNS)	0.15	-
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**

Source: Election results in 1992, CSO.

Table 12.3 Voters of the most important parties in the 1992 elections according to who they voted for in the 1990 election (%)

Political party	OF	VDS+ SPR-RSČ	HSD-SMS	KSČ	Soc. dem.	KDU	SZV	Other	non-voters	Total
ODA	75	1	3	1	1	3	1	10	5	100
ČSSD	42	0	9	8	12	2	2	20	5	100
HSD-SMS	27	1	48	4	1	2	1	11	5	100
KDU-ČSL	27	1	4	1	1	59	2	3	2	100
LSU	35	0	5	9	3	4	18	22	4	100
OH	78	0	3	2	2	1	1	10	3	100
SPR-RSČ	49	10	11	3	3	4	1	12	7	100
LB	6	0	3	80	1	0	1	6	3	100
ODS-KDS	84	0	2	0	1	3	0	6	4	100

Source: Elections 1992, IWM.

An important element in the shaping of the Czech party system was the number of relevant subjects and, related to this, the designation of the Czech party system as either limited (moderate) or extreme (polarized) pluralism. Even though simple addition would suggest that the number of relevant parties grew between the 1990 and 1992 parliamentary elections, this approach is of only limited value here. It is true that this increase was caused by the heterogeneity of politics and opinions within the OF. And secondly, it is apparent from the growing number of clubs in the legislative bodies in this period that the issue of the parliamentary representation of parties and movements was by no means resolved only by the elections. Thus we may conclude that because it is not possible to speak of attribution to a certain type of party system, the only appropriate type is polarized pluralism.

The second period may be characterized with three attributes, of which the first one is related mainly to the first phase, whereas the other two are clearly related to the second.

1. The constitution of the left. Considering the conditions in which the new party system developed, the fact that the left part of the party spectrum was the first to be stabilized may at first glance be surprising. In terms of the spectrum of opinions, the OF had covered the area from social democracy to the conservatives, even though the intensity of the emphasis on the various lines of opinion varied. In any case, this situation led to the fact that any subject wanting to define itself in the space taken by OF (which was the whole space of the center and the right), faced difficulties and had little chance of success.

The left had no such problem, for no party was too dominant to stifle competition. Both the KSČM as well as ČSSD were sufficiently established already in 1990. It is true that ČSSD partially overlapped with the OF, but fortunately for it, the social

democratic current within the OF was relatively weak and rather centrist in orientation, thus leaving sufficient space for its own realization. With the exception of the slow decline of the ČSS and its subsequent rebirth into a centralist grouping, no other parties or movements had been established. The left had gained a certain advantage, which was soon lost partly due to its own mistakes.

2. The constitution of the right. Similar to the first phase, in which a rather fixed scheme of the left-wing of the party system had been established, during the second phase the political right developed its own character. All of the relevant parties which today belong to the right (except for the DEU), either originated in this period (such as ODS), clearly affirmed themselves for the first time (as with ODA and SPR-RSČ), or identified themselves with the right (KDU-ČSL) even if only for strategic purposes. An exception can be made for the KAN, whose importance had, however, deteriorated. The position that the individual subjects of the right adopted in relation to each other remained stable for nearly the entire subsequent period.

3. Tracing the space at the center. Developments in the center of the political spectrum were completely different from the above ones where, in contrast to the right, fluctuating movements were an important formative element. During this period, a space was defined in which parties and movements wishing to be considered as members of the political center could be established. After the left and the right had achieved a stable position, the realistic boundaries of parties at the center became clear. Besides the OH, which was certainly well situated at the center of the spectrum, it was difficult to find another party belonging to the center by its individuality rather than because the center was a residual space, and the only one left for remaining political subjects.

The party system in the Czech Republic thus had a well-defined right and left after the 1992 parliamentary elections and a rather fixed-force distribution among the individual subjects active in this space. It was lacking clearly defined subjects in the political center, and it had a weak and unstable ideological background, and individual political parties were only at the halfway point on the road to becoming standard European parties.

12.3 Stabilization of the system: June 1992 - June 1996

The period immediately following the elections was influenced by problems in relations with Slovakia and the beginning of the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Federation. This process had a double impact on the development of the party system. The first was external, in the sense of a split within the party spectrum over the issue of maintaining or separating the state. The second one was internal and related to the events inside the framework of individual parties.

In the first case, parties were divided between those which stressed some positive results of talks with the Slovak representation, and those preferring the very act of meeting and talking, which corresponded roughly to the division between the coalition and the opposition. In the second case, problems in the dissolution of the state and the issue of Czecho-Slovak relations were so predominant that all other activities had become for the time being secondary for individual parties and movements. However, the process of state separation itself and its final result remained without greater consequences for the further development of the Czech party system, as it just confirmed the existence of conceptual differences between the individual subjects. The autonomous system of Czech parties, which was in practical terms already in place, could thus be considered complete. The third phase of the Czech party system was characterized by several trends, of which the most important include: 1. The integration and gradual weakening of the center, as the individual subjects belonging to it unsuccessfully attempted to obtain relevant positions; 2. The expansion of ČSSD policies, whereby it gradually filled in the hypothetical space constrained on one side by KSČM and on the other by the diminishing center; 3. The strengthening disharmony within the government coalition, which had weakened its capacity for action and assisted, in the long run, certain changes in the location of certain parties (mainly ODS and KDU-ČSL) in the multi-dimensional party space, this aspect, however, was less important than the previous two.

The development on the right was - with the exception of KDU-ČSL, which we shall describe later - no less revolutionary. This was particularly true of both 'civic' parties, the mutual relations and positions of which were, at the end of the monitored period, practically the same as at the beginning. The evolution of these parties was also similar. Up until 1995, ODS fulfilled the role of the leading party on the right; its position can be described as a strong and stable one, despite the occasional objections made by its coalition partners, accusing it of uncooperative and power-based politics. The slow but steady downward trend of election preferences and repeated scandals, however, generated a need for self reflection, for which mainly Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Zieleniec made calls already in 1995. It was largely due to his initiative that a long-term program was prepared and accepted in its final form at the sixth party congress in November 1995.

The ODA had also undergone a similar development, in which the main topics were communication within the party and its future political style. Internal discussions were initiated by a parallel sequel of scandals concerning the party's debt with the Credit and Industry Bank, and alleged surveillance by the Security Information Service (BIS), which was all very detrimental to the party. In contrast to ODS, where internal party disputes were mainly based on conflicts of ideas among individual personalities, in ODA the conflict was between two wings of the party.

There were also conflicts within KDS. At the December 1993 Convention, the group supporting I. Pilip gained strength and called for a more dynamic and pragmatic policy than that favored by the chairman V. Benda. Let us note, however, that in contrast to ODA, this was not a conflict of programs and ideas, but rather an attempt to create a more attractive image for the KDS. Despite the efforts by KDU-ČSL to lure the KDS over to its side at the beginning of 1995, a merger between KDS and ODS was finalized in March 1996. However, there was an interesting

prelude to this event. A merger with the KAN, which was in preparation, had started to fall apart due to the intention of the KDS to merge with ODS. A split into two separate camps of equal strength occurred within the KAN, one favoring the merger with ODS and the other, opposed to it and in the end the merger did not occur.

In this area of the party spectrum, the most interesting development was in KDU-ČSL. In June 1992, its management had already resolved the residual disputes and expelled R Sacher, who later joined, together with the former party chairman J. Bartončík, the newly created but marginal Christian-Social Union (KSU). The tactics for the following period, prescribed to members of KDU-ČSL by Josef Lux, were based on the gradual building of an image of a non-conflictual and constructive approach to problems and as having no internal disputes, in contrast with other parties. These tactics began to he fruitful at a time when ODA and ODS became concerned with resolving their internal difficulties and as their capacity to commit forces to other problems dwindled.

This occurred at the same time that ČSSD began its rather dramatic ascent. At KDU-ČSL's Brno Convention at the end of September and the beginning of October in 1995, Josef Lux placed greater emphasis on the importance of a social-market economy and presented the people's party as a 'calm force' on the Czech political scene. The beginning of this shift into the actual (not only nominal) political center had become altogether realistic following the 1996 parliamentary elections, and entailed the gradual strengthening of the coalition potential of KDU-ČSL (Fiala, 1995 and 1997).

From the point of view of the political party system, the establishment of the Democratic Union (DEU) could have presented interesting changes, and which was officially registered in March 1994. But even in this party internal disputes soon emerged, and its impact remained only very limited: according to Institute for Public Opinion, DEU's election preferences throughout its entire existence was at most 3 %.

Even the general development of the right during 1992-1996 can ultimately be characterized as a modest shift towards the center. In the case of the people's party this shift was intentional, for the civic parties it was caused by the weakening of their political will in general, and in the case of ODS, there was on top of this its gradual transformation into the 'catch-all' party, which is usually characterized by centrist leanings (Box 12.3).

Box 12.3 Characteristics of 'catch-all' parties

Otto Kirchheimer was the first to describe the 'catch-all' party, characterized by the following five conditions: 1. Drastic limitation of a party's ideological burden; 2.Further strengthening of groups centered on individual leaders; 3. A drop in the importance of individual party members; 4. Limitation on the emphasis on a concrete class or religious group; and 5. Connection to a wide range of interest groups. To realistically fulfill these conditions, a situation must appear in which 'the mass integrating party, which is a product of a time when the boundaries between the classes were firmer and Church activities more emphatic... is transformed into an all embracing 'people's' party. It abandons the attempts for an intellectual and moral selection of the masses; instead it turns more decisively to the voters as a whole and I attempts to exchange the efficiency of its activity for yet a wider field of partisans and a faster election success' (Kirchheimer, 1990: S).

At the political center, a number of complex events had occurred. Immediately after the 1992 elections, problems emerged in LSU, where tension between the ČSS (especially its 'right' wing grouped around P. Hirš and J. Vyvadil) and ZS, and also in HSD-SMS, where the criticism of the chairman J. Kryčer was growing. The separatist trends within the LSU were finalized with its gradual transformation from a movement into a political party. On the other hand, the 'Moravian' movement, which had occupied a rather marginal position, was looking for a way to strengthen its position through its transformation into a standard centrist party (specifically into ČMSS in January 1994) and a subsequent merger with other subjects. These were in the end joined together, when the ČMSS, LSU and ZS established the ČMUS coalition in December 1994, and in February 1996 was transformed into a party. The LSNS took another road, aiming at cooperation with the governing coalition. After 1995, discussions were held about forming a closer relationship with the Free Democrats (the transformed OH), ending in December 1995 with the establishment of a single subject bearing the name Free Democrats - Liberal National Social Party (SD-LSNS).

In general, the development among subjects at the center can be divided into three parts. The first one is linked to the transformation of the ČSS into the LSNS and the dissolution of the LSU movement. The second one concerns the changes into the 'Moravian' movement and its relationship with the subjects formerly belonging to the LSU, and finally the third is linked to the transformation of the OH into the SD and its subsequent merger with the LSNS. However, this complex turn of events did not bring any particular benefit to the participating parties. As far as the existence of the relevant subjects was concerned, the space at the center was empty at that time.

The most important development occurred on the left, specifically within ČSSD. As was the case with the subjects at the center, ČSSD had entered this period with various sub-groups within it, which gradually formed two currents. The first consisted of the 'old' Social Democrats, who had renewed the party after November 1989,

grouped around the chairman J. Horák. The second current, including M. Zeman and P. Dostál, consisted mostly of former OF members. But these groups were not unanimous in their opinions; for example, M. Zeman's current supported cooperation with the Communist Left Block, not only against the will of J. Horák, but also that of P. Dostál.

In the period before the 26th Convention of ČSSD in February 1993, there were already three currents within this party: the 'Rakovník' one, closest to the government coalition (J. Paroubek), the 'centrist' one, including P. Buzková, P. Novák and P. Dostál, and the 'radical' one led by M. Zeman, which endorsed a confrontational stance in relations to the government *(Budování států* 2/1993:7). The election of a chairman in the absence of J. Horák ended with M. Zeman's victory, which represented an important turn. The new chairman associated himself with expansive trends directed towards the left, which had already existed in ČSSD during the era of his predecessor (see the case of the Revival Club). It began with a populist type of politics with two goals: to increase its number of voters and to suppress competition on the left of the political spectrum. The practical consequence of his effort to obtain the strongest possible position on the left was to put pressure on other subjects on the left as well as on the right of ČSSD, which was made apparent by both absorbing members of these subjects and their voters.

The ČSSD was assisted in its efforts by the disintegrative trends on the extreme left when, in connection with the strengthening of the 'conservative' wing of KSČM and its later victory at the June 1993 convention (when M. Grebeníček replaced the pro-reform J. Svoboda as chairman), the 'reformists' began splitting off. They founded two new parties (the SDL and LB) and the subsequent activities of ČSSD were focused mainly on gaining their members (especially of SDL) and voters. Thus in the space between ČSSD and KSČM, two small subjects were established, which led to the shift of the KSČM to the left margin of the political spectrum. The departure of several dissatisfied members did not bring about much change for the KSČM, and its voters seemed to be satisfied with the new leadership.

The expansion of ČSSD towards the political center was also visible in the revival of the idea of the Realist Block in June 1993, joined by the LSU and KSU. Simultaneously, a slow but relatively steady transfer of some personalities from the OH (or SD) to ČSSD had been going on. The decisive turn for ČSSD occurred in the first half of 1995, when Zeman's tactics, together with the 'civic' parties problems contributed to a sharp increase in support for ČSSD, which almost doubled, exceeding 20 %. Shortly before that (in November 1994) V. Grulich, on behalf of ČSSD, made the first formal offer to KDU-ČSL to cooperate in the preparation of a 'social-market economy' model. The ČSSD was thus gradually gaining hegemony in the space between the KSČM and KDU-ČSL. Despite occasional expressions of disapproval by some members, M. Zeman had built for himself á similar position inside the party.

During the third phase of its development, the party system in the Czech Republic underwent a gradual clarification of the positions of individual subjects both in regard to the standing of these subjects in the multi-dimensional space defined by Sartori (horizontal refinement), and to their importance within the system of internal relationships (vertical refinement). Similar to our description of the previous phases, even here it is possible to emphasize some characteristic traits of the whole period, in particular the following two:

1. The integration and collapse of the center. During this period, political subjects at the center of the spectrum had become more integrated after a long wait, but even this did not strengthen them in any way. Even prior to the 1996 parliamentary elections, it was obvious that no center parties had been clearly established there. In addition to the fact that adepts themselves aiming at being labeled 'center party' were weak, this situation was augmented by KDU-ČSL's steady movement towards the center. This party had gradually acquired a real position in the center of the party spectrum and even began to function as a centrist subject in certain aspects of its activities.

2. The establishment of European-type parties. Between 1992 and 1996, the external picture of subjects on the Czech party scene began to change. Subjects conceived on a status, national or other narrow principle had begun to lose support, while parties, which approached the whole electoral spectrum, had faired better. The relevant political parties or the parties with a significant coalition or blackmail potential (above all ODS, but also ČSSD had become more of a 'catch-all' party) gained the character of nonselective parties. Consequently, they abandoned their focus on the more narrow and better-defined areas of social problems and voter groups that were typical for the initial period of the development. The Czech party scene was also characterized by the total disappearance of the form of political subject, which had been popular earlier - the political movement.

Shortly before the 1996 parliamentary elections, the party system in the Czech Republic had all of the prerequisites to complete its basic stabilization and to enter the next phase in which a shift in the power relations between parties replaced changes in the number and character of the subjects. While it is not possible to classify the party system as moderate or polarized pluralism, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the aspects of moderate pluralism were predominant. Due to certain features of the development of this system during the third period (most importantly the above-mentioned shift of KDU-ČSL towards the center), it was not clear whether these characteristics would strengthen in the following period or whether there would be a change towards polarized pluralism.

12.4 Balancing of powers in the system: after the May 1996 elections

The elections to the Chamber of Deputies held on May 31 and June 1, 1996 represented an important turning point in the development of the Czech party system. The elections not only brought about a significant reduction in the number of the political .subjects represented in Parliament, but also restored the association

between the actual importance of a political subject and its share in legislative power. In addition, these elections also decided that those unsuccessful subjects who had not gained the necessary 5 % would remain marginalized in the future and that their potential for growth would be very limited, at least for the next election period. This is also witnessed by the fact that the majority of unsuccessful political subjects have since been characterized by a continuous long-term decrease in preferences. The exception was DŽJ, which regularly earns about 3 % of votes and to a certain extent even DEU, which has not earned enough support to receive financial contributions from the state (Table 12.4).

In addition to these consequences, the elections also brought a change in the system itself. The political parties that made it into the Chamber of Deputies entered an environment in which only six subjects, with roles, which were to a certain degree pre-defined, would determine the limitations of the manoeuvring space. Possibilities of strategic advances, which had been quite high in the previous election period, had closed significantly. The system as a whole was now facing a situation where the ongoing changes were only of a tactical character (with the possible exception of KDU-ČSL).

Two other important changes in the system were linked to the election results, the first concerning the KDU-ČSL. Although it had already shifted significantly to the actual center of the spectrum during the pre-election period, it unambiguously occupied this space after the elections. This gave it a balanced coalition potential both in relation to the 'civic parties' as well as ČSSD. In a certain sense KDU-ČSL had earned the greatest coalition potential on the Czech party scene, the second change was linked to ČSSD. The loss of the election battle with ODS confirmed its hitherto rather theoretical position as the alternative counterpart to ODS. On the other hand, ČSSD gained a practical hegemony in the space between the KSČM and KDU-ČSL, due to the election failure of the 'center' parties and other left subjects (with the exception of KSČM).

The development inside the six parties was limited during the months preceding the first Senate elections as their position was either affirmed or strengthened by the elections, with the exception of only occasional attempts at finding out how far one or another subject could go in this new situation. A typical example of such behavior were the reflections of Prime Minister Václav Klaus on prospective mergers by the right subjects or the attacks of M. Zeman against ODS politics or against some of its members, who were gradually gaining face. The elections to newly established Senate, which occurred during two weekends in November 1996, did not have any significant impact on the shape of the party system (this was also due to the character of the Senate in general).

Table 12.4 Results of elections to the Chamber of Deputies in 1996 (%)

Party	***Votes***	***Seats***
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	29.62	34.0
Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)	26.44	30.5
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)	10.33	11.0
Christian-Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL)	8.08	9.0
Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ)	8.01	9.0
Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA)	6.36	6.5
Pensioners for Life Guarantees (DŽJ)	3.09	-
Democratic Union (DEU)	2.80	-
Free Democrats - Liberal National	2.05	-
Social Party (SD-LSNS)		
Left Block (LB)	1.40	-
Independents	0.50	-
Czech-Moravian Centre Union (ČMUS)	0.45	-
Movement of Autonomous Moravia and Silesia (HSMS-MNSj)	0.42	-
Moravian National Party (MNS-HSMS)	0.27	-
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	0.13	-
Czech Right (ČP)	0.05	-
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**

Source: Election results 1996, CSO.

In 1997, developments occurred which would significantly influence the position and importance of the majority of subjects on the party scene. Worth mentioning from the first half of the year is the exchange of positions by the strongest two parties. According to election preferences indicated in opinion polls, ODS and ČSSD had switched places at the beginning of spring 1997, and the margin ČSSD's lead gradually increased to 69 %. Much more pronounced changes occurred in the fall of 1997 and continued into 1998, which completely altered the right-wing of the party spectrum. Prolonged financial scandals, already plaguing ODS since 1995 (hiding donations by sponsors behind the fictional donors), led to an internal party crisis which later evolved into a governmental crisis. These events had three serious impacts on the development of the party system:

1. A split in ODS caused by personal, political and moral priorities of both rank and file members and party leaders. The result was on the one hand a visible weakening of ODS among voters (according to Institute for Public Opinion, its support dropped to 10 %, however soon after it started to climb to between 12 % and 15 %). On the other hand, it also caused a certain consolidation within the party around V. Klaus after the departure of a number of its members.

2. The establishment of the Freedom Union (US) made up of former ODS members and fresh individuals that had been outside of politics. Although it was not clear at the beginning what position this party would occupy in the framework of the party spectrum, it was soon apparent that it would most likely be a liberal-conservative subject attempting to appeal to voters by stressing the role of ethics in politics and society. Soon after its establishment, US had already gained rather substantial support from voters (according to Institute for Public Opinion surveys 12-13 %).

3. The formation of US also significantly influenced the position of KDU-ČSL, which up to then represented a 'substitute' alternative for right voters who were unwilling to support either of the 'civic' parties. This role was taken over by US immediately after its formation, which was reflected in a significant drop in support for KDU-ČSL (from 1012 % down to 7-8 %). While this drop had no impact on the coalition potential of KDU-ČSL, it nevertheless represented an obvious sign that their position as the party which 'strikes the balance' could in certain circumstances be jeopardized.

The scandal which caused the break-up of ODS also had an impact on the situation in ODA. The internal problems of the alliance, where two groups had been fighting against each other since spring 1997, were not resolved even after the election of J. Skalický as the party chairman. The temporary suppression of these problems ended when the financial audit of the party, initiated by Skalický, uncovered irregularities similar to those which had destabilized ODS not long before. Some of the members of the right faction, grouped around Ivan Mašek, left ODA and established the marginal Party of Conservative Contract. The majority of the leading representatives had gradually left and the party itself ceased to exist as a significant subject (its preferences have dropped to 1 %). The appearance of US contributed to ODA's retreat from important political positions. Whereas KDU-ČSL suffered only a nominal drop in voters as a result of the establishment of US, ODA (perpetually struggling with the instability of its voters and their weak relationship to the party) saw the loss of the remaining support of its voters, accompanied by internal crisis.

It is remarkable that the difficulties which both civic parties and even the entire political right were facing did not in any way strengthen the position of ČSSD. The disintegration of the right should have theoretically strengthened ČSSD's position, but nevertheless in spring of 1998 it experienced a drop in the number of supporters. We can assume that ČSSD in continuing with its policy of incessant criticism, due largely to its leader, this time was distracted in aiming at the newly formed US instead of utilizing the right's difficulties in a more constructive manner. This policy, alongside the fact that even ČSSD was itself unable to avoid scandals, was likely the cause of the loss support. But the subsequent elections showed that voters interpreted all of this as a clash between the right and left, and that actual party scandals had basically no impact on their decisions.

12.5 Conclusion

The results of the June 1998 elections to the Chamber of Deputies have indeed brought some changes, but none of which might be described as a change of the system as a whole. As Table 12.5 shows, the bipolarity of the system remained intact, with ODS on the right and ČSSD on the left. The KSČM has maintained its extreme left character despite attempts at change. Such attempts found a response in the proposals of ČSSD to give the KSČM some representative function in Parliament and in the willingness of President Václav Havel to meet the representatives of this party under certain circumstances. Overall KDU-ČSL had maintained its previous position at the center of the political system.

Not even SPR-RSČ's failure in the elections could be considered as a change in the system, despite the fact that this failure certainly widened the space for manoeuvre for the subjects which made it into Parliament, theoretically making the formation of viable coalitions easier. From the system perspective, the absence of ODA and the newfound representation in Parliament by US may be considered even less significant. It is likely that US will take over the same position which belonged to ODA, so that the system as a whole will continue to work without any change.

The short time that has elapsed since the elections does not allow for further analysis. However, one aspect, which could in theory lead to some change in the political system might be mentioned. In the eventuality that the so-called opposition agreement signed between ODS and ČSSD led to either constitutional change or the introduction of a kind of majority electoral system (which would be an acceptable alternative for leaders of both parties), or if the consequence were to be an attempt by these two subjects to monopolize power on the political scene through some kind of 'cartel' agreement, there could be substantial changes in the functioning of the system and important changes in the system as a whole.

Table 12.5 Results of elections to the Chamber of Deputies in 1998 (%)

Party	*Votes*	*Seats*
Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)	32.31	37.0
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	27.74	31.5
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)	11.03	12.0
Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL)	9.0	10.0
Freedom Union (US)	8.60	9.5
Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ)	3.90	-
Pensioners for Life Guarantees (DŽJ)	3.06	-
Democratic Union (DEU)	1.45	-
Green Party (SZ)	1.12	-
Independents	0.87	-
Moravian Democratic Party (MDS)	0.37	-
Czech National Social Party (ČSNS)	0.29	-
Civic Coalition - Political Club (OK-PK)	0.25	-
Total	**100.00**	**100.00**

Source: Election results, 1998, CSO.

Another important development, which could potentially change the Czech political scene, is the integration of the moderate center and right parties, which has begun to occur recently. Before the Senate elections in 1998, the so-called Four Coalition consisted of KDU-ČSL, DEU, ODA, and US. The programs of these individual subjects are, however, rather different. The KDU-ČSL is aiming at a politics of the 'right center', US is presenting itself as the rightist party of a 'new kind', the DEU has up to now only been concerned with anti-communist issues and the ethical dimension of politics and ODA has shaped itself as a conservative-liberal party of an Anglo-Saxon type. These four coalition parties also have a largely dissimilar membership (numerically and socially), which would be an obstacle to further integration. In the event of the introduction of a majoritarian electoral system, or the in case of a significant modification of proportional representation, some sort of functional cooperation among them will become necessary.

At present, the party system in the Czech Republic has an ambivalent shape. On the one hand, from the point of view of the 'location' of the subjects on the left-right axis it is already established. But on the other hand, despite the fact that the 1998 election results have made the situation much more clear, neither the strength of the relevant subjects nor the intensity of their mutual relationships are known. Furthermore, it is becoming apparent that although significant chances of change in the distribution of power are not likely, it is possible to foresee a replacement of one type of subject with another. In theory it is also possible that more analogous subjects could begin functioning in a particular space. We must also not forget that clashes within ČSSD became stronger in 1997 and 1998, which raise the possibility of a potential split.

In general, it is possible to outline several attributes of the Czech party system: 1. The existence of only four parties with the potential of forming a coalition and at the same time each uncompromisingly enforcing its own policies (ODS, KDU-ČSL, ČSSD, and US replacing ODA); 2. The centripetal trends of these parties linked to tougher competition in the struggle for undecided voters, and 3. The relatively stable distribution of power between the left and right. As for the parties that did not make it into Parliament, we could say (with the probable exception of DŽJ that any further development in the future would depend upon their success at the regional level.

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