

Political parties and the party system

The end of communism

- Renaissance of political pluralism
- „Small Bill on Political Parties“ – recognition of some political parties
- Number of new political parties:
 1. Already existing (OF, KSČ, ČSL)
 2. Renewed (ČSSD)
 3. Genuinely new (SZ, ODA, SPR-RSČ,...)

Joke parties

Friends of Beer Party



Independent Erotic Initiative



The 1990 general election

- Struggle over the character of the régime
- Clear victory of OF
- Legitimacy of KSČ confirmed
- Number of new parties elected

Development of political parties in a nutshell

- 1991 – **breakup of OF** and emergence of ODS, OH and ODA
- 1992 election won by ODS-KDS and formation of the centre-right cabinet (V. Klaus)
 - Fragmentation of the parliament (LSU, HSD-SMS, ČSSD, SPR-RSČ, KSČ)
- 1996 – the electoral success of ČSSD; formation of the centre-right minority cabinet (V. Klaus)
- Tendency to a bipolar pattern of competition BUT not repeated patterns of alteration (see later)
- Four main parties established

OF and its effects on party system formation

- Initially a very broad (anti-communist) movement
- Conflict over the character of the movement (and politics)
- Social-liberal Civic Movement
- Conservative-liberal Civic Democratic Party
- The role of political parties, civic society, attitude to economy...

The „Big Four“

Civic Democratic Party (ODS)

- Conservative (values) liberal (economy), soft-Euroscepticism

Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)

- Left-centre in economic terms, split in value dimension, pro-European

Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM)

- Unreformed, anti-capitalist, Eurosceptic, the issue of the past

Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People`s Party (KDU-ČSL)

- Social-conservative party, religious values, economically in the centre, existence of internal disputes

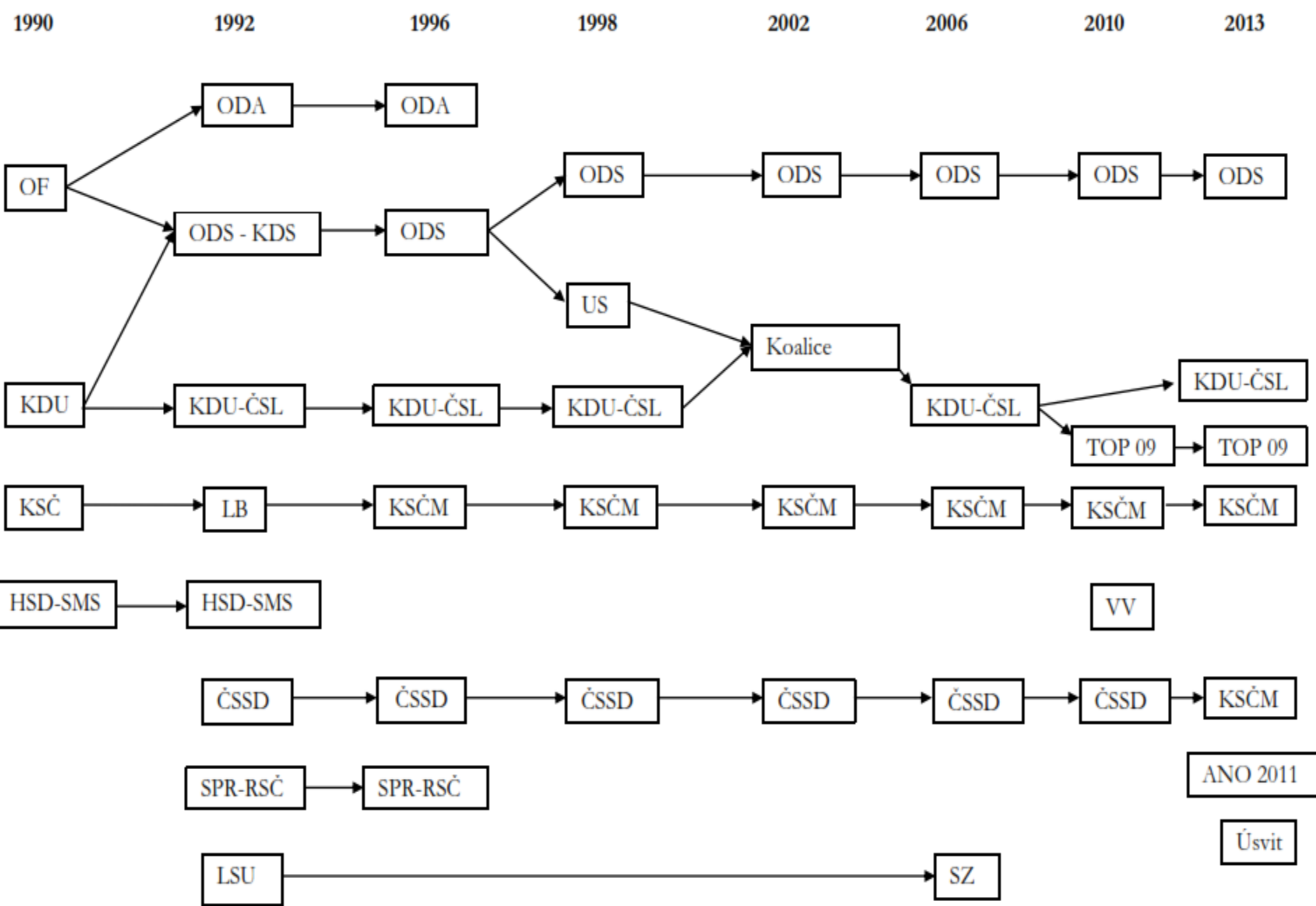
Development of political parties in a nutshell

- 1997/8 – splitting of ODS and the emergence of Freedom Union (US)
- 1998-2002: reduction of the number of parliamentary parties, „opposition agreement“ (Coalition of Four project)
- 2002-2006: left-centre cabinets (ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, US-DEU)
- 2006 – parliamentary disappearance of US-DEU, entry of the Green Party (SZ), centre-right-green cabinet
- 2009 – fall of the cabinet (a caretaker cabinet till 2010)
- 2010 – **the rise of (quasi-)new parties** TOP 09 and Public Affairs (VV), weakening of the two major parties, parliamentary departure of SZ and KDU-ČSL, centre-right cabinet

Electoral results (1990-2010, number of seats)

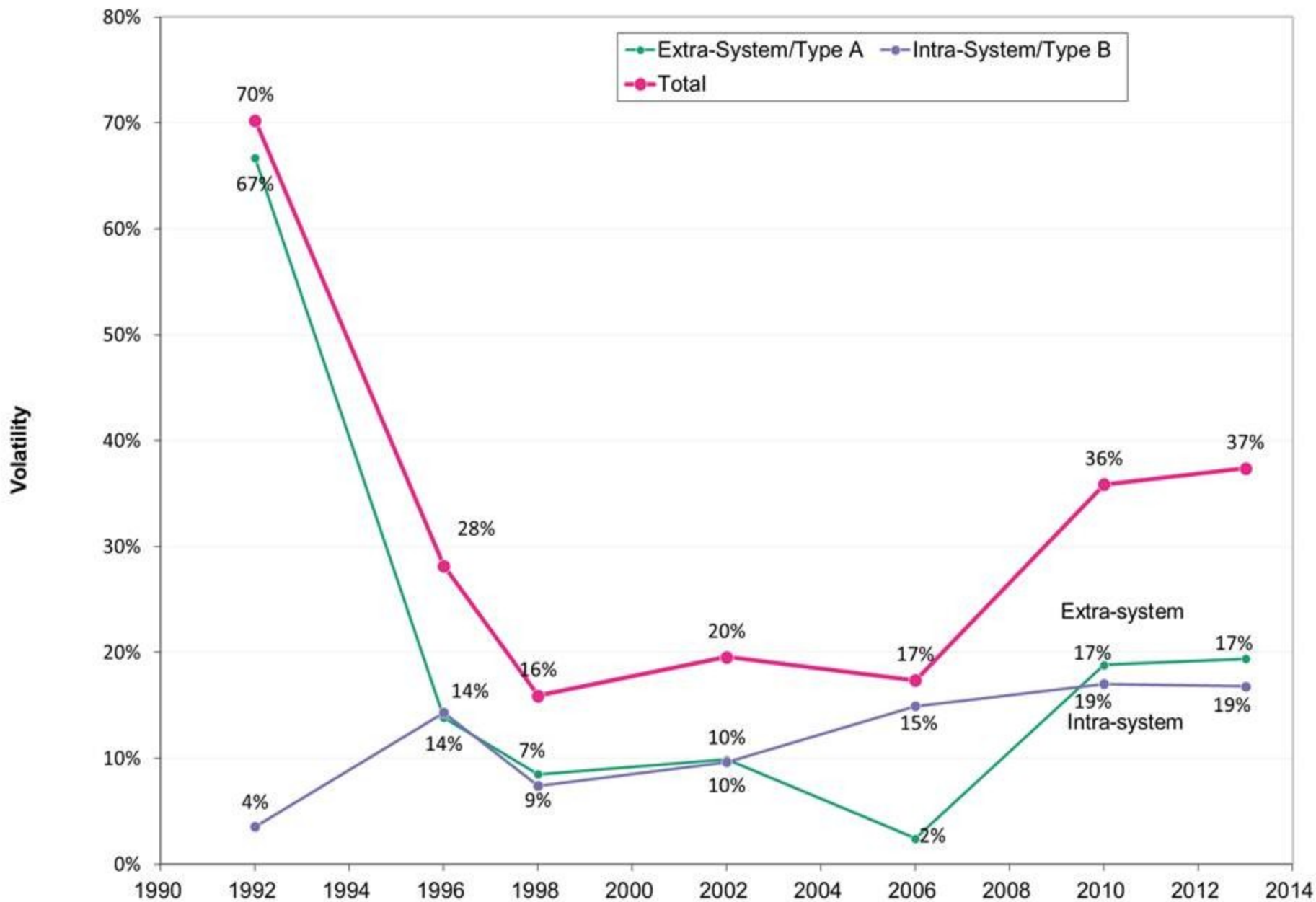
	1990*	1992*	1996	1998	2002	2006	2010
OF	127						
HSD-SMS	22	14					
KSČ(M)	32	35	22	24	41	26	26
ODS(-KDS)		76	68	63	58	81	53
ČSSD		16	61	74	70	74	56
KDU(-ČSL)	19	15	18	20	31	13	
US(-DEU)				19			
ODA		14	13				
SPR-RSČ		14	18				
SZ		16				6	
TOP 09							41
VV							24

Data source: volby.cz, *Czech National Council election



Volatility by type over time in the Czech Republic

Zdroj: Haughton, Novotná, Deegan-Krause 2013



Party system stability in CZE – a systemic approach

- „*the system of interactions* resulting from inter-party competition“ (Sartori 1976)
- A party system change occurs „*when a party system is transformed from one class or type of party system into another*“ (Mair 1997: 51-52)
- A stable party system = stable and predictable *patterns* of party competition
- How to measure these patterns?
- Cabinets composition? Polarity? Polarization?

Cabinets formation and patterns of party competition in the Czech Republic

- Since 1998 – the absence of clear, predictable government alternatives:
- The position of KSČM – very limited coalition potential, improbable but not impossible cooperation of left political parties, determinates interactions among the rest of the parties
- Pivotal position of KDU-ČSL (participation in both right-centre and left-centre cabinets)
- „Opposition agreement“ and after 2006 elections bargaining – (possible) cooperation of the two major rival parties
- Uncertainty related to (quasi)new political parties – SZ (2006) and VV, ANO, Úsvit (2010) – presence of new actors contributes to uncertainty and unpredictability of the patterns of competition
- Variability of (possible) real coalition options - instability of the Czech party system

Conclusion

- Stable parties and unstable party system in the Czech Republic – necessary to distinguish between parties stability and party system stability
- Unstable parties due to the recent electoral earthquakes
- Dominant unidimensional competition (supplemented by some other relevant issues)
- Unstable party system – lack of well-established patterns of conflicts and cooperation
- Roots of low stability:
 - Character of parties (mostly top-down institutions)
 - Atmosphere in society
 - Economic turbulence
 - Quality of political representation