

Political parties and party system

Two main goals

1. Produce a narrative of the development of the Czech Party system
2. Lessons learned from the Czech case? What has been done and what could (should) be done.

Structure of the presentation

- 1. Let me introduce...A brief description of the evolution of the party system in the Czech Republic
- 2. The stability of the party system I: Individual actors and volatility
- 3. The stability of the party system II: A systemic approach
- 4. Party system in the Czech Republic: Problems, challenges, possibilities

Who are they? Political parties in the Czech Republic

- **Civic Forum** (OF, 1989) – umbrella democratization movement, broke up in 1991
- **Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia** (KSČM, 1921) – radical-left, an untransformed communist party
- **Czech Social Democratic Party** (ČSSD, 1878) – moderate centre-left party
- **Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People`s Party** (KDU-ČSL, 1919)
- **Civic Democratic Party** (ODS, 1991) – the major centre-right (liberal-conservative) party, a result of breaking up of OF
- **Civic Democratic Alliance** (ODA, 1989) – a minor conservative party

Who are they? Political parties in the Czech Republic

- **Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ, 1990)** – radical-right wing, populist party
- **Movement for Self-Governing Democracy – Association for Moravia and Silesia (HSD-SMS, 1990)** – a regional party
- **Liberal Social Union (LSU, 1992)** – an electoral alliance of agrarians, socialists and the Green Party
- **The Green Party (SZ, 1990)** – an ecologist, rather right-centre party
- **Freedom Union (US, 1998)** – a minor liberal party, splinter from ODS
- **TOP 09 (2009)** – splinter from KDU-ČSL, a liberal-conservative party
- **Public Affairs (2002)** – an „exclusively populist“ political party

Development of political parties in a nutshell

- November 1989 – the Civic Forum founded (together with other political parties), recognition of the „old parties“ (KSC̣, ČSL, ČSS)
- 1990 election – victory of OF, parl. representation of KDU(-ČSL), KSC̣(M) and HSD-SMS
- 1991 – breakup of OF and emergence/independence of ODS, ODA and other small parties
- 1992 election won by ODS-KDS and formation of the centre-right cabinet (V. Klaus)
 - Fragmentation of the parliament (LSU, HSD-SMS, ČSSD, SPR-RSC̣, KSC̣)
- 1996 – the electoral success of ČSSD; formation of the centre-right minority cabinet (V. Klaus)

Development of political parties in a nutshell

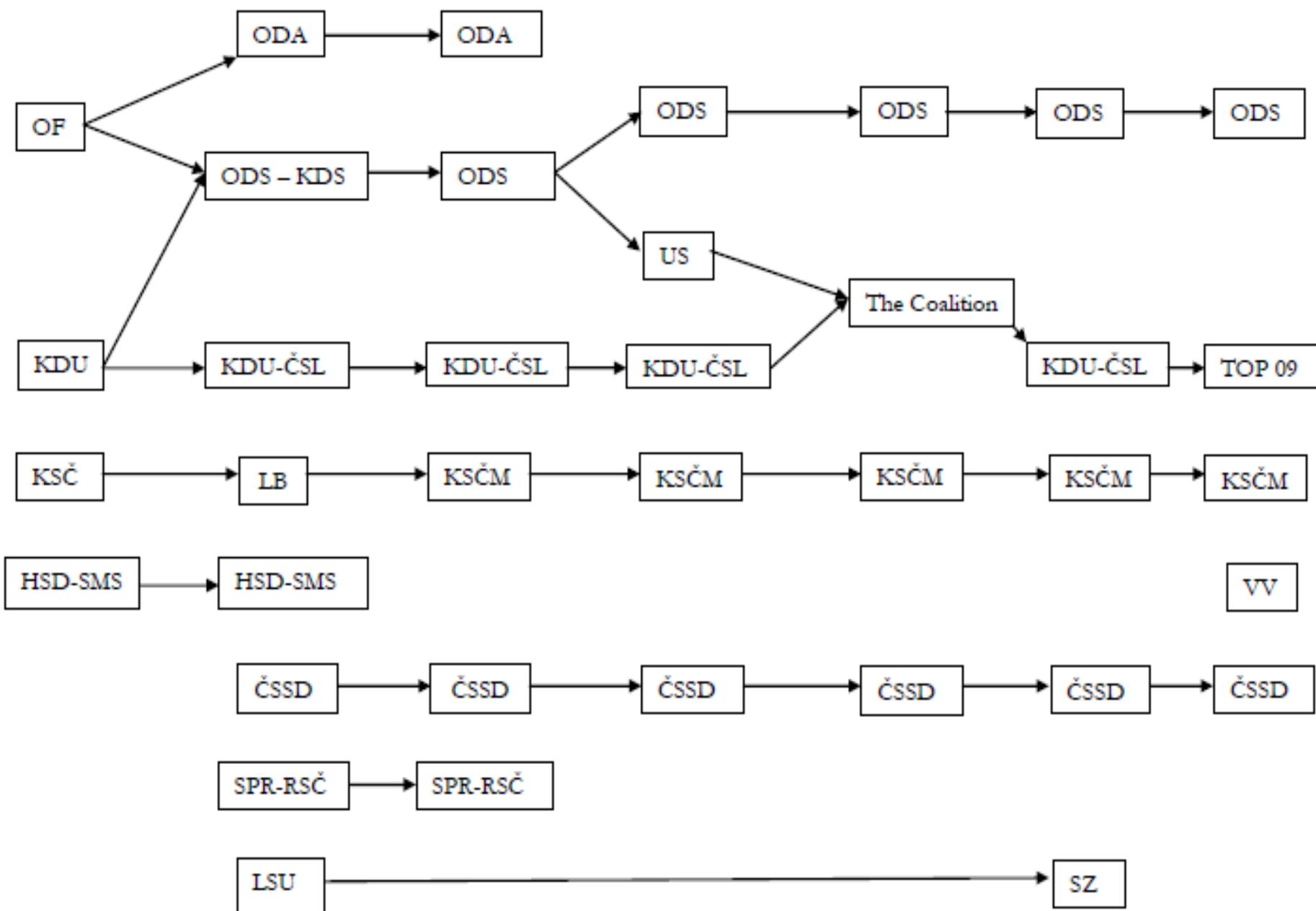
- 1997/8 – splitting of ODS and the emergence of Freedom Union (US)
- 1998-2002: reduction of the number of parliamentary parties, „opposition agreement“ (Coalition of Four project)
- 2002-2006: left-centre cabinets (ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, US-DEU)
- 2006 – parliamentary disappearance of US-DEU, entry of the 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

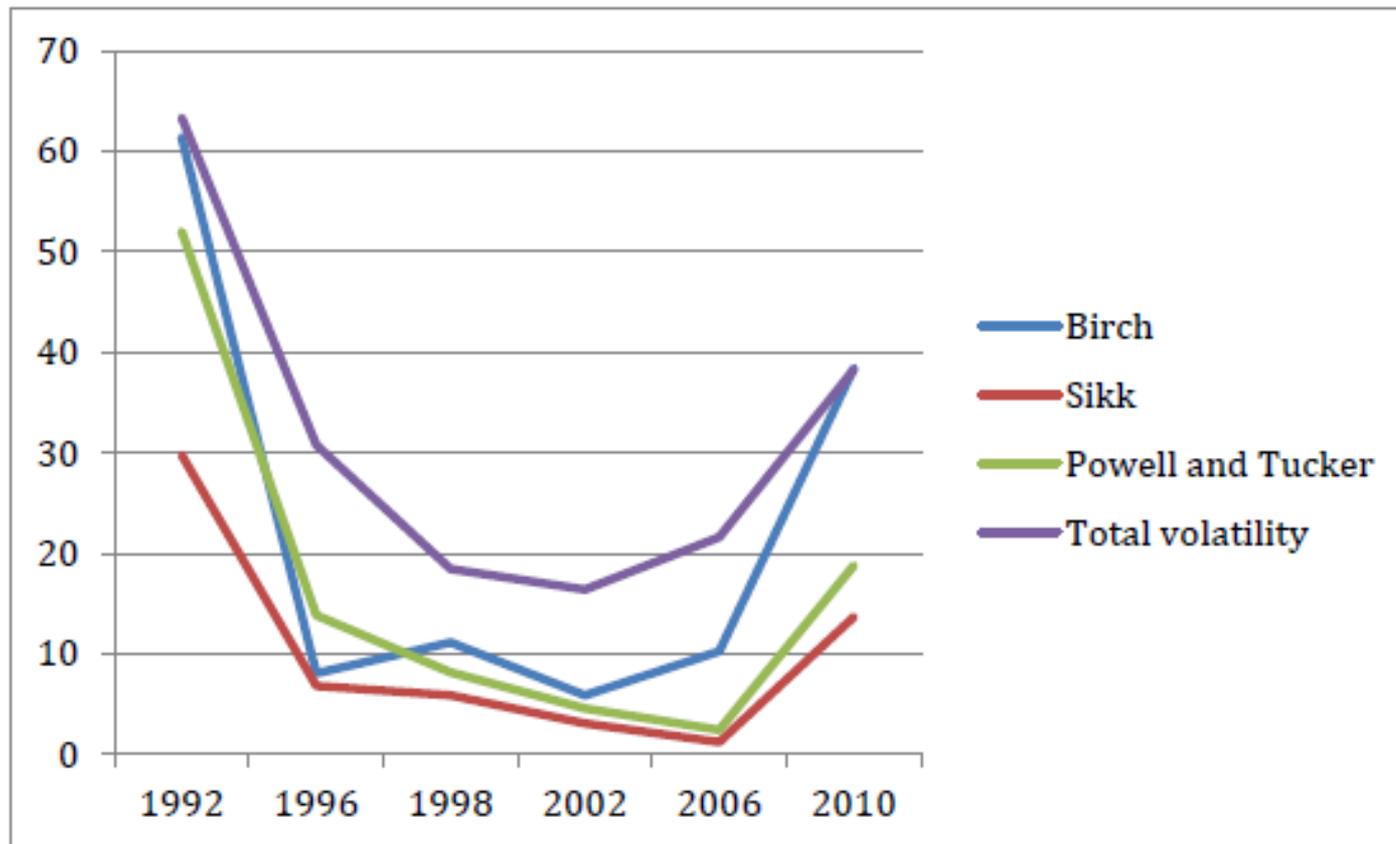
Data source: volby.cz, *Czech National Council election

1990 1992 1996 1998 2002 2006 2010



Volatility and the success of new political parties

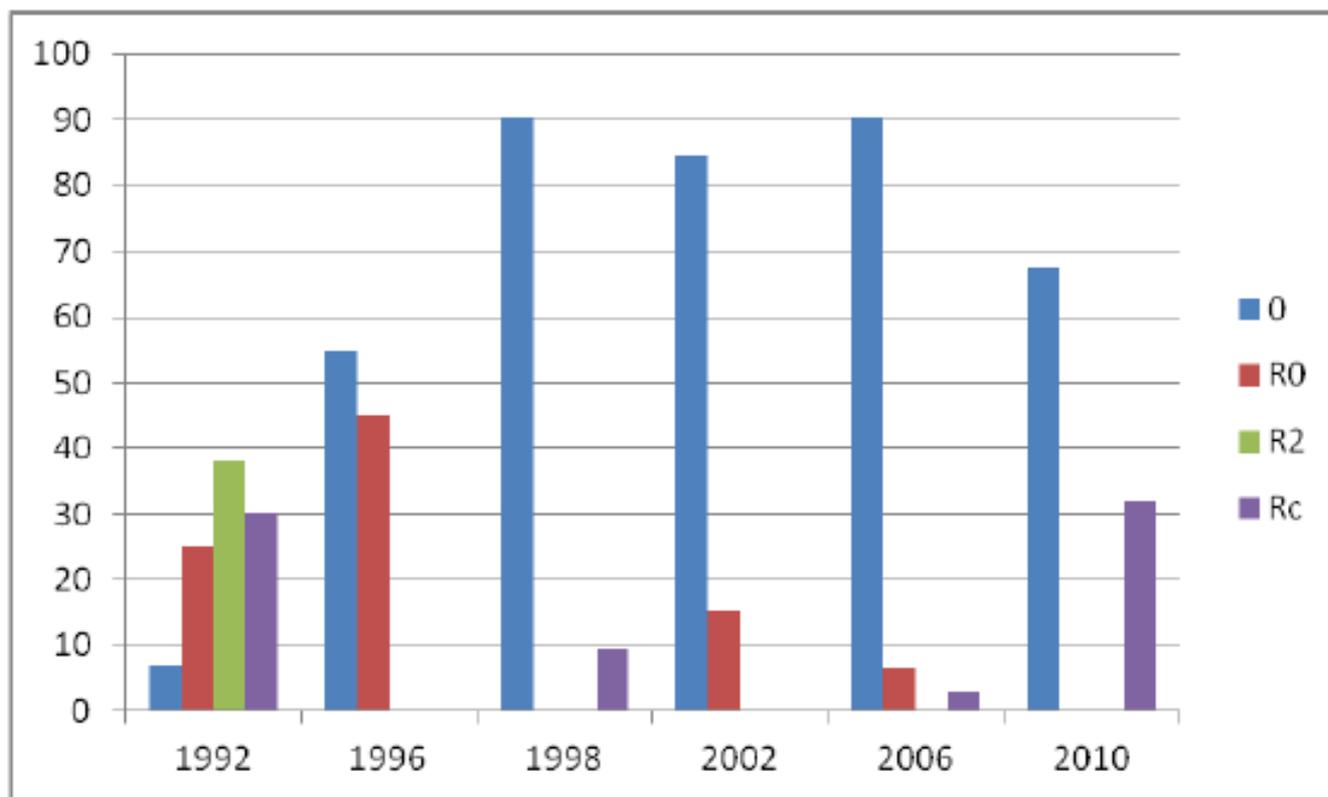
Figure 1: Evolution of volatility and gains of new political parties in the Czech Republic (1992–2010)



Source: Birch (2003), Sikk (2005), Author's calculation

Parliamentary party replacement

Figure 2: Party replacement in the Czech Republic 1990-2010 (modification used by Šedo and Chytilék)



Data source: volby.cz, Šedo and Chytilék 2007

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 (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