

# Cleavages in the Contemporary Czech and Slovak Politics Between Persistence and Change

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This study describes and compares Czech and Slovak party politics after 1989. The concept of cleavages is used as a theoretical starting point. The authors point out that although the communist period overshadowed the traditional cleavages dating from the second half of the nineteenth century, it is possible to analyze some politically-based cleavages in the respective party arrangements of the two countries. The main conclusion of the article is as follows: that despite differing trajectories of political development during the 1990s, at the present time, both the Czech and Slovak party systems show great similarities in terms of the prevalence of the socioeconomic cleavage. Socioeconomic cleavage emerged quite early after 1989 in the Czech Republic; in Slovakia the socioeconomic cleavage has become dominant only in recent years. This has contributed to the stabilization of the classic left-right model of political competition and the consolidation of the two countries' party systems.

**Keywords:** political cleavages; post-communist transformation; Czech Republic; Slovakia; party systems; political parties, democracy

The researches on post-communist East-Central Europe have devoted a great deal of attention to political parties as important actors in competitive politics. A problem in that regard, however, was the marked instability of most of the individual countries' party systems. This instability was seen in the short political life expectancy of many of the parties holding seats in parliament for one or two terms before fading, in the dynamic fluctuations in the identity of many parties, and in the frequent changes in the party composition of government coalitions. The instability of party systems was also undoubtedly influenced by the issues of political and economic transition during the 1990s, as well as the

older legacy dating to not only communist era, but also to pre-communist history.

Today, almost twenty years since the competitive politics were introduced at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, it is now possible to identify some of the longer-term trends that have emerged in Central-East European politics. The instrument we use for this study is the concept of cleavages, which was originally developed to be applied to the study of Western party systems. Inspired by other works utilizing this concept, the authors have modified it for post-communist conditions. The concept is presented in detail at the beginning in the theoretical part of the study. The text goes on to apply it to the cases of two countries in the region, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Two countries differed significantly in terms of party systems after 1989, despite their long period of shared history as part of Czechoslovakia, and their cultural and social similarity. The authors, by making comparisons and by presenting their differences, provide a detailed analysis of the current state of party politics in the two countries. They also offer a prediction of how these cleavages and the two countries' political parties will develop in the future.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. Cleavages in the post-communist party systems: The theoretical framework**

A marked volatility of the electorate, voters' negative identification with political parties (i.e., voters are sure mainly which parties not to vote for), and different conceptualizations of the notions of "the political right" and "the political left" have been, and in some cases are, typical of the party systems of the Central European countries after 1989.<sup>2</sup> Facing these difficulties, one school of thought among political scientists<sup>3</sup> has argued that given the instable conditions of the countries after the break of the communist rule, it is not possible to apply Stein Rokkan's concept of cleavages.<sup>4</sup> Other political scientists have tried, though not very convincingly, to use the unchanged model of cleavages borrowed straight from the Western European milieu.<sup>5</sup> However, most of the authors have recognized the existence of specific cleavages, while they emphasized the need for specific

instruments and research methods at the same time.<sup>6</sup> We will try to use a similar approach seeking compromise.

We will refer to the suggested concept of the cleavages as “cleavages of transformation” to avoid any conceptual confusion. There are two processes going hand in hand during transformation and leading to the creation of the cleavages:

- “from above,” i.e., efforts by political parties to structure the party options through gradual specification and clarification of party ideology and programme; and
- gradual structuring of electoral blocs “from below,” corresponding to the different social groups that arise on the basis of restored or newly evolved cleavages.

These basic conditions prevent the use of the classical Rokkian “sociological” approach to the issue of cleavages. Here we see the need to apply an approach oriented more toward structuring of political space and the party system to avoid problems connected with unsettled societal stratification in post-communist countries.<sup>7</sup> We will thus use the “political” concept of cleavages.<sup>8</sup>

During the first stage of transformation, the determining role in all of the Central and East European countries was played by a cleavage that could be called an initiatory matrix of political life. It represented the axis around which the initial constellation of the party spectrum was created. It was a conflict over the form and character of the regime or—in other words—the cleavage running between the communist regime and the anti-communist opposition. The cleavage of the conflict over the character of the regime did not last long after the first, founding democratic election. This cleavage, however, frequently survives in residual form in the conflict between the former communist parties that turned toward social democracy, and the formations that continued the heritage of the former broad civic movements (*fora*) of the late 1980s and early 1990s. A typical example is the remaining antagonism between the ex-communist formations and their anti-communist opponents on the right in Poland and Hungary. This cleavage can be seen, for instance, in the discussions dealing with the disputes over the so-called lustration, or vetting, and

generally in the attitudes towards coming to terms with the communist past. For the purpose of this article, we can call this residual cleavage the cleavage of communism versus anti-communism.<sup>9</sup>

It cannot be ruled out that the dispute over the character of the regime may re-emerge; but if it does, it will be in a new, modified form. This could happen in the situation where a significant participant or significant participants begins to challenge “the rules of the game,” settled upon within the given political system during the transformation towards democracy. This would especially apply to countries that experienced trouble with the consolidation of democracy. Such countries might even find themselves in the category of hybrid regimes standing at the boundary between democracy and authoritarianism.<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this article, we can call this cleavage the renewed conflict over the character of the regime. This concept, however, can be different in individual cases (see the case of Slovakia below). The participants, which either become political allies or oppose one another on the basis of this cleavage, can vary widely in terms of their ideological and programmatic orientations and origins. If the cleavage is intensive enough, it may even lead to the *prima facie* paradox, an alliance between ex-communists and anti-communists. It can also stunt the process of creating the emergence of cleavages that would naturally reflect the social and political character of an individual country.

Another differentiation among the cleavages takes place at further stages of democratic transition and in the course of democratic consolidation. Very important, we believe, are both the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation as well as the cleavage of nationalism versus regionalism/ethnicity; i.e., the nationalistic cleavage of transformation. These two cleavages of transformation can be observed in all post-communist countries. Underlying both these cleavages is a great mobilization power that enables them to become the determining factors of the party system.

*1.1 The socioeconomic cleavage of transformation.* Why is it not possible to reduce the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation to the classic Stein Rokkan cleavage of owners versus working class? After the collapse of communism, property relationships

took a long time to sort themselves out, and the social and economic status of an individual was determined—in the proper sense of the word—by his or her class affiliation. The conflict on a social and economic level took place rather between the winners and the losers of economic and social transformation. However, this is not the only source of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation. This cleavage is also strengthened by disputes over the form, extent, and pace of the state property privatization and economic liberalization—and over the extent of the social network provided by the state, etc. Only as gradual economic reforms progressed did social groups supporting various political parties from the right or the left side of the political spectrum emerge. In cases where the transformation from a directed economy towards a market economy is successful, the probability increases that the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation will correspond more closely to the owners–working class cleavage. Conservative and liberal-oriented formations supporting faster transformation towards the market economy usually occupy one side of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation. The social-democratic or socialist parties that take into account the social impacts of transformation are formed on the opposite side. In the period when the first stage of the democratic transition is finished and the political system and economy are being consolidated, the character of the conflict between these parties is more and more similar to the competition between the right and the left in Western Europe. The socioeconomic cleavage of transformation is now beginning to correspond more closely with the contemporary form of the owners–working class cleavage in Western Europe. This is also partly due to the fact that under Western European conditions, this cleavage and the classic Rokkan concept are not absolutely identical. It is a consequence of social change and—above all—of the increased social mobility of Western European societies in the last decades.<sup>11</sup>

*1.2 The Nationalistic Cleavage of Transformation.* Just as the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation contains the owners–working class cleavage in some form, the nationalistic cleavage of transformation similarly includes Rokkan’s classic centre-periphery

cleavage. The sources of cleavage have a significant ethnic or nationalistic configuration in the case of the post-communist countries. The nationalistic cleavage is not based on the socioeconomic structure, and depends only to a limited degree on the ideological specification of the parties and their voters. It is a cleavage formed on the basis of identity that is being established within nations and ethnic groups, religious confessions, or on the basis of linguistic differences.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it tends to polarize a given political community very sharply and irreconcilably. The complex ethnic situation in Central and especially Southeastern Europe is moreover complicated by historical resentments, and various traditions of national or ethnic oppression and struggle. Collectively shared images of the “traditional national enemy” become a strong political weapon.

The nationalistic cleavage of transformation can arise as a consequence of three factors that can coincide or complement one another:<sup>13</sup>

1. the existence of an ethnic minority or a specific region within the individual state, which tries to achieve specific status or respect for minority rights (for example, Albanians in Kosovo, Russians in Estonia or Latvia, Hungarians in Slovakia) that provoke the resistance of the majority population;
2. the existence of a neighbouring state or nation that is traditionally regarded in political mythology as a “national enemy” and a potential threat (see the image of Germany for some Czechs, Hungary for many Slovaks, or the image of Serbia for Slovenes or Croatians etc.); and
3. the existence of a fundamental dispute over the most desirable character of the state between nationalists and supporters of a more civic-oriented construction of the state (for example, in Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia, or in Baltic states).

In fact, some of the motives, and sometimes all of them at once, have been present in all of the post-communist countries. However, they have not led to the emergence of a dominant nationalistic cleavage in all of the countries. The nationalistic cleavage dominated unambiguously in all the states of the former Yugoslavia (with the exception of Slovenia), and in many

**Table 1.** *The Main Cleavages of Transformation.*

The Cleavages of Transformation	The Key Controversial Questions	The Parties Formed Within the Cleavage
Conflict over the character of the regime	Character of the regime, pace, intensity, and direction of the social and political transformation	Communist parties Civic movements (forums) Anti-communist formations of dissident provenience
Socioeconomic cleavage	Question of profits and losses of the economic transformation	Liberal-conservative formations
	Dispute over the form and pace of the economic transformation	Social-democratized ex-communist parties
	Rudiment of the <i>cleavage</i> owners–working class (questions of the range of economic redistribution)	Re-established “historic” social-democratic or socialist formations
Nationalistic cleavage	Existence of ethnic minority or specific region	Parties/movements of national minorities
	Existence of another nation regarded as a traditional “enemy”	Regional formations
	Dispute over the character of the regime (inclusive civic society versus “ethnocracy”)	Nationalistic formations with the “nationwide mission”
Residual cleavages from the early stage of democratization in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century	Church versus state Town versus country	Christian-democratic and Christian-national parties Agrarian formations

*(continued)*

**Table 1.** *(continued)*

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The Cleavages of Transformation	The Key Controversial Questions	The Parties Formed Within the Cleavage
Residual cleavage communism versus anti-communism	Process of de-communization Attitude toward the communist past	Ex-communist parties Neo-communist parties Parties formed from the movements (forums)
Revitalized conflict over the character of the regime	Questions of respect to the liberal rights and values, rule of law state, fairness of political competition	Parties formed from the movements/forums (sometimes) Ex-communist, Christian-democratic, liberal, and other formations (their ideological and programme orientation and their origin have not the substantial role)
Embryonal post-materialistic cleavage	Material versus post-material values	Green parties Movements/forums (partly) Social-liberal formations

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post-Soviet republics during the entire 1990s. It was strong in Slovakia, as well.

The party systems in which the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation is the paramount cleavage have more features in common with the Western European party systems than those in which the nationalistic cleavage of transformation predominates. The party spectrum is in essence concentrated around the left-right

axis in the countries where the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation prevails. It can be expected that in such party systems, the ideological orientation of the individual parties—the components of the system—will be “more standard” in the sense of its proximity to the classic Western models. The existence of more complex organizational forms of political parties can be also expected in these systems. Consequently, these party systems are usually more consolidated and stable.

A more complicated path of development can be expected in the case of party systems with strong nationalistic cleavage of transformation. During this development, substantial changes in party configuration can emerge. Nationalistic rhetoric and politics cannot be pushed indefinitely while avoiding the “everyday” problems (above all the economic ones). There is also the influence of external factors such as the pressure of the international community (European Union [EU], North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], etc.). Moreover, countries with a strong nationalistic cleavage of transformation do not usually possess developed (mature) party systems. The dominant role of the nationalistic cleavage of transformation requires the existence of strong ethnic or national-oriented parties that may well exist in a substandard form, in most cases resting on the dominant role of a party leader (Mečiar in Slovakia, Milošević in Serbia, Tudjman in Croatia, etc.).

Radical nationalistic appeals and attacks on minorities negatively influenced the outcome of democratic consolidation. The consequence has been that a nationalistic cleavage of transformation tends to re-open the conflict over the character of the regime.

## **2. The cleavages in Czech politics after 1989**

The initial form of the Czech party system was a product of the competition between the broader Civic Forum (OF) movement and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC). The first confrontation took place in the regular election in June 1990. The initiatory cleavage of transformation—the basic argument over the character of the regime—between the communist party and

its opponents (mainly the Civic Forum) occupied the dominant role until the election. The 1990 voting was considered by the society a plebiscite on the Czech public's attitude toward communist rule.<sup>14</sup> The convincing and outright victory of the Civic Forum (over 50% of votes, the Communist party ended second and obtained nearly 14% of votes), however, was soon followed by a conflict over the character of the regime. The Civic Forum was going through an internal differentiation even before the election. This process finally resulted in its disintegration at the beginning of 1991. The main successor became the liberal-conservative Civic Democratic Party (ODS). The residual cleavage of communism–anti-communism was not of great importance in the Czech milieu in the 1990s, unlike in the cases of Poland or Hungary. The only exception was the informal agreement concerning the isolation (ostracism) of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), the direct successor of the KSC, which was applied by the other party actors.

The election demonstrated the marginal relevance of some of the other cleavages. The church–state cleavage was partly reflected in the existence of the Christian Democratic Union-Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL). Electoral support for the KDU-ČSL remained limited to a small group of faithful Catholics due to the high degree of secularization of Czech society. The faithful remained loyal in the next election as well. The other formations, however, expressed little interest in “cultivating” an anti-Catholic agenda (except for a general aversion to the restitution of church property confiscated by the state during the communist era). The church-state cleavage has thus remained a constant feature of Czech politics, but its significance has been very limited.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, after the 1990 election, the influence of a nationalistic cleavage emerged due to the success of a Moravian participant, i.e., a formation supporting the idea of Moravia as an independent region within the Czech Republic. This “wave” of Moravian consciousness started to weaken immediately during the early 1990s due to lack of support among the citizens of Moravia and internal conflicts within the Moravian political leadership, resulting in the marginalization of this cleavage.

In 1990 it was possible to observe the influence of a town vs. country cleavage; however this, too, was weak. In June 1990 the Alliance of Farmers and Villages (SZV) obtained about 4% of the vote, thus failing to enter parliament; it disintegrated after the election. Of greater importance was an emerging difference in behaviour on the part of rural and urban electorates in the process of lining up behind individual political parties. This was a trend that was manifested, albeit to a limited extent, in the following election. The cleavage materialism–post-materialism was nearly negligible. Like the Alliance of Farmers and Villages, the newly founded Green Party (SZ) obtained just over 4% of the vote, and remained without parliamentary representation. In the course of the 1990s, the role of the Green Party on the Czech political stage was only marginal. Environmental topics appeared in the programmes of most of the parliamentary parties, but did not play a significant role in determining party orientation before the end of the 1990s. This is a natural reflection of the attitude of the majority of voters at a time when the economic transformation focused mainly on the material interest, and marginalized post-material values. This situation was in fact typical not only of the Czech Republic, but of nearly all the countries of post-communist Europe. For determining the basic outlines of the cleavage structure, the formative period of 1991-1992 was extremely important. During that time, a clear strengthening of the importance of the socio-economic cleavage of transformation took place. The same period saw the gradual formation of the most important participants of both the Czech right and the left. Between the 1992 and 1996 elections, the dominance of this cleavage was confirmed.<sup>16</sup> The importance of the other cleavages, on the other hand, was decreasing, except for the state-church cleavage, which has already been mentioned. This development was especially supported by the fact that the ODS showed itself to be the major force on the Czech right as early as the 1992 election. In 1993 the “historical” social democrats, the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD), elected the charismatic Miloš Zeman as head of the party, and the electoral potential of this party on the left side of the political spectrum began to rise. The ČSSD based its self-definition

on criticism of the way transformation was being carried out by the government led by the ODS. The ČSSD was able to exploit the fact that the KSČM maintained its orthodox-communist character, thereby making the KSČM unacceptable for most voters, despite dissatisfaction with the course of economic transformation. Thus the ČSSD became the dominant party on the Czech left. During the early- and mid-1990s, the ODS and to a certain extent the ČSSD as well represented the catch-all party model in many respects,<sup>17</sup> and were consequently able to appeal to centrally-oriented voters; after that, the division into right and left reflecting the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation became the most important indicator of the position of individual parties. Therefore, it is possible to assert that for the analysis of Czech party competition, that was the point where it started to be acceptable to apply Sartori's one-dimensional simplification.<sup>18</sup>

The 1996 election confirmed the trends showing a simplification and increased transparency of the system of relevant political parties. While in 1992 there were eight electoral participants that made it into parliament, in 1996 there were only six—the ODS, the ČSSD, the KSČM, the KDU-ČSL, the minor liberal Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA), and the radical populist Association for the Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ).<sup>19</sup> In the 1996 election campaign, economic topics and the competition on a right-left basis clearly predominated. In the 1996 and 1998 elections, the significance of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation continued to increase.<sup>20</sup> All of the relevant political parties fully and clearly defined themselves along the right-left axis running along the cleavage. The socioeconomic cleavage was decisive not only because of party competition, but because it was seen to be a consistently more important factor in the identification and party preferences of the electorate.<sup>21</sup>

Surveys of voter preference and attitudes demonstrated that, at the same time in the framework of this cleavage, a new dimension had begun to manifest itself. It could be called “axiological” (proto)cleavage, dividing the supporters of more or less liberal persuasion on the one hand, and state-centred and authoritarian

political, cultural, and social attitudes on the other. The axiological orientation of voters was mostly compatible to the right-left dimension.<sup>22</sup> Due to its increasing importance in subsequent years, however, it was possible in hindsight to identify this axiological cleavage as an independent phenomenon. However, this did nothing to change the dominance of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation, since the axiological elements are primarily represented by its completion.

The complicated situation connected with the formation of a majority government after the early election in 1998 was solved by an agreement between the ČSSD and the ODS (The Agreement on the Formation of the Stable Political Environment in the Czech Republic—the so called ‘opposition agreement’). It set up rules for relations between the two political parties, and allowed the formation of a minority government of the ČSSD with the parliamentary support of the ODS. The “opposition agreement” significantly, but only temporarily, influenced the structure of party competition. The minor parties—the Union of Liberty (US) created by the secession from the ODS in 1997/1998, and the KDU-ČSL; and two other formations outside the parliament, the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) and the Democratic Union (DEU)—formed the so-called Four-Coalition (Čtyř koalice) in autumn 1998 (the US and the DEU merged into a single party, the Union of Liberty-Democratic Union—US-DEU, in 2001). The main *raison d’être* of the Four-Coalition lay in criticism of the opposition agreement. The opposition agreement was denounced by the Four-Coalition as a utilitarian cartel deal aimed at restraining the democratic institutions in the Czech Republic. The Four-Coalition rejected the proposed constitutional changes and modifications of the Act on Parliamentary Elections, which would have strengthened the majority elements of the voting system. Most of the proposed changes in the Czech political system put forth under the agreement failed in the end. The Four-Coalition, having lost its reason for existence, subsequently disintegrated. Despite this, the KDU-ČSL and the US-DEU stood together as an electoral coalition in 2002 election.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. The present party system and cleavages in the Czech Republic

The 2002 election demonstrated the stability of voters' support for the main participants in the Czech party system—the ODS and the ČSSD (see Table 2). The subsequently formed government, led by the left-centrist ČSSD and comprising as well the centrist KDU-ČSL and right-centrist US-DEU, failed to a certain extent to follow the logic of right-left governments alternating in power. It was more of a reflection of the difficulty of forming a majority government under Czech conditions than of the weakening of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation. The artificial character of this governmental alliance was demonstrated by the fact that US-DEU rapidly lost the majority of its voters, a part of its members left the party, and the party failed in the 2006 election. The prevailing dominance of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation is indicated in the main political themes adopted by the ČSSD in the government and the ODS in the opposition between 2002 and 2006 elections (taxation, pension reform, health care reform, etc.). Typically, one of the main promises of ODS during the 2006 election campaign was the flat income tax. The main campaign slogan of ČSSD was “Security and prosperity,” by which the party was trying to emphasise its image of a formation guaranteeing economic development without big (and socially painful) reforms. The position of the individual participants within the framework of the socioeconomic and the axiological cleavages is depicted in Figure 1.

The dominant position of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation has not been threatened even by new topics that have been influencing Czech politics since the end of the 1990s. These have to do with party attitudes towards European integration and the EU. These topics have shown a capacity to both unite and divide. The proclaimed pro-European attitude of the ČSSD, the KDU-ČSL, and the US-DEU served as an important motivating factor for the coalition government formed by these parties after elections in 2002. On the other hand, the attitude of the ODS is much more sceptical. However, European subjects can hardly be considered a real cleavage. This topic is not decisive for Czech voters, and attempts to ground part of a party's identity in a

**Figure 1.** *The orientation scheme of the parties and cleavages in the present Czech party system.*

		<i>socioeconomic cleavage</i>	
		the left	the right
liberal		SZ	US- DEU
<i>axiological cleavage</i>			ODS
authoritarian	KSČM	ČSSD	KDU-ČSL

proclaimed “Europeanism” manifested particularly by the US-DEU did not prove to be appealing to voters. Shortly before the 2002 election, the “resuscitation” of the Green Party (SZ) gave rise to the possibility of the activation of the marginal cleavage of materialism versus post-materialism. However, the electoral share of the SZ (2.4%) showed that supporters of post-materialistic values and environmentalists are not yet so numerous as to be able to influence to a greater extent the structure of cleavages and the political competition. Although SZ received 6.3% in the 2006 elections, this result cannot be interpreted as a demonstration of bigger improving post-materialistic values. The SZ had modified its profile before this election and incorporated some liberal economic goals. It therefore became appealing to new liberal voters (especially first voters and former voters of ODS).<sup>24</sup>

After seven months of complicated negotiations, a coalition of ODS, KDU-ČSL, and SZ was introduced, which has a total of 100 mandates in the 200-member parliament. Opposition parties (ČSSD and KSČM) control ninety-eight mandates, because two members of ČSSD left the club and now act as independent. This shows that the logic of a right-left competition based on a socioeconomic cleavage is strongly reflected, even in the formation of government and opposition.

The willingness of ČSSD to cooperate with communists—already taking shape several months prior to the 2006 elections—has revived discussion about decommunization. ODS and KDU-ČSL had used opposition to KSČM as one of the issues in their election campaigns. After the elections, ODS, KDU-ČSL, and SZ refused to take part in any government that would depend on communist support. This shows that the residual cleavage between communism and anti-communism still has certain—though not very big—significance in the Czech conditions.

#### **4. Cleavages in the Slovak politics after 1989**

The Slovak democratic “starting point” was no different from those of the other Central and East European countries. As in the Czech lands, or neighbouring Poland or Hungary, the key cleavage during the first stage of democratic transition became the conflict over the character of the regime. Unlike the Czech situation, the June 1990 election in Slovakia did not boil down to a referendum between the Communist Party and the broad civic movement, Public Against Violence (VPN). Months before the election, the two main rivals had already emerged—the VPN and the conservative Catholic-oriented Christian Democratic Movement (KDH). It reflected the tendency towards a revitalization of a long-standing cleavage, that of church and state. The conditions for its emergence were more suitable in the Slovak context than in the Czech. Although secularization during the communist era significantly influenced the character of the society, the country’s relatively strong Christian (Catholic) character remained. Thus the initial conflict over the character of the regime had in fact been decided even before the first democratic election in 1990.<sup>25</sup> The VPN obtained about 30% of the vote to win the election; the KDH received only 19%. However, the electoral share of the VPN was significantly lower than that of the OF in the Czech lands. As a result, the VPN was forced into a coalition government with the KDH (as the other parliamentary parties were even less acceptable).

Likewise, the evolution of the VPN after the election differed from that of the OF. As with the case of the OF, the heterogeneity

**Table 2.** *Czech Parliamentary Election Results in 2002 and 2006.*

Party Standing in the Elections	2002		2006	
	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (%)	Seats
Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD)	30.2	70	32.3	74
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	24.5	58	35.4	81
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM)	18.5	41	12.8	26
Coalition Christian and Democratic Union—Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL) and Union of Liberty-Democratic Union (US-DEU)	14.3	31	—	—
Christian and Democratic Union—Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL)	—	—	7.2	13
Union of Liberty-Democratic Union (US-DEU)	—	—	0.3	—
Green Party (SZ)	2.4	—	6.3	6

SOURCE: The Czech Statistical Office: The Election to the Assembly of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in 2002 and 2006, <http://www.volby.cz>.

of the movement manifested itself very quickly. Its prime minister, the charismatic Vladimír Mečiar, left the movement in 1991, along with part of the party elite, to found the Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which won the election in 1992 (with 37% of the vote). It was the best result for any political formation after 1989. But the character of the HZDS differed significantly from that of the Czech ODS. It was not a liberal-conservative formation, but a broad centrist party with a number of widely-differing currents (nationalistic, social-democratic, Christian, etc.).

The situation in Slovakia differed from the Czech situation in another aspect. During the course of 1990 and 1991, the Communist Party changed its programme and officially declared

its discontinuity with the former Communist Party. The new course of social democratization was reflected in its new title, the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL'). Political developments after the 1992 election enabled the SDL' to break out of its political isolation. Parties that featured de-communization in their programmes and rhetoric were forced to cooperate for pragmatic reasons with the ex-communists on the governmental level (see below). Thus the residual cleavage of communism versus anti-communism asserted itself very slightly in Slovakia.

The key reason this was so closely connected was the rise of the HZDS. The HZDS succeeded in building its electoral capacity on the conjunction of a number of cleavages. The most important cleavage for the HZDS was the cleavage of centre-periphery in the context of Czechoslovakia up until 1992. The relevance of the cleavage was magnified by the explosive dispute over the future shape of Czechoslovakia. The Slovak National Party (SNS) called for Slovak independence, while the KDH advocated more of a confederative model; these two parties initially worked together on the same side of this cleavage. The KDH was forced to manoeuvre and hedge its anti-federal line with respect to its governmental role.<sup>26</sup> It was apparently very advantageous for the HZDS to combine nationalistic rhetoric with its claim to having been the main defender of the interests of the Slovak "periphery" during its opposition role before the 1992 election. It supplemented this role by protesting the cruel social effects of rapid economic transformation initiated from the "Prague" federal (state) centre.<sup>27</sup> The HZDS offered a *špecifickú* ("specific") Slovak way of economic transformation that would implement economic reform more slowly and minimize the social impact. The HZDS simultaneously managed to take advantage of the embryonic socioeconomic cleavage of transformation. The main protagonist acting against the social impacts of transformation was not the left, but the broadly centrist HZDS, which succeeded in linking itself in the public mind with the defence of the interests of the periphery. The SDL' was only a secondary beneficiary of the resistance to economic transformation (nearly 15% in the 1992 election), while the historical social

democrats remained for all practical purposes a marginal party. However, the HZDS had begun to behave in a manner that challenged the democratic rules of game. In the following years, this very fact would become the core of the party competition in Slovak politics. It resulted in a situation in which the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation arose to a much lesser degree in Slovakia than in the Czech Republic.

The HZDS also managed to take advantage of the nationalistic cleavage of transformation. The dispute between the Czech (Prague) centre and the Slovak periphery ceased to exist after the split of Czechoslovakia. However, even earlier it had become possible to identify the nationalistic cleavage of transformation with the cleavage centre-periphery cleavage as its sub-variant.<sup>28</sup> In an independent Slovakia, after 1992, it was linked to the ethnic divide between the Slovak majority and the Hungarian minority (approximately 10% of the population). Anti-Hungarian rhetoric was used not only by the HZDS, but to a greater or lesser degree by other Slovak political formations. The Hungarian political parties were therefore nearly isolated within the party system.<sup>29</sup> The nationalistic cleavage of transformation played a major role on the Slovak political stage during the whole of the 1990s. It was gradually overshadowed by another cleavage—the renewed conflict over the character of the regime. One of the by-products of this revisited dispute was a greater willingness of a part of the Slovak parties to cooperate with the Hungarian political elites, even on the governmental level. The nationalistic cleavage thus began to lose its importance.

## **5. The revitalized conflict over the character of the regime—Mečiarism versus anti-Mečiarism**

The conflict between liberal democracy and the non-liberal approach to the political regime dominated the Slovak political stage during the 1990s. It was closely linked to the political style and methods of governing of HZDS chairman Vladimír Mečiar.<sup>30</sup> The originally journalistic expression of “Mečiarism versus anti-Mečiarism” that describes the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime quickly became a common item in Slovak political science terminology.

Taking into account the intensity of the cleavage, it is possible to differentiate between three following stages. The first, *crystallization* stage, began during the period of the VPN's disintegration at the beginning of 1991, and its final point can be situated at the beginning of 1994. By this time, Mečiar's newly-established HZDS had succeeded in building a huge electoral base and taking power after the 1992 election. However, a number of dissatisfied deputies who refused to accept premier Mečiar's ruling methods left the ranks of the HZDS' coalition partner, the SNS. The Mečiar's government, therefore, lost its majority in the parliament, and as a result, the parliament passed a vote of censure in March 1994. This was the starting point of a second stage that could be called *escalation*. The new anti-Mečiarist governmental coalition headed by Prime Minister Jozef Moravčík was very heterogeneous. Its two main components were the anti-communist, right-centrist KDH, and the ex-communist SDL. What cemented the coalition together was a common rejection of Vladimír Mečiar's methods. Mečiar, however, took advantage of being in the opposition, and successfully mobilized the voters. This resulted in another victory by the HZDS in the irregular election in autumn 1994 (35% of the vote). During the post-electoral negotiation, it was found that none of the parties represented in the Moravčík government was willing to cooperate with Mečiar's HZDS. Mečiar solved this problem by creating an exceptionally heterogeneous government. It was comprised—besides the HZDS—of the nationalistic SNS and the radically leftist Alliance of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). This heterogeneity was the manifestation of the trend in the structure of party competition based on a revitalized conflict over the character of the regime. Both the SNS and the ZRS were ready to adopt and implement a series of controversial steps typical of the government coalition of Vladimír Mečiar. One "famous" example was the unconstitutional deprivation of Deputy František Gaulieder of his mandate. That deputy left the HZDS with words to the effect of, you may keep your mandate. However, a parliamentary majority declared on the basis of a falsified letter to chair of parliament that the deputy had "resigned his mandate."<sup>31</sup> The Slovak Constitutional Court ruled that was an

unconstitutional procedure, but the parliamentary majority of HZDS, SNS, and ZRS blocked any revision. Also controversial were the attacks against President Michal Kováč. Kováč was in conflict with the Prime Minister, and had spoken against him in parliament, contributing to the vote of censure in March 1994. After the 1994 election, Mečiar pressed Kováč to abdicate. Mečiar's methods were rude; for example, the Slovak Secret Service kidnapping the president's son.<sup>32</sup>

The acute situation forced the anti-Mečiar parties into a broad alliance, despite the differences in the parties' profiles. The Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) was established in summer 1997, consisting of the right-centrist KDH, the liberal Democratic Union (DU), the liberal-conservative Democratic Party (DS), and two small left-wing formations, the historical Social Democrats, and the Green Party in Slovakia (SZS).

The influence of the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime projected itself onto the new governmental coalition after the 1998 election. Although the HZDS again won a plurality (27%), it was not able to find—except for the SNS—any coalition partner willing to cooperate (the ZRS did not make it into parliament). Therefore the HZDS was unable to gain a parliamentary majority. The new government was formed by the opposing parties—the SDK, the left-wing SDL, the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK) composed of three Hungarian parties, and the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), established shortly before the election. The new government was as heterogeneous as Moravčík's government of 1994. The fear of the HZDS coming back to power became the main 'binding agent,' and the main unifying goals were the removal of the non-liberal consequences of the previous era, the consolidation of the democratic regime, and the Slovak accession to the EU and NATO. Despite many conflicts, the anti-Mečiarist parties always managed to find some kind of *modus vivendi* that enabled the government of Mikuláš Dzurinda to survive until the 2002 election.<sup>33</sup>

The third stage of the development of the Mečiarism–anti-Mečiarism cleavage has been taking shape since 2000. It could be called the stage of *erosion*. One of the first signals was the electoral success of a new political formation called Direction (Smer).

Smer was established at the end of 1999 by the former first vice-chairman of the SDL, Robert Fico. According to the opinion polls, Smer has won over a great part of the electorate of the SDL and the SOP, and to a smaller degree of the SDK and the HZDS.<sup>34</sup> The new party rejected the existing division within the cleavage Mečiarism–anti-Mečiarism, and based its success on criticizing the steps made by Dzurinda’s government, especially in the socioeconomic sphere. A similar attitude to this cleavage is expressed by another new political party, the liberal New Citizen Alliance (ANO). ANO was established by media tycoon Pavol Rusko in spring 2001. An important factor was a change of strategy by the HZDS. Instead of hostile tactics that originally attempted to damage the governmental coalition at all costs, it began presenting itself as the part of political change, and partially dissociated itself from the past. This was meant to help the HZDS break out of its international isolation and increase its coalition potential. It started calling itself a *ľudová strana* (“people party”) that aspires to enter the European People Party. It dissociated itself from its ally—the nationalistic SNS—at the same time.<sup>35</sup>

In the 1990s, public opinion surveys showed that Slovak society was divided, as was the Slovak political elite, into different ideological and value-oriented currents. Those who supported the parties of the Mečiar coalition demonstrated political intolerance through an above-average authoritarian personality; they were more in favor of tolerating abuse of the law by politicians, they were unwilling to acknowledge minority rights, and they regarded the policies of the KSC before November 1989 as mainly positive. These people were not willing to participate in political and civic activities. The average supporter of Mečiar’s coalition parties was a less-educated person living in a rural or small town environment. On the other side, voters for the anti-Mečiar parties were more tolerant of minorities, more open-minded, more liberally-oriented, and less authoritarian; they were better educated, and the main part of them lived in bigger cities.<sup>36</sup> The cleavage of Mečiarism vs. anti-Mečiarism was thus apparent not only in the political parties, but also in the segmentation of the population.

## 6. The present state of cleavages in Slovakia and the prospects for future development

Despite its clear erosion, the cleavage Mečiarism–anti-Mečiarism still had certain significance at the time of the 2002 elections (for election results see Table 3). Although the HZDS again won the election, it was still regarded as an unacceptable partner, and was forced to remain in the opposition. Fear of the consequences for foreign policy if the HZDS were accepted into the governmental coalition played the significant role.

The result of the post-election negotiations was the formation of the second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda. It was a coalition between the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) that Prime Minister Dzurinda established out of the ruins of the SDK, the SMK, the KDH, and the ANO. The new government differed from the former in its more homogeneous right-centrist character. Smer—in spite of great expectations—obtained fewer votes than predicted and found itself in the opposition. The SDL, the SOP, and the historical Social Democrats did not make it into the parliament, nor did the SNS, which split in 2001. The surprise of the election was the orthodox Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), which succeeded in getting into parliament. The KSS was restored in 1992, but remained marginal until 2002. Its electoral success was based on the socioeconomic troubles that afflicted the eastern parts of Slovakia. The cleavage Mečiarism–anti-Mečiarism was not important for the conduct of the KSS, nor for Smer or for ANO. The change in the socioeconomic atmosphere was also shown by the electoral agenda of some of the traditional parties. They paid only indirect attention to issues connected with the conflict over the character of the political regime. For example, the KDH strongly accented the demand for the flat income tax, better social security, and support of the traditional family model.

The 2002 election signalled the increasing importance of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation. This was reflected in the character of the new (second) Dzurinda's government after the 2002 election. The background of its members (SDKÚ, SMK, KDH, ANO) was *relatively* similar from the point of view of their position along the right-left axis. The agenda of the new government

confirmed this. It stressed radical reform in the social and economic spheres (tax reform, social welfare, pension reform, health care reform, etc.). This brought reaction by the opposition. Smer found itself in the position of being the main critic of the reforms. Most important was the fact that Smer simultaneously redefined its own identity. It clearly manifested its social-democratic orientation (though the signs were noticeable even before the election) instead of the previous vague position on the right-left scale and unclear political character. This tendency was confirmed by its affiliation with the left standing outside the parliament—the SDL,<sup>7</sup> historical Social Democrats, and other small formations. The new identity was symbolized after the affiliation by the change of the title—Smer-Social Democracy at the end of 2004.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, it signified the movement of the Slovak political context towards the logic of right-left competition.

The disappearing importance of the cleavage Mečiarism–anti-Mečiarism was best illustrated in the situation that came about after Dzurinda’s governmental coalition lost its parliamentary majority in autumn 2003. The HZDS expressed an obliging attitude to the government and did not attempt to pass a vote of censure in the parliament (unlike Smer, which made such efforts). The HZDS deputies voted identically with the governmental deputies several times.<sup>38</sup> In exchange, the HZDS was treated more kindly by the SDKÚ. Prime Minister Dzurinda repeatedly expressed appreciation for the tolerance of the HZDS, and admitted the possibility of a future coalition after the 2006 election.<sup>39</sup> It is, however, necessary to note that the other governmental parties—the KDH and the SMK—were more reserved about potential cooperation with the HZDS. The decline of its electoral support was the price the HZDS had to pay for getting out of political isolation and possibly increasing its coalition potential. According to public opinion polls, it reached its historical minimum of between 10% and 15% of voter preference in 2005.<sup>40</sup>

HZDS then got only 8.8% votes in the 2006 elections. This dramatic decline in the number of votes for HZDS can be explained not only by its unclear hedging between government and opposition, but also by its inability to adapt to the changing form of political competition and to find a new political agenda appealing to

voters. The issues connected with Mečiar's era of a hybrid regime in the 1990s played only a marginal role in the electoral campaign. The main motivation of voters of HZDS behind voting for this party was the personage of the leader, Vladimír Mečiar. This is a threat to political survival of HZDS, should Mečiar leave the party.

Besides the increase in the socioeconomic cleavage between the 2002 and 2006 elections, there was also an increase in the significance of the state-church cleavage. The quickly escalating conflict in the governmental coalition between the conservative-Catholic KDĽ and the liberal ANO flamed up soon after the 2002 election. At issue was the question of abortion. The proposal for new liberal legal regulation of abortion, submitted by ANO and supported by Smer and the KSS, brought about an exceptionally hard protest of the KDĽ. The other issues that affected relations between the KDĽ and the ANO were the disputes over registered partnership or divorce law. These were the classic issues typical of this cleavage. The issues connected with the state-church cleavage had been the reason for the break-up of the government coalition in February 2006. The impulse, however, hadn't come from ANO,<sup>41</sup> but from SDKÚ. SDKÚ refused to support the effort of KDĽ to pass the law on conscientious objection.<sup>42</sup> KDĽ then announced it was quitting the government coalition. This situation had led to fast agreement across the political spectrum on the necessity to call for an early parliamentary election in June 2006.

The positions of the individual participants within the framework of the socioeconomic and state-church cleavage are depicted in the Figure 2.

The existing orientation of the political competition was confirmed by the electoral campaign. While Smer presented itself as a clear opponent of the reforms by Dzurinda's government, SDKÚ was the main advocate of the reforms. Thanks to this, both parties attracted significantly more voters compared to the 2002 elections (see Table 3). Smer managed to expand its group of voters by, among others, a part of the voters of HZDS and also KSS, which didn't make it into the parliament. SDKÚ, on the other hand, managed to appeal not only to its voters from 2002, but also to first voters.<sup>43</sup> The KDĽ, which stuck to its Christian-conservative agenda in the elections, got basically the same

**Figure 2.** *The orientation scheme of the parties and the two most significant cleavages in the Slovak party system in 2006.*

		socioeconomic cleavage	
		the left	the right
religious <i>cleavage</i> state-church	religious		KDH
	secular	SNS, HZDS	SMK
	secular		SDKÚ
secular	KSS	Smer	ANO

result as in the 2002 elections. Similarly, basically the same result as in the previous elections was achieved by SMK, which had relied on traditional mobilization of its Hungarian voters.

The reunited SNS also returned to the parliament after the 2006 elections with a very good result. SNS used its traditional anti-Hungarian agenda (its electoral campaign included a demand for outlawing SMK). Its success was significantly based on winning a part of the former nationally-oriented voters of HZDS. The relaxation of the nationalistic appeal of Mečiar's party wasn't acceptable for such voters, and SNS represented a suitable substitute in this respect.<sup>44</sup> The nationalistic cleavage thus confirmed its stability in the party competition. However, compared to the first half of the 1990s, its significance is much smaller. But it is not excluded that it could surpass the state-church cleavage in the future, becoming the second most significant cleavage (after the socioeconomic cleavage).

As for the potential government alternatives, the winner of the 2006 elections, Smer, decided to form a coalition with SNS and HZDS. The main motivation was the willingness of both these

**Table 3.** *The Slovak Parliamentary Election Results 2002 and 2006.*

Party Standing in the Election	2002		2006	
	Votes (%)	Seats	Votes (%)	Seats
Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	19.5	36	8.8	15
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ)	15.1	28	18.4	31
Direction (Smer)	13.5	25	29.1	50
Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	11.2	20	11.7	20
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	8.3	15	8.3	14
Alliance of a New Citizen (ANO)	8.0	15	1.4	—
Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS)	6.3	11	3.9	—
Slovak National Party (SNS) <sup>a</sup>	3.3	—	11.7	20

NOTE: a. In the 2002 elections, SNS competed with the Real Slovak National Party (PSNS), which had seceded from SNS shortly before the elections. The PSNS won 3.7% of the votes. Both parties reunited after the elections.

SOURCE: The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, <http://www.statistics.sk>.

smaller parties to let Smer be dominant in the government coalition (including all important ministries and the possibility to outline the main features of the government programme according to Fico's conceptions). Economic issues were not crucial for the profiles of SNS and HZDS—with regard to the primarily nationalistic anti-Hungarian orientation of SNS and the fixation of HZDS on Mečiar—and they gave Smer ample scope in this regard for putting its ideas into effect. On the other hand, the parties participating in the previous Dzurinda's government didn't show much willingness to "bury" the reforms they had implemented. SMK was probably the most accommodating of those parties to Fico with regard to potential government cooperation, its motivation being the effort to prevent SNS from getting into

the government. The SMK, however, insisted that it would only participate in the government with Smer if the government also included KDH or SDKÚ to effectively “inhibit” Fico’s conceptions. The dominance of socioeconomic issues in Slovak politics certainly influenced the form of party competition, even in forming the new Fico’s government.<sup>45</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

Comparison of the Czech and Slovak cases shows what different paths the development of the party systems and cleavages in Central Europe after the break of the communist regimes can take. Czech conditions demonstrate a relatively smooth emergence of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation and its dominance, supplemented with axiological components (see Table 4). The other cleavages are now marginal or nearly marginal. The possibility that other cleavages will become more important in the future cannot, of course, be ruled out. However, it is not probable that it would overshadow the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation.

The Slovak case, which is from many standpoints more interesting, vividly demonstrates two problems that the post-communist party systems can face:

- The problem of personalization of politics connected with the existence of strong populist and charismatic leaders,
- The problem of the concurrence of the democratic transition and the final phase of formation of the modern nation/national state.

This resulted in the temporary dominance of the revitalized conflict over the character of the regime, reinforced by nationalistic cleavage of transformation. As the above-mentioned problems have been at least partially solved (and the Slovak accession to the EU on the 1st May 2004 could be the symbolic turning point), the greater convergence of the cleavages structure has started to take effect in the Czech lands as well as in Slovakia. There is only a small chance that the Slovak conflict over the character of the regime

**Table 4.** *Evolution of the Main Cleavages of Transformation in Czech Republic and Slovakia after 1989 (simplified view).*

Timing/ Cleavages	Czech Republic	Timing/ Cleavages	Slovakia
1989/1990	initial: conflict over the character of the regime; significant: socioeconomic, church vs. state, nationalistic (↓); weak: town vs. country, materialism vs. post-materialism.	1989/1990	initial: conflict over the character of regime; significant: socioeconomic, church vs. state, centre vs. periphery (↑).
1992	significant: socioeconomic cleavage (↑); weak: church vs. state, communism vs. anti-communism (↓).	1992	significant: revitalized conflict over the character of the regime (Mečiarism vs. Anti-Mečiarism) (↑) and centre vs. periphery with change to nationalistic cleavage; weak: church vs. state, socioeconomic, communism vs. anti-communism

*(continued)*

**Table 4.** *(continued)*

Timing/ Cleavages	Czech Republic	Timing/ Cleavages	Slovakia
		1998	significant: revitalized conflict over the character of the regime (Mečiarism vs. anti- Mečiarism) (↓); weak: nationalistic cleavage, church vs. state (↑), socioeconomic (↑) communism vs. anti- communism.
2002	significant: socioeconomic; weak: church vs. state, materialism vs. post- materialism, communism vs. anti- communism.	2002	significant: socioeconomic; weak: church vs. state (↑), nationalistic cleavage, revitalized conflict over the character of the regime (Mečiarism vs. Anti- Mečiarism) (↓).
2006		2006	

NOTE: Arrows indicate tendency of evolutions specific cleavage.

will recur. The remnants of this conflict will continue, however, to be present in the Slovak politics. This is related to the emotion that the chairman of the HZDS Vladimír Mečiar still provokes. The importance of the nationalistic cleavage of transformation has been significantly weakening since the end of the 1990s, though its termination cannot be proven and it will certainly still maintain some significance in Slovak politics in future. On the other hand, the relevance of the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation is now becoming more intense. It has continued even after the interruption that was caused by the growth of the phenomenon of “Mečiarism” at the beginning of the 1990s. Similarly the church-state cleavage that was present at the start of the transition is now returning to the Slovak political stage.

Comparison of the Czech and Slovak cases confirms the proposition concerning the relation of different cleavages of transformation to the process of consolidation of the party system. The main features of the Czech party system began to consolidate in the mid-1990s. The Slovak case was more complex. Through the 1990s and up until the beginning of this decade, neither (1) the patterns of functioning of the party system nor (2) the parties themselves showed any tendency towards stabilisation and consolidation. The Slovak case was thus in many ways similar to the cases of Croatia or Serbia, with consolidation of the party system prevented by strong nationalistic cleavages of transformation. Once the socioeconomic cleavage of transformation started to prevail, Slovak parties started taking clearer positions, and general patterns of party cooperation and concurrence began to stabilize.

The long-term dominance of the socioeconomic cleavage and its shift towards similarity with the changing owners-versus-workers class cleavage in contemporary western European societies opens a new comparative perspective that may not strictly correspond to the boundary previously defined by the Iron Curtain.

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List of abbreviations of political parties:

**Czech Republic**

ČSSD—Czech Social Democratic Party (česká strana sociálně demokratická)

DEU—Democratic Union (Demokratická unie)  
KDU-ČSL—Christian and Democratic Union—Czechoslovak People's Party (Křesťanská a demokratická unie-Československá strana lidová)  
KSČM—Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy)  
KSČ—Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa)  
ODA—Civic Democratic Alliance (Občanská demokratická alliance)  
ODS—Civic Democratic Party (Občanská demokratická strana)  
OF—Civic Forum (Občanské fórum)  
SPR-RSČ—Association for the Republic—Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku-Republikánská strana Československa)  
SZ—Green Party (Strana zelených)  
SZV—Alliance of Farmers and Villagers (Spojenectví zemědělců a venkova)  
US—Union of Liberty (Unie svobody)  
US-DEU—Union of Liberty-Democratic Union (Unie svobody-Demokratická unie)

### **Slovakia**

ANO—New Citizen Alliance (Aliancia nového občana)  
DS—Democratic Party (Demokratická strana)  
DU—Democratic Union (Demokratická únia)  
HZDS—Movement for the Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko)  
KDH—Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie)  
KSS—Communist Party of Slovakia (Komunistická strana Slovenska)  
SDK—Slovak Democratic Coalition (Slovenská demokratická koalícia)  
SDKÚ—Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia)  
SDL'—Party of the Democratic Left (Strana demokratickej ľ'avice)  
SMK—Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalície)

- SNS—Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana)  
 SOP—Party of Civic Understanding (Strana občianskeho porozumenia)  
 SZS—Green Party in Slovakia (Strana zelených na Slovensku)  
 VPN—Public Against Violence (Verejnost' proti násiliu)

## Notes

1. An earlier draft of this article was presented at the European Consortium for Political Research Conference in September 2005 in Budapest, Hungary. This article has been elaborated within the framework of the Research Intention entitled Political Parties and the Representation of Interests in Current European Democracies (code MSM0021622407).
2. For the volatility phenomenon cf. Gábor Tóka, "Party Appeals and Voter Loyalty in New Democracies," *Political Studies* 46: 3 (1998): 589-611; for negative voting cf. Richard Rose and William Mishler, "Negative and Positive Party Identification in Post-Communist Countries," *Electoral Studies* 17: 2 (1998): 217-34; for unclear meaning of Left and Right cf. Radoslaw Markowski, "Political Parties and Ideological Spaces in East Central Europe," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30: 3 (1997): 221-54.
3. Michael Roskin, "The Emerging Party Systems of Central and Eastern Europe," *East European Quarterly* 27: 1 (1993): 50-62; Laurentiu Stefan-Scalat, *Pacts and Conflicts in Post-Communist Transformations. In a Search of a New Social Contract* (Wien: Institut für Wissenschaften vom Menschen, IWM Working Paper, 7/2000).
4. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," In Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspective*. (New York-London: The Free Press and Collier-MacMillan Limited, 1967), 1-64.
5. Klaus von Beyme, *Systemwechsel in Osteuropa* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994); Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, "Social and Ideological Cleavage Formation in Post-Communist Hungary," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47: 7 (1995): 1178-204.
6. Herbert Kitschelt, "The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe," *Politics & Society* 20: 1 (1992): 7-51; Jack Bielasiak, "Substance and Process in the Development of Party Systems in East Central Europe," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30: 1 (1997): 23-44; Andrzej Antoszewski and Ryszard Herbut, *Demokracje Europy środkowo-wschodniej w perspektywie porównawczej* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998), 131-40; Nick Sitter, "Beyond Class vs. Nation? Cleavage Structure and Party Competition in Central Europe," *Central European Political Science Review* 2: 3 (2001): 67-91; Paul G. Lewis, *Political Parties in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (London-New York: Routledge, 2001), 140-48.
7. Cf. Attila Ágh, *The Politics of Central Europe* (London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi: SAGE, 1998), 55-62.
8. Cf. Andrea Römmele, "Cleavage Structures and Party Systems in East and Central Europe," In Kay Lawson, Andrea Römmele, and Georgi Karasimeonov, eds., *Cleavages, Parties, and Voters: Studies from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 1-18; Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski, and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems. Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
9. Regarding the often "social-democratized" identity of the former communist parties, this is a cleavage with more of a "post-communist" or "ex-communist" basis than with a "communist" one. However, this terminology seems to be apt due to the way it has been utilized by its opponents.
10. Cf. Larry Diamond, "Thinking about Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13: 2 (2002), 21-36.

11. Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 244-67.
12. Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies. Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 249.
13. Vít Hloušek, Konfliktní linie v postkomunistických systémech politických stran," *Politologický časopis* 7: 4 (2000): 379.
14. Petr Fiala and Miroslav Mareš, "Konstituování systému politických stran v České republice (1989-1992)," *Politologický časopis* 4: 1 (1997): 107. Jiří Kunc, *Stranické systémy v re/konstrukci* (Praha: Slon 2000), 182-209.
15. Petr Fiala, *Katolicismus a politika* (Brno, Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury 1995), 236-38.
16. Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radosław Markowski, and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems. Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 226-31, 244-60. The economic preferences and attitudes of the individual parties were fundamental for forming the governmental coalition. This becomes apparent in the light of comparison with the other Central and East European countries under transformation, in which some non-economic issues influenced the coalition preferences of the political elites to a greater extent at that time.
17. Petr Fiala, Miroslav Mareš, and Pavel Pšeja, "Vývoj politických stran a jejich systému po listopadu 1989," In Jiří Večerník, ed., *Zpráva o vývoji české společnosti 1989-1998* (Praha: Academia, 1998), 284.
18. Cf. Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 334-42.
19. The SPR-RSČ failed in the next 1998 parliamentary election and later died out. The ODA underwent an internal crisis before the 1998 election, lost most of its voters, and did not stand in the 1998 election. It attempted to revitalize its political potential within the Four-coalition project (see text).
20. Miroslav Novák, "Utváření stranického systému v českých zemích," *Politologický časopis* 6: 2 (1999): 136-38; Maxmilián Strmiska, "Utváření českého multipartismu: příběh na pokračování," *Politologický časopis* 6: 2 (1999): 162-69.
21. The analysis of 2000 shows that the voters of the KSČM declared themselves to be the furthest left on the left-right scale, followed by voters of the KDU-ČSL, the ČSSD, the US, and the ODS. The ČSSD voters, in particular, moved towards the centre; on the other hand, the electorate of the KDU-ČSL moved relatively markedly to the left. Also, the US moved from the clear right in 1998 to the political centre. The position of the KSČM, the US, and the ODS voters corresponds to the declared political option represented by 'their' parties. The positions of ČSSD and the KDU-ČSL voters differ slightly from the positions of their parties; see Klára Vlachová, "Levice-pravice v České republice v letech 1996-2000," In Zdenka Mansfeldová and Milan Tuček, eds., *Současná česká společnost* (Praha: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd české republiky, 2002), 265-66; cf. Klára Vlachová, "Party Identification in the Czech Republic: Inter-Party Hostility and Party Preference," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34: 4 (2001): 479-99.
22. Klára Vlachová, "Názorová krystalizace a levicové posuny," In Jiří Večerník, ed., *Zpráva o vývoji české společnosti 1989-1998* (Praha, Academia 1998), 263; Cf. Daniel Kunštát, "Strany a voliči v zrcadle předvolebních výzkumů Čtyřkoalice veřejného mínění," In Lukáš Linek, Ladislav Mrklas, Adéla Seidlová, and Petr Sokol, eds., *Volby do poslanecké sněmovny 2002* (Praha: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2003), 116.
23. Petr Kolář, "Vzestup a Čtyřkoalice," In Lukáš Linek, Ladislav Mrklas, Adéla Seidlová, and Petr Sokol, eds., *Volby do poslanecké sněmovny 2002* (Praha, Sociologický ústav AV ČR 2003), 207-19.
24. Roman Chytilík and Otto Eibl, "Jak ODS bojovala o putujícího voliče," *Revue Politika* 4: 6 (2006): 4-5.
25. Soňa Szomolányi, *Kľukatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii* (Bratislava: Stimul, 1999), 45-47.
26. Jan Rychlík, *Rozpad Československa. česko-slovenské vztahy 1989-1992* (Bratislava: Academic Electronic Press, 2002), 276.
27. Milan Tuček, Ján Bunčák, and Valentína Harmadyová, *Stratégie a aktéri sociálnej transformácie a modernizácie v českej a Slovenskej republike* (Brno: Doplněk, 1998), 43-52.

28. Marek Rybář, "Stranické rodiny a prípad Slovenska: Niekoľko teoretických poznámok," *Politologický časopis* 10: 3 (2003): 278-79.
29. Lubomír Kopeček, "Stranický systém Slovenska," In Petr Fiala and Ryszard Herbut, eds., *Stredoevropské systémy politických stran* (Brno: Mezinárodní politologický ústav Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, 2003), 211-13.
30. A relatively high degree of political pluralism continued to exist during the era when this cleavage was on the rise. In spite of the tendency to eliminate its opponents, restrictions were never so tough as to qualify the regime as authoritarian; cf. Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 159. Probably the most obvious evidence was the competitive character of the 1998 election. The regime was, however, far from what is commonly thought of as liberal democracy. Therefore it is legitimately classified as a *hybrid regime*; cf. S. Szomolányi, "Aký režim sa vynára na Slovensku," In Soňa Szomolányi, ed., *Slovensko: Problémy konsolidácie demokracie* (Bratislava: Slovenské združenie pre politické vedy, Nadácia Friedricha Eberta, 1997), 7-26; Peter Učeň, "Decade of Conflict Within Slovak Polity: Party Politics Perspective," In Vladimíra Dvořáková, ed., *Success or Failure? Ten Years After* (Praha: Česká společnost pro politické vedy, Slovenské združenie pre politické vedy, 1999), 111-33; Tim Haughton, "Facilitator and Impeder: The Institutional Framework of Slovak Politics during the Premiership of Vladimír Mečiar," *Slavonic and East European Review* 81: 2 (2003): 267-90.
31. Cf. Milan Galanda and Juraj Hrabko, *Poslanecký mandát na Slovensku* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 1998).
32. Ľuba Lesná, *Únos demokracie* (Bratislava: G plus G, 2001), 101-17.
33. Grigorij Mesežnikov, "Vnútropolitický vývoj a systém politických strán," In Miroslav Kollár and Grigorij Mesežnikov, eds., *Slovensko 2002. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2002), 19; Kevin Krause, "Slovakia's Second Transition," *Journal of Democracy* 14: 2 (2003), 65-79.
34. Vladimír Krivý and Grigorij Mesežnikov, "Politické strany a ich prívrženci," In Oľga Gyárfášová, Vladimír Krivý, and Marián Veľšic, eds., *Krajina v pohybe* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2001), 103.
35. Grigorij Mesežnikov, "Parlamentné voľby 2002 a vývoj systému politických strán," In Grigorij Mesežnikov, Oľga Gyárfášová, and Miroslav Kollár, eds., *Slovenské voľby '02* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2003), 44.
36. Vladimír Krivý, Viera Feglová, and Daniel Balko, *Slovensko a jeho regióny* (Bratislava: Média, 1996), 93-134; Marián Veľšic, *Zmena politického režimu na Slovensku v perspektíve verejnej mienky* (Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejné otázky, 2001), 104-5.
37. Juraj Marušiak, "Smer—from Pragmatism to Social Democracy," In Lubomír Kopeček, ed., *Trajectories of the Left* (Brno: Democracy and Culture Studies Centre, 2005), 165-78.
38. The governmental coalition moved their proposals forward not only with the help of the HZDS, but with the support from an increasing number of independent deputies.
39. "SDKÚ je otvorená každej spolupráci," Newspaper *Pravda*, 6 November 2004.
40. The Institute for the Public Opinion Polls of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (ÚVVM SR), <http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/slov/infor/uvvm/uvvm1205.htm>.
41. ANO leader Pavol Rusko suffered a big corruption scandal in summer 2005, and his party disintegrated. Most of the party deputies continued to support the Dzurinda government; a few (including Rusko) left for the opposition (ANO failed in the 2006 elections—see Table 3).
42. This was a legal provision that was supposed to be accepted by Slovakia based on the concordat with Vatican in 2000. The substance of the law was the right to refuse action contradicting the Christian principles. This was particularly significant in health care. It should, among other things, allow doctors to refuse performing certain things—such as performing abortions, prescribing contraceptives, sterilization, etc.
43. Oľga Gyárfášová, "Retrospektívny pohľad na volebné správanie," *Sme/Smena* 10 August 2006.
44. *Ibid.*
45. The form of Fico's government, however, provoked a reaction from the Party of European Socialists (PES) for which the participation of the nationalistic SNS in the government was unacceptable. The membership of Smer in PES was therefore suspended in autumn 2006.