

**Party Institutionalisation and Centre-Right  
Eurocepticism in East Central Europe: the Case of  
the Civic Democratic Party in the Czech Republic**

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## **Party Institutionalisation and Centre-Right Euroscepticism in East Central Europe: the Case of the Civic Democratic Party in the Czech Republic**

### **Abstract**

*The Czech Republic has East Central Europe's most prominent mainstream eurosceptic formation, Václav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party. This paper addresses euroscepticism in the Czech Republic, and in Central Europe more generally through a detailed case study of this party. It begins by surveying the nature of euroscepticism (and europhilia) in the emerging Czech party system in the decade since 1989. The paper then maps ODS's position on Europe both in the 1992-1997 period, when the party held government office and subsequently as the Czech Republic's main opposition party. It notes the radicalisation of the party's position in the late 1990s and argues that this should be understood not simply as a response to loss of office and the more immediate prospect of Czech EU accession, but also as part of a broader response to a 'structural' crisis, affecting the Czech and Central European right since 1989. This, it is argued, can in some cases lead centre right parties to respond to pressures of Europeanisation by taking a marked eurosceptic turn. In the case of ODS, the party's shift towards a greater reliance on the charismatic leadership of Klaus and on his personal agenda, it is argued, was the crucial causal mechanism enabling a radicalisation in the party's euroscepticism. The paper additionally notes the importance of the Kosovo crisis and the rise of new, younger political elites within ODS after 1998 as factors in this process, and the importance of a strongly eurosceptic ideology in reconciling diverse elements within the party.*

### **1. Introduction**

In the decade since the reemergence of democracy after the collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989, the issue of 'Europe' in Czech politics developed from a subsidiary theme to a central concern. Although, as in other party systems throughout Europe, euroscepticism was strongly represented on the far right and far left, as in a number of countries in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, it was also a significant characteristic of the centre-right. In the course of the 1990s the main force on the Czech centre right, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) of Václav Klaus, moved from a position of championing rapid, unconditional Czech integration with West European institutions in the early 1990s to one of marked, and increasingly hard line Euroscepticism, which seemed sometimes to question the very desirability of Czech accession to the EU. At first sight this development seems simply a continuation of the 'Thatcherite' neo-liberal eurosceptic positions prominently taken up by the party and its leader in the mid-1990s, albeit sharpened by the party's move from government to opposition in 1997 and the more concrete prospect of Czech EU membership following the launching of the formal accession process in March 1998. Closer investigation, however, suggests, a more complex picture.

This paper maps the development of euroscepticism within the Czech party system in the period 1990 – 2001 before moving on to analyse the evolving position of ODS and its leader both before and after 1997. It concludes by considering some of the possible factors explaining the strong

and increasingly radical euroscepticism of a party, whose profile diverges significantly from the, often relatively marginal, national-popular, traditionalist nationalist and/or radical leftist formations that typically embrace euroscepticism in both Western and Eastern Europe, either as 'a touchstone of dissent' (Taggart 1998) or as an articulation of the interests of cultural and economic 'losers' in post-communist transformation (Henderson 2001). In the case of ODS, it is argued, ideology seems to be the key determining factor, but the party's difficulties in institutionalising itself both organizationally and through establishing a coherent long-term ideology – difficulties characteristic of the centre right across Central Europe - appear a significant additional 'facilitating' factor explaining its recent move towards a more hard-line 'national' Euroscepticism.

## **2. The Issue of Europe in Czech Politics**

The issue of 'Europe' and European integration, while constantly present in Czech and Czechoslovak political discourse, were ideals widely shared across the political spectrum, understood mainly as an (re)affirmation of Czechs' and Slovaks' cultural and historical affinity and a benchmark for, and model of, of desirable democratic and market-based values and practices (Bugge 2000: 3-7, Vit 2000, Mareš 2000). This consensus was largely expressed through the *Civic Forum* movement formed in the Czech lands during the Velvet Revolution of November/December 1989 as a means of uniting political opposition to Czechoslovakia's crumbling communist regime, which won the first free, post-communist Czech and Czechoslovak elections in June 1990. Concrete measures such as the dissolution of Soviet bloc international institutions such as Comecon and the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Czechoslovakia and the development of a range of economic and political links with the European Community, culminating in December 1991 with the signature of a Association Agreements with Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, were uncontentious and widely supported.

The most significant exception to this consensus was arguably the position of the *Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia* (KSĚM), the Czech successor to the former ruling party, which argued for pan-European political and security structures, arguing that rapid integration with existing West European institutions would constitute a threat both to national traditions and national sovereignty and leave Czechoslovakia vulnerable to economic exploitation. As well as a pronounced anti-German emphasis, the party's pan-European position could also be viewed as a strategy for retaining some form of 'Eastern' orientation, retaining links with the (former) Soviet Union and preserving elements of its previous integration in the Soviet Bloc.

Table 1: Electoral Support of Selected Parties in Czech Parliamentary Elections 1992 – 1998

	1992*	1996	1998
<b>Euroseptic parties</b>			
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSĚM) - <i>neo-communist, leftist</i>	14.05**	10.33	11.03
Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSĚ) - <i>populist, far right</i>	5.98	8.01	3.90
Civic Democratic Party (ODS) - <i>liberal-conservative, centre-right</i>	29.73	29.62	27.74
<b>Europhile parties</b>			
Czech Social Democratic Party (ĚSSD)	6.53	26.44	32.32
Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ĚSL)***	6.28	8.08	9.00
Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA)*** - <i>liberal-conservative centre-right</i>	5.93	6.36	Did not contest
Freedom Union (US) *** - <i>liberal, centre-right</i>	-	-	8.62

Results do not include 1990 'founding election' won by the transitional Civic Forum movement.

\* Results for elections to the Czech National Council (Parliament of Czech component of the Czechoslovak Federation). Results for elections to Czechoslovak Federal Assembly were broadly similar.

\*\* Contested as part of Left Bloc Coalition

\*\*\* Member of Four Party Coalition (4K) 1998-2002. Fourth coalition member was non-parliamentary Democratic Union (DEU). 4K replaced by Two Party Coalition of Christian Democrats and Freedom Union in early 2002.

However, to the limited extent that the issue of 'Europe' became a matter of mainstream domestic political contestation, it did so as part of the emerging Czech right-wing critique of dissident-led 'civic' politics. The main party of the Czech centre right, the *Civic Democratic Party* (ODS), emerged from the Civic Forum movement in April 1991 as a loose alliance of neo-liberal economists, such as Federal Finance Minister Václav Klaus and anti-communist district activists. The divisions within Civic Forum that led to the party's foundation centred almost entirely on a series of domestic issues concerning post-communist transformation: economic reform, decommunisation, Czech-Slovak relations and reform of Czechoslovak federalism, and the future of the Civic Forum movement itself. To the right, the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia directed by the former dissident, Jiří Dienstbier, which had in 1990-91 shifted from a 'utopian' position of dissolving existing blocs, towards a pragmatic orientation towards co-operation with, and an eventual membership of, the European Community, represented a dangerous reworking of reform communist aspirations of the 1960s to find a Third Way between Soviet-style communism and Western liberal capitalism. As such it resurrected an outdated tradition of Czech national messianism dating to the 19th century.

To such supposedly left-wing, experimental and utopian ideas, the right countered its belief in 'tried and tested' and 'standard' Western institutions such as political parties, free markets and the existing West European institutional architecture. The 1992 ODS election programme put it "ideas that a country which has just escaped the Russian colonial yoke can enrich a tired democratic Europe with new and original initiatives and approaches" as well as "third ways; ways which do not mean a return to communism, but which do not mean a return to Europe either. The practice of seeking third ways in domestic or foreign policy is the biggest danger today for Czechoslovakia's nascent democracy" (ODS 1992: 7). The 1992 ODS programme, therefore, advocated "a pragmatic foreign policy, free of empty gestures, moralising and lecturing others" in which NATO membership and "the integration of Czechoslovakia into the European Community is our most important and immediate goal" (ODS 1992: 13-14). Although strongly Atlanticist in tone in supporting the "active participation of the US" (ODS 1992: 13) and in rejecting the notion of the Central European Visegrad states being a bridge between the West and the USSR via, for example, 'triangular trade' arrangements, neither ODS programmatic documents or the public statements of its leaders contain any substantial criticism of existing European institutions. Indeed, where it featured at all in the right's political discourse in Czech and Czechoslovak domestic politics in this period, the European issue was used to reject ideas of remaking or

questioning the institutional status quo as a dangerous third way.

The 1991-92 period saw ODS consolidate itself organisationally and electorally to emerge both as the predominant party of the Czech right and the dominant actor in Czech politics. In the 1992 Czech and Czechoslovak elections it attracted the bulk of the younger, more urban, better-educated, reformist electorate that had previously supported Civic Forum, polling 32% of the Czech vote. ODS thus became both by far the largest party in the Czech Republic and as the dominant partner in a majority centre right coalition which, after the negotiated dissolution of the Czechoslovak federation in the latter part of 1992, governed the independent Czech Republic until June 1996. The 1992 elections also saw the emergence of the far right *Association for the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia* (SPR-RSĚ), which combined a potent and aggressive, if incoherent, mix of social and economic populism, chauvinistic nationalism, anti-Romany racism and anti-communist conspiracy theories. Although notionally committed to reform and West European political values, the party was virulently hostile to established international and European institutions, such as the EC/EU and, in particular, NATO. However, these were largely conflated with the (supposed) threats posed to the Czech economy and national sovereignty by German and Sudeten German aspirations. However, given the party's failure to produce any substantive programmatic documentation during its six years as a parliamentary party and the incoherence of the published writings and speeches of its chairman, Miroslav Sládek, its position was difficult to identify with any precision.

The 1992-96 ODS-led government pursued a European policy radically different from that of its predecessor, stressing the Czech Republic's exceptionism as a political and economic front-runner suitable for rapid integration with the European Union and rejecting the Visegrad group as an artificial Western-inspired recreation of 'Eastern Europe' holding the advanced Czechs. This self-confident mood was reflected in an assertively eurosceptic discourse combining neo-liberal, nationalist and moralistic criticism of Western Europe (analysed in detail in section 3 of this paper), principally articulated by Václav Klaus, and in the Klaus government's delaying the Czech Republic's application to join the EU until 1996. In practice, this essentially unrealistic strategy meant "a certain standstill in Czech-EU relations" (Bugge 2000: 6) as the EU worked its way towards the formal opening of accession negotiations. In domestic politics too, the European issue receded in salience, remaining largely a symbolic point of reference for discussion of the general progress of post-communist transformation.<sup>1</sup> However, as political forces began to profile themselves more clearly in programmatic terms – partly in response to the dominance of the

centre-right and its effective control of the political agenda of post-communist transformation: - a number of alternative positions on European integration began to be developed by Czech parties.

The *Czech Social Democratic Party* (ĚSSD), which developed from being a minor political actor in the early 1990s, to being the dominant force on the Czech left and the main opposition party evolved an essentially europhile position. By the mid 1990s, the party had developed its early, unfocused rhetoric of supporting a 'united Europe' and promoting European integration through cooperation with sister parties in the Socialist International, with which it had longstanding contacts, into a policy of supporting the model of European integration outlined in the Maastricht Treaty and subsequent documents. ĚSSD explicitly endorsed the regional, structural and industrial policies of the EU, as well as political aspects of integration such as Common Foreign and Security Policy, which, it argued, would increase Czech influence in international affairs. Nevertheless, despite criticising the European policy of the right as narrowly nationalistic, isolationist and arrogant in its desire to lecture established democratic states, some of the more statist aspects of its social and economic policies – both in programmatic materials and in government after 1998 – conflicted with the requirements for accession. Moreover, as recently highlighted in recent controversial remarks by outgoing Social Democratic Prime Minister, Miloš Zeman, concerning the post-war expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia, traditional Czech nationalist discourses remain a part of the party's political makeup.<sup>2</sup> (Mareš 2000; Bugge 2000: 39-41)

A strongly europhile discourse in relation to Czech EU membership was also developed by President Havel from the mid 1990s, on the basis earlier ideas of a European confederation, which in turn, drew on earlier notions of pan-Europeanism in Czech political thought, such as the notion of a Europe of 'unity in diversity' advanced in the interwar period by Czechoslovakia's first President, Tomáš Masaryk. Havel has been broadly supportive of the existing institutional form

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<sup>1</sup> The 1996 ODS election campaign, for example, trumpeted the Czech Republic's admission to the OECD as evidence that it had joined the 'club of developed nations'.

<sup>2</sup> Defending the retention in Czech law of the 1945 Beneš Decrees giving legal sanction to the expulsions, Zeman told an Austrian magazine that the German minority had been a 'fifth column' for Hitler and later, on

and direction of the EU and of proposals for some form of political federalism, loosely along the lines advocated, for example, by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher (Libánský 2000; Bugge 2000: 10-23; Tucker 2000).<sup>3</sup> However, the main thrust of his arguments has concerned the need to ground emerging European political and economic institutions in a well-established European identity and set of European values, which might imbue the largely technocratic structures of the EU with a moral and spiritual dimension (Havel 2000a, 2000b). Nevertheless, despite Havel's prominence in both domestic and international politics as head of state, his lack of formal powers as President, particularly after the creation of the independent Czech Republic in 1993, and – until the foundation of the Four Party Coalition in 1998 (see below) – of close political allies in the Czech party system, limited the significance of his position.

The mid 1990s also saw the development of a more worked-out position on European integration by the Czech Communists (KSĚM). Despite adopting a hardline 'neo-communist' ideology in 1993, after briefly flirting with a more social-democratic stance, the party's approach to the EU, whilst strongly sceptical in tone, contains a number of significant ambiguities – ambiguities, which have become more marked in recent years (Mareš 2000, Bugge 2000). Whilst strongly rejecting the EU 'in its existing form' as a German-dominated neo-liberal project, the party stressed that it was in favour of European integration and, advocated both the safeguarding of the position of national states and the democratisation of European political institutions through, for example, strengthening of the role of the European Parliament. However, KSĚM has tended to duck the issue of whether it will endorse Czech entry to the EU, typically stressing that it should be a decision taken by the Czech people in a referendum (KSĚM 1998). More recent party materials, accept that Czech EU membership is 'inevitable' (KSĚM 1999) and, there are indications that the addition of a European level to Czech politics may be pragmatically welcomed by the party for the opportunities it may afford the party to break out of its current domestic political isolation.<sup>4</sup> To a considerable extent, the party's European position, like much of its ideology and policy appears to represent a balancing act by party elites between the conservative, rejectionist, anti-Western inclinations of its members and core voters and the political realities of a democratic, post-

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an official visit to Israel, appeared to suggest that Israel should use similar mass expulsions in relation to Palestinians.

<sup>3</sup> Havel has thus supported the notion of a two-chamber European Parliament and the enacting of a constitution of the EU.

<sup>4</sup> KSĚM has links with a number of orthodox communist parties in Western Europe, which it is likely to be able to work with in a future European Parliament. Additionally, for West European political actors, including EU bodies and institutions, the party's status as successor to the former ruling party is likely to prove less of an obstacle to dealing with it, than is the case for domestic political actors.

communist Central Europe undergoing integration with existing West European institutions. (Hanley 2001)

From the mid-late 1990s it became increasingly clear that, rather than creating a post-communist economic miracle, the economic strategy followed by the Klaus government had created an under-regulated, under-capitalised and relatively inefficient private sector dominated by politically well connected, rent-seeking groups. This malaise critically undermined the claims of Czech exceptionalism, that had underpinned much of the ODS programme, including its European policy. It also aggravated tensions within the governing coalition with the junior partners, the social-market oriented Christian Democrats (KDU-ĚSL) and the free market Civil Democratic Alliance (ODA), who made sharp, if opposing, criticisms of ODS social and economic management. Internal discontent with Klaus's leadership of ODS also grew. In 1996 pressure from Josef Zieleniec, the Czech Foreign Minister and a party co-founder Deputy Chair, led to the adoption by ODS of a long-term *Political Programme* of aims and values with a more 'social', conservative focus intended to counter the image of an arrogant, over-personalised leadership style and of a party standing only for technocratic economic liberalism. Such criticisms were magnified when in the June 1996 elections, after a complacent and lacklustre campaign by ODS, whose vote remained virtually static at 29.9 per cent, the centre-right coalition narrowly failed to retain its parliamentary majority and was forced to continue as a minority administration 'tolerated' by the opposition Social Democrats. Zieleniec, for example, argued that the party needed to undergo a process of 'broadening out' (*rozkroèeni*) its base by becoming a more open and pluralistic formation with significant centrist and Christian democratic elements (Zieleniec 1996). In 1997 the incipient internal and political crisis facing ODS came to a head both because of the clearly deteriorating position of the Czech economy, which saw the previously stable Czech crown unexpectedly devalued, and the dramatic collapse of the Klaus-led government in November/December of that year over a party financing scandal centring on concealed, illicit donations to ODS.<sup>5</sup>

Klaus's alleged knowledge of and complicity with the donations prompted the minor parties to withdraw from the coalition and caused a split in ODS itself, in which senior figures in the party, such as former Interior Minister Jan Ruml and former Finance Minister Ivan Pilip, called Klaus's integrity, political judgement and management of the party into question. However, using his

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<sup>5</sup> Although the exact details of the affair are still unclear it is certain that donations to the party from business interests which had been involved in the privatisation process were illegally channelled to it and the identity of the donors concealed by 'unidentified' officials at ODS Head Office.

immense personal authority with the ODS grassroots, Klaus - who claimed to have been unaware of the financial irregularities - was able to mobilise the support of activists and members to resist pressure for his resignation as party leader and to defeat his opponents by a decisive majority at a special congress in Podi brady in 1998. After 1998 ODS redefined and realigned itself in a number of ways, including a radicalisation and sharpening of its euroscepticism around the theme of defending national interests. This 'national turn' is analysed in detail in section 4 of this paper.

The anti-Klaus faction subsequently broke away to form a new party, the *Freedom Union* (US), whose subsequent programme represented a significant departure from the politics of ODS. The Freedom Union was particularly strong in its criticisms of ODS euroscepticism and stressed the need for a more positive approach to Czech EU accession, both in relations with the EU and in its presentation in domestic politics (Banot 2000). However, despite proclaiming itself a 'euro-optimist' party and endorsing euro-federalism, subject to the retention of national states in some form, the Freedom Union's programmatic stance on Europe as on other issues, has tended to merge with that of the centrist/centre right *Four Party Coalition* (4K) bloc (see below).

In early elections in June 1998 despite recovering much apparently lost electoral support in an aggressive, if unfocused campaign, ODS was out-pollled by the Social Democrats. The election was also significant for the collapse of the far-right Republican Party, whose anti-establishment appeal appears to have been damaged by revelations of corruption and cronyism within the party. Although centre-right parties including ODS regained a theoretical parliamentary majority, such were the political and personal tensions between ODS and its former allies, that Klaus opted unexpectedly to sign an 'Opposition Agreement' with ĚSSD allowing a minority Social Democratic government to take office and agreeing on a number of institutional reforms on which the two parties would collaborate. This co-operation was extended in January 2000 through the signing of the so-called 'Patent of Toleration'.

The Four Party Coalition formed after the 1998 elections by the Freedom Union, the *Christian Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party* (KDU-ĚSL), the *Civic Democratic Alliance* (ODA) and the small Democratic Union party (DEU) as a political counterweight to the 'Opposition Agreement' emerged as a significant third force in Czech politics, managing to gain an overall majority in the Czech Senate as a result of electoral gains in 1998 and 2000.<sup>6</sup> Drawing mainly on

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<sup>6</sup> At this time the Civic Democratic Alliance had effectively become a defunct, minor party, following damaging internal splits and revelations concerning concealed donations to the party. It was unable to field candidates in the 1998 parliamentary elections. The Democratic Union merged with the Freedom Union in

the Freedom Union's desire to break with the political legacy of ODS and Czech Christian Democrats' openness to European political and economic integration, which, under the influence of German and Austrian sister parties, was viewed as a logical extension of Christian-democratic values of universalism, solidarity, and the social market, the Four Party Coalition has sought to use its positive commitment to European integration in party competition with both ODS and the Social Democrats. One of its first programmatic documents (September 1999) was thus a report on the Czech Republic's state of readiness for EU membership, and a series of events and initiatives intended to promote public awareness and understanding of the accession process. It has forged close links with President Havel, reflecting a closeness of views on European integration as well as other issues such as the importance of decentralisation and a strong, locally-based civil society.

Of the three parliamentary parties identified as eurosceptic in the above survey, the Civic Democratic Party is by far the most significant case both analytically and in electoral and office-holding terms. Unlike pariah parties such as the far right Republicans and the Communists, which remained outside normal coalition-building politics and whose vote since 1992 in parliamentary elections peaked at 8% and 10% respectively, ODS has consistently polled 25-30% - and looks likely to repeat this performance in the forthcoming June 2002 elections. It was the dominant coalition partner in the Czech government between 1992 and 1997 and since 1998 has continued to exercise a significant degree of political influence through its institutionalised cooperation with the minority Social Democratic government. Moreover, unlike centre-right formations in, for example, neighbouring Poland and Hungary, the party is a self-consciously 'new' force formed in response to the demands of post-communist social transformation, and not obviously influenced by pre-communist right-wing, conservative or nationalist traditions, which were, in any case, historically weak or absent in the Czech Lands (see Hanley 1999). The remainder of the paper therefore focuses on the case of ODS, initially mapping its changing eurosceptic discourses (sections 3 and 4), before tentatively suggesting some of the factors which may underlie them (sections 4 and 5).

### **3. The Euroscepticism of Václav Klaus 1992-6**

The Eurosceptic - or as he and other ODS leaders preferred to term them, 'Euro-realist' - views publicly expressed by Václav Klaus date approximately from late 1992. In a series of speeches and articles addressed to both domestic and international audience, Václav Klaus developed a

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January 2002. ODA left the grouping in February 2002 after a dispute over its debts. 4K was then

prominent Eurosceptic critique dealing with both the nature of the EU and the prospects for enlargement, becoming in the process East and Central Europe's best known, and most vocal Eurosceptic politician. Klaus's arguments can be viewed partly as the response of a committed neo-liberal to European integration after Maastricht; partly as the rearticulation in a new context of well-established Central European geo-political anxieties by the Prime Minister of a in a peripheral region of EU candidate states; and the interventions of a Czech politician seeking to influence and shape a debate about national identity. The Eurosceptic critique developed by Klaus contained three key strands:

- An 'Anglo-Saxon' neo-liberal economic critique of the European Union as inefficient, restrictive and 'socialist' and as dominated by self-seeking bureaucratic elites with far-reaching political ambitions to challenge the United States leading them to introduce economically questionable measures for political reasons.
- A 'Central European' critique of the EU's self interest and bad faith in enlarging itself and in managing its relations with East and Central Europe.
- A 'national' critique of the EU as a threat to Czech national sovereignty and identity stemming both from existing aspects of the Union and plans for further political integration. These were often depicted as reflecting the German (or Franco-German) dominated character of the EU.

### 3a. The EU as 'continentwide dirigisme'

Like many neo-liberals Klaus viewed the EC/EU as 'socialist' and etatistic both in its origins, as a project supposedly based on the collectivist "ideological paradigm of the first part of the 20th century" and traditions of "continentwide dirigisme" (Klaus 1994a: 107, see also Klaus 1993a: 122-3) and shaped by the political and security concerns of French Gaullism and German Christian Democracy. Klaus also detected similar left-wing and collectivist tendencies in the Union's current and emerging forms of "excessive regulation and bureaucratisation" and in the "ballooning welfare states" in "Western Europe (today's European Union)". This, he suggested, might need reforming not simply as a means of facilitating enlargement but on principle as a means of maintaining Europe's global competitiveness (Klaus 1997a: 348, Klaus 1996a). Such neo-liberal criticisms were, however, often relatively unfocused, sometimes failing to distinguish between the EU and domestic social and economic arrangements in Western Europe. The one key exception can be found in Klaus's criticisms of EMU. As a academic economist, Klaus made

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relaunched as a two party bloc, Coalition.

detailed criticisms of the Euro on macro-economic and technical grounds, arguing, for example, that in fiscal terms the EU did not constitute an optimal currency zone and that the single currency was therefore "above all a political project" (Klaus 1996b: 358). As such, he felt, it lacked an adequate political basis. Citing the break-up of Czechoslovakia as a negative example, and the unification of the former East Germany with the FRG as a positive example, Klaus argued that, when such economically diverse regions were brought into a single currency zone transfers from richer to poorer regions, underpinned by a strong sense of shared identity, were necessary. The EU, he argued, lacked precisely such a strong common European political identity. The result, he suggested, of such a currency union would be that economically less developed regions - regions, he implies, like East and Central Europe - would become caught in a cycle of backwardness, as had occurred with Southern Italian regions following the unification of Italy in the 19th century (Klaus 1995a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996e, 1997a).

### 3b. European Integration and the Experience of Central Europe

However, as with other areas of its ideology and policy, ODS euroscepticism of the 1990s as voiced by Klaus was a more complex phenomenon than a simple transposition of Anglo-American neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies to the context of post-communist and post-Cold War Europe. It also contained a distinctly 'Central European' strand. As is well known, Klaus rejected the institutionalisation of 'Central Europe' after 1989 through the Visegrad group seeing it as an attempt to create "interval stages, interval society [which] revived some kind of ideas of bridges between East and West" (Klaus 1995b: 388). Such concepts - associated with President Beneš in post-war Czechoslovakia and also present in the thinking of dissidents before 1989 - represented, Klaus argued, not only an ideologically suspect Third Way, but also counterproductive in failing to address lukewarm West European attitudes towards extending EU membership directly to Central European states and politically unviable given the divergent interests of these states.

Nevertheless, aspects of Klaus's Euroscepticism clearly draw on a sense of Central European identity and experience. This can be seen, for example, in the moralistic argument that the EEC/EC/EU was a product and beneficiary of the Cold War at the expense of Central Europe (Klaus 1993a, see also Bugge 2000: 25-29), which echo the arguments of more self-consciously 'Central European' writers such as Kundera and Havel. Secondly, Klaus argued that the historical experience of Central European states, dominated by larger powers and centralised, oppressive supranational regimes, meant that they faced a 'double task' of maintaining and rediscovering national identity and national independence and integrating with the rest of Europe (Klaus 1993a,

1994a: 125).<sup>7</sup> Central European states Klaus argued were, moreover, especially sensitive and alert to the dangers of such over-centralisation and harmonisation given their long experience of foreign and imperial domination, first under the multi-national empires of the 19th century, then under Nazi rule during the Second World War and most recently under Soviet domination. Such arguments implicitly but unmistakably equate the EU, or the EU as it might develop with Comecon and other coercive institutions of the former Soviet bloc, as well as to general notions of totalitarian domination through references, for example to European 'Newspeak' (Klaus 1996a: 352).<sup>8</sup>

### 3c. Europeanism, National Distinctiveness and National Statehood

A concern with the Czech nation and its interests was notable, if submerged element in much of ODS's domestic agenda of the early-mid 1990s. The assertion of the Czech Republic's interest against that of Slovakia during the protracted, but futile, attempts to reform Czecho-Slovak federalism in 1990-2, was an key early mobilising issue for ODS, dovetailing with its proclaimed desire to pursue radical free market reform, (perceived as in the Czech but not the Slovak interest). Similarly, the economic strategy and privatisation policies - and particularly its flagship policy of mass coupon privatisation - of the 1992-6 ODS-led government clearly prioritised the development of national capital over market efficiency and higher levels of investment that greater foreign ownership might have assured (Orenstein 2001). Careful analysis of the party's supposedly neo-liberal ideology of Anglo-Saxon conservatism shows that the nation was a central political category - perhaps the central political category. Following the largely unexpected break-up of Czechoslovakia, the character and national identity of the Czech Republic required definition and clarification both domestically and internationally, reigniting a much older debate about the meaning of Czech identity dating back to the 19th century. This is a debate to which both Klaus personally and ODS as a party had contributed by challenging and reinterpreting key aspects of the Czech national tradition to legitimise the neo-liberal aspects of their transformation programme (Williams 1997; Hanley 1999). Such strongly 'national' reinterpretations of Czech identity and tradition can be detected in the Right's framing both the Czech-Slovak split (Holy 1996) and the politics of post-communist transformation more generally (Williams 1997; Hanley 1999).

It is therefore unsurprising that - like virtually all Czech discourse on Europe - Klaus's and ODS's

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<sup>7</sup> Klaus even went so far as to cite Tomas Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's first President, on the need for a diverse Europe in which small states were not dominated by large centralising powers, despite his disdain for Masaryk's morally-based understanding of politics and left-of-centre stance on social policy issues (Klaus 1994a: 124).

euroscepticism of the period should also have incorporated a strong 'national' element. However, while politicians such as Havel viewed European, national and local identities as concentric and overlapping (Tucker 1995) and addressed the relationship between them through a mixture of metaphysical reflection,<sup>9</sup> and proposed institutional compromise between regional, national and European levels of governance, Klaus drew stark conclusions concerning the need to defend the Czech national state as a guarantee of national identity and political self-determination against perceived threats implied by Europeanisation. This is best summed up in his well known (and repeated) remark that the Czech Republic faced the task of "how to be European without at the same time dissolving into Europeanism like a lump of sugar in a cup of coffee" (1994 cited in Bugge 2000: 29). Elsewhere, he argued that Czech 'Europeanism' (*evropanství*) should be interpreted as 'obligations to safeguard and preserve our distinctive features because we are exactly what we can offer to Europe' (Klaus 1995a). The national state, in Klaus's view should not only be the building block of European integration, but should be resolutely guarded against any encroachment from either supranational or regional institutions, both of which, he felt, were inefficient, undemocratic and irreparably lacking political, cultural and historical legitimacy (Klaus 1994b).

### 3d. Limits to Klaus's Euroscepticism

It should be noted however that most such speeches and writings both to domestic and foreign audiences were presented as sceptical reflections which did not draw explicit political conclusions and were presented as honestly expressed doubts, "merely questions not answers" (Klaus 1995a: 354) or concerns "that should be seriously discussed" (Klaus 1996b: 364). As such, Klaus's Euroscepticism of this period, despite the occasionally provocative tone of his rhetoric, remained very squarely within the limits of a 'soft' Eurosceptic critique (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001)

At no time was the necessity or desirability of the Czech Republic's membership of the EU called into question nor was it suggested that any of the Union's fundamental institutions such as the Euro, mandatory for newly acceding states, should be reformed or rejected.

Moreover, official government and party policy statements towards the European Union in this period were considerably less critical, both in tone and in the balance of criticism to positive

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<sup>9</sup> Havel, for example, stressed the need both to develop a European identity and Czechs' responsibility to maintain national identity by not being overly seduced by consumerism and materialism.

assessments, than Klaus's own personal Eurosceptic agenda. Thus, the Czech Government Memorandum of January 1996 which accompanied the Czech Republic's application for EU membership "accepts for its future membership the European Union such as it is and such as it will be shaped by the collective wisdom of its Member States in the months and years to come" (cited in Bugge 2000: 32) including the "broader, non-economic aspect". Moreover, as Bugge notes the Memorandum "reads almost like a confession" of doubts mistakenly held. Similarly, the 1995 ODS *Political Programme*, which describes joining the EU as 'the key task' of Czech foreign policy praises the Union for having overcome national rivalries in post war Western Europe and having contributed to economic renewal and prosperity before making a series of qualified criticisms concerning the need to restrict bureaucracy, promote global free trade and base European integration on 'sovereign national states' (ODS 1996A: 8-9). The strongest and most nationally-oriented note of euroscepticism in the document is the statement that we do not want to dissolve our state into supranational structures without deep roots or real identity (ODS 1996A: 9). Similarly, the 1996 ODS election programme despite promising to "consistently base ourselves on the Czech national interest" (ODS 1996B: 10) identifies full EU membership as the party's main foreign policy goal, noting that European integration would bring the "citizens of EU member states peace, security, stability and economic prosperity", striking a more eurosceptic note subsequently only by arguing that such integration "should not artificially suppress the diversity of nations and cultures, which is one of the values of European civilisation" and should therefore be based on "individual states and that the sovereignty and powers of the union should be derived from the sovereignty and powers of individual states" (ODS 1996B: 11).

#### **4. The Post-1997 Realignment of ODS and the Turn to 'National' Euroscepticism**

After the political crisis of 1997, ODS underwent a two year period of ideological and political consolidation and realignment as an opposition party which, from summer 1999 onwards, saw it adopt a significantly 'harder' and higher profile Euroscepticism expressed in an ideological shift away from the rhetoric of a neo-liberal 'Anglo-Saxon' conservatism to one stressing patriotism, and the defence of national interests against the European Union. This shift, although it has roots in the period 1996 to 1998, was heralded by the party's critical stance to NATO intervention in Yugoslavia in early 1999 and was developed and further incorporated into the party's programme at three 'Ideas Conferences' held in Prague in June 1999, June 2000 and April 2001, at its tenth regular congress in Liberec in December 1999, and to a lesser extent, at its most recent annual congresses in Plzeň in October 2000 and Ostrava in November 2001. The fullest and most up to-date statement of the party's position is arguably its *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* discussed at its Third Ideas Conference (ODS 2001a, 2001b), which seems likely to form the basis of its

foreign and European policy and related sections in its programme for the 2002 Czech parliamentary elections.<sup>10</sup> This period also saw the emergence of party leadership, strongly committed to the new, more assertive European policy, which, with the obvious exception of Klaus himself, was drawn from a younger generation of ODS politicians, such as Jan Zahradil, the party's Shadow Foreign Minister, Petr Neèas, its Shadow Defence Spokesman, few of whom had held senior party or government office before 1997. The explicit theme of the 'nation' and more assertive vision of an *Europe des patries*, in combination with ODS's personalised style of leadership, underlined by Klaus's apparent ambitions to succeed Václav Havel as Czech President when his final of office expires in 2002, led some press commentators to speak of the emergence of a 'Czech Gaullism', although as with the earlier 'Thatcherite' tag, such labels concealed as much as they revealed.<sup>11</sup>

The substance of ODS criticisms of and preferences for the EU remained largely consistent with views previously expressed by the party or its Chair. Thus, the *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism*, for example, repeats earlier neo-liberal ODS criticisms of the Union, depicting it as a product of post-war welfare capitalism and the *acquis* as 'above all the product of various lobbies and corporatist pressures' (ODS 2001a: 4) serving mainly to restrict market force; once again notes the lack of a European political identity and supposed tendency of federalist visions of European integration to ignore the importance of national identity in providing a stable basis for democratic institutions and to 'reduce it to a mere piece of folk culture' (ODS 2001a:8); criticises the 'implicit anti-Americanism' of current EU steps towards greater political integration, which, in its view, represent 'efforts to restore lost great power status' on the part of certain, unnamed European states; and develops a swingeing critique of East-West relations in Europe and Western Europe's self-interested approach to EU enlargement (discussed below). It then continues by advocating an 'inter-governmentalist' model of European integration (ODS 2001a: 4,8-10) based on cooperation between sovereign states, which, in the ODS view, extends to economic cooperation with limited political coordination - a point recently underlined by Václav Klaus in remarks to the European Parliament, when he stated that current trends towards greater political integration should simply be frozen (Klaus 2001). It also opposes the extension of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), the enhancement of the powers of the European Parliament and the establishment of the European Commission in a quasi-governmental role from Scandinavian states and Great Britain at

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<sup>10</sup> The *Manifesto* was co-authored by Jan Zahradil, the ODS Shadow Foreign Minister, who was subsequently elected a party deputy chair at its Congress in Ostrava and who was nominated by ODS to serve as one of the Czech Republic's representatives to the EU Convention. The content of the *Manifesto* does not seem to have been directly criticised by any speakers at the 2001 Ideas Conference or by Klaus himself.

<sup>11</sup> More hostile commentators spoke of a 'Haiderisation' of ODS, partly influenced by ODS's defence of the Austrian Freedom Party's right to enter government against EU disapproval (see below).

the recent Nice summit have, the *Manifesto* claims, demonstrated that the Czech Republic would find potential allies within the EU for this position. However, the position of the 'new' ODS on Europe incorporated a number of significant *changes of emphasis and explicitness* in comparison with both the party's official position and Klaus's personal position in the preceding period:

- A much heavier focus on the nation and the defence of national interests at the expense of neo-liberal and, to a lesser extent, 'Central European' critiques of the EU, justified in terms of political realism and combined with a much more concrete and explicit vision of the type of European integration ODS wished to see. A minority in the party sought unsuccessfully to extend this new emphasis on the nation to domestic policy through the concept of 'national cohesion'.
- A more general scepticism about the acceptability of European and Western international institutions such as the EU and NATO taking collective security and foreign policy action on the grounds that these violated the national sovereignty of small Central and East European states. This was most clearly seen in ODS reactions to the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia in March 1999 and to European Union sanctions taken against Austria when the far right Freedom Party entered into government in 2000.
- Open discussion of the possibility that EU enlargement would be postponed for a significant period or that it would offer 'second-class membership' to Central and East European countries and the contemplation as a contingency of alternative scenarios for a Czech medium term future outside the European Union. A radicalisation of the party's rhetoric criticising the EU and the introduction of 'Europe' and the defence of national interests against the EU as an issue distinguishing ODS from its political opponents, especially competing centre-right parties in the Four Party Coalition (4K), such as the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) and the Freedom Union (US), the Czech President and the non-aligned 'civic' intelligentsia. In doing so ODS depicted itself as representing and mobilising a broad popular and national constituency against unrepresentative and out of touch intellectual and political elite, in a manner reminiscent of the strategy it had used to frame issues of post-communist transformation in the early 1990s.

#### 4a. The Turn to 'National Interests'

The notion of asserting and defending a Czech national interest first appears in ODS programmatic documents of the mid 1990s (ODS 1996A: 6-9, 1996: 10-15), replacing the more

traditional Czech notion of a Czechoslovak 'state idea' wherein foreign policy was seen as embodying certain ideals and moral values identified with the nation. However, the concept of defining and defending a Czech national interest, which seems to have emerged from debates in the academic and policy communities following the unexpected emergence of an independent Czech state in late 1992 (see, for example, Valenta et al. 1992; Krejčí 1993), seems to have been relatively unimportant in ODS's 'balanced' Euroscepticism of the mid 1990s and does not even feature explicitly in the majority of Klaus's writings and speeches of the period. Moreover, where it is evoked in this period in relation to European integration, the national interest of the Czech Republic was almost always used to justify joining the EU, rather than to highlight possible costs and conflicts (see for example ODS 1996B: 10-13). ODS's turn to a 'harder' public Euroscepticism centring on the national interest first emerges as one of the four key themes presented by Václav Klaus to the party's extraordinary Congress held in Podìbrady (the 'Podìbrady articles') and was developed further at the party's ninth regular annual congress held in Jihlava in April 1998 which incorporated it into the party's election programme for that year (ODS 1998a, 1998b). However, Klaus's statement that defending the Czech national interest required the Czech Republic's participation in the European Union and NATO provided that this did not mean the dissolution of the Czech state into a European superstate or a Europe of the regions was little more than a repetition of the party's position as stated in its 1996 programme. Moreover, at this stage the party gave equal prominence to neo-liberal themes such as privacy, individual freedom and a 'cheap state', as well as to the party's supposed victimisation by a hostile establishment.

Although denied by Klaus (1999e), the Kosovo crisis appears to have marked a watershed in ODS thinking about the Czech relationship with Western and European political and security institutions, leading to a radicalisation of the tone and nature of criticisms levelled by ODS towards them. Having criticised "our traditionally sceptical public" for having "a virus of distrust for NATO in its bloodstream" (Klaus 1999a) at the time of the Czech Republic's formal admission to NATO in March 1999, Klaus and other ODS leaders - along with much of the Czech political class - were seemingly taken aback by NATO military intervention in Yugoslavia a few weeks later, an intervention from which they largely disassociated themselves, feeling that it was both counterproductive and politically unacceptable in its violation of Yugoslavia's national sovereignty (Klaus 1999b, 1999c, 2000i; Zahradil 1999a). The latter point was only explicitly conceded by Klaus later the next year (Klaus 2000d). Klaus criticised Czech supporters of NATO military intervention such as President Havel and other centre-right parties, as falling victim to "a typical Czech way of talking tough which conceals weakness" and of following a policy "which does not take the complexity of the situation in the Balkans into account and is not based on the real

interests of the Czech Republic" (Klaus 1999b). Klaus was also critical of subsequent EU and western attempts to influence the results of elections in Yugoslavia so as to accelerate the fall of Milosevic.

The rethinking and relaunching of the party's ideology was heralded by an 'Ideas Conference' in June 1999 at which ODS's more 'national' standpoint was presented and discussed as a key plank of party policy for the first time, a shift also signalled to a wider public by Klaus in interviews with the right-wing daily *Lidové Noviny* and by the party's Foreign Affairs Spokesman Jan Zahradil, (1999c) in an interview with the mass circulation middle market tabloid *Mladá fronta Dnes*. In his interview Klaus (1999d) stressed that the concept of patriotism should not be forgotten, arguing that the homeland, the nation and the state were "natural entities of human societies with which a person identifies" in contrast with the 'vacuous Europeanism' upon which a 'certain organisation' was being constructed. He further argued that the need to defend national identity was becoming more actual as the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union became a more concrete prospect. However, he emphasised that European integration was "inevitable" and that his objections concerned the form it would take. Specifically he believed "a pan-European political entity" was "simply mistaken". However, while Klaus's comments represented essentially a change of emphasis and a clarification of his well-known objections to political integration, younger ODS leaders were more radical and more specific, about both the importance of Czech national identity and about the forms of integration that were acceptable to the party. One of the most far-reaching attempts to rehabilitate and assert the concept of the nation was made by Petr Neèas, the party's Defence Spokesman and since December 1999 one of its Deputy Chairs. Neèas, one of the leading thinkers on ODS's neo-conservative wing, argued at the first Ideas Conference that it was necessary to defend the nation and national interests against 'cheap pseudo-Europeanism' not only in the context of European integration, but also as the only means of preserving the social cohesion that was being destroyed by social, economic and generational differences (Belsinek 1999). However other ODS leaders distanced themselves from the tone of Neèas's remarks. Václav Klaus, for example, specifically rejected the notion of "national cohesion" (*národní soudržnost*) used by a number of speakers at the Ideas Conference that his ideas centred on the nation state or more exactly "the state organised around the nation" (Klaus 1999d).

Such a purely political, international relations-based concept of asserting the primacy of the nation is also evident in the party's outline foreign policy document, *National Interests in the Real World*, which establish the principles of 'realism' and the defence of national interests as the basis of ODS's European and foreign policy. These concepts seem to derive mainly from Jan

Zahradil the ODS Shadow Foreign Minister, a policy specialist employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 1997 and an advisor on foreign policy to Václav Klaus, who headed the working group within the ODS party commission on foreign affairs, which drafted the *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* (ODS 2001a). Zahradil's accounts of the ODS position on Europe have been formulated and justified more fully and clearly than those of Klaus. Like Klaus and other ODS leaders, Zahradil considers that the Czech Republic has "no long-term alternative" to joining the EU, which is necessary "to prevent total economic isolation and the blocking of our exports by EU member states" (Zahradil 2000k), but rejects further European political integration as unfeasible, given the current lack of a strong European identity. He views Europeanisation and globalisation both as essentially left-wing ideologies and as a cover for large powerful states to assert their own national interests. Although not excluding the possibility that, it might come about incrementally over the historical long-term, Zahradil has argued that the artificial, politically motivated dismantling of nation states, he detects in current EU political integration, will trigger a xenophobic extreme right-wing nationalist backlash (Zahradil 1999b), (Zahradil 1999b, 2000k).

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The clearest and most specific account of the ODS view of position of Czech national state within European integration is given in the *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism*, which argues that Czechs 'can no longer settle for a blanket interpretation of our entry to the EU as a final symbolic end to our being part of (*pobyt v*) the former socialist empire or in today's temporary post-communism' (ODS 2001a: 3) or regard it as a politically neutral technical and administrative process of adapting to the *acquis communautaire*. The *Manifesto* argues that EU enlargement is a process defined by its actors' self-interest 'not concerned with the acceptance of candidate countries as rapidly as possible but with using the accession process to the advantage of current members. The EU sees the candidate states above all as markets for its products, sources of beneficial opportunities (*výhodné uplatnění*) for its surplus professionals, as well as a source of raw materials and cheap and skilled local labour and a possible buffer zone against political and security risks in the East and the Balkans' (ODS 2001a: 5). Rapid enlargement is seen as being blocked by employers' lobbies and other interest groups in the existing EU. Somewhat ironically

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<sup>12</sup> This is a contrast with Klaus for whom globalisation, in the sense of economic globalisation, is a given and therefore something to be accepted and welcomed - nevertheless, Klaus has expressed doubts recently about some of the non economic and cultural aspects of globalisation describing the internet for example as "a fetish" (Klaus 2000d). ODS specifically rejects the argument that globalisation has eroded the functionality of the nation state declaring that it "does not consider change security risks... economic globalisation... or rapid technological developments to be a justification for a new, constructivist, utopian and social engineering vision of a new world order" adding in an allusion to President Havel's reflections on globalisation that "Czech foreign policy must be practical, realistic, sober and free of kitsch moralising" (ODS 2000).

given the party's earlier European policy the *Manifesto* also argues that the EU has 'transformed enlargement into a competition between individual candidates and prevented them taking a common approach' (ODS 2001a: 6-7). In a further reversal of earlier ODS policy, the *Manifesto* additionally argues that the Czech Republic and other candidate states are committing a 'strategic error' in giving greater priority to the rapidity of EU accession at the expense of the quality of the terms of entry negotiated. Depicting rapid enlargement in unprecedentedly negative terms, the *Manifesto* highlights the possibly exaggerated 'liberalisation shock' that it could bring to the economies of candidate states, including a growth in inflation and unemployment and pressure on domestic business sectors. Given that the EU is such a 'cockpit' (*kolbišti*) opposing the interests of existing member states, candidate states, national interest groups and the EU bureaucracy, accession requires appraisal of the conditions, costs and benefits of entry and the taking up of a Czech position on current EU politics and the future shape of the Union, reflecting the Czech national interest in these apparently zero-sum games.<sup>13</sup> The ODS approach to EU accession is perhaps most clearly, and brutally, summed up in remarks by Petr Nečas to the party's 2001 Ideas Conference: 'Let us gain everything possible from the EU! And let us not give it a fraction more than we have to. Let us say fairly, openly and loudly to the Czech public that for us entering the European Union is not, and will not be, a love match, but a marriage of convenience,' (in ODS 2001b: 16).

#### 4b. 'Europe' as a Mobilising (and Realigning?) Issue in Czech Politics

Despite the party's respectable showing in the June 1998 elections ODS leaders seem to have been aware that, given its failure to implement a successful radical free market economic programme when in government, and its tacit support of a minority social democratic government through the 'Opposition Agreement', it could no longer credibly present itself in strident neo-liberal terms as a vehicle for successful transformation and alternative to the left. (Nimešek 2001) Additionally, mass demonstrations in November 1999 and December 2000/January 2001 against the Opposition Agreement and perceived attempts by ODS and the Social Democrats to control Czech public television through political appointments to its board underlined the growing frustration of the Czech public with the parties of 1990s transformation.

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<sup>13</sup> The Czech national interest is defined in the *Manifesto* as 'the maintenance and development of a clearly defined national identity: the strengthening of the international rule of law and of an institutional framework in which the same rules apply for big and small states; the maintenance of the territorial integrity and political sovereignty, independence and security of the Czech Republic; the mutual opening and linking of markets without excessive barriers' (ODS 2001a: 8). Interestingly, both the *Manifesto* and its predecessor (ODS 2000) reintroduce the notion of a Czech 'state idea' which is presented as the basis of national identity, sovereignty and national interests. Somewhat implausibly, the *Manifesto* also claims that traditional Czech thinkers such as Havlíček, Palacký and Masaryk who elaborated concepts of a 'state idea' are 'strikingly close to Anglo-Saxon liberal-conservative thought' (ODS 2001a: 8).

ODS leaders have repeatedly maintained that, in contrast with other political actors, for whom any critical assessment of the EU and its relationship with Central Europe is a taboo, they are opening up a real debate about the nature of European integration as it affects the Czech Republic (Klaus 1999e, 1999g, 1999i; Zahradil 1999a, 1999c). However, ODS's contribution to this debate has been frequently characterised by a strident populist rhetoric attempting to marginalise and discredit political opponents over the European issue. The political strategy pursued by ODS echoed that used at the party's foundation over issues of post-communist transformation in its attempts to depict the party's opponents as intellectual elites with a covert left-wing agenda, detached from the people and the nation, and in its stressing of the need for a 'realist' view of politics based on arbitrating between conflicting interests. Thus, addressing the second ODS Ideas Conference in June 2000, Klaus declared that "we are not a group of café society intellectuals for whom EU entry is an academic exercise in rhetoric or in the formulation of visions of salvation in the so-called 'globalising world' ". In an allusion to the concerns of President Havel and the Freedom Union, who had stressed the need to promote a sense of European identity and educate the Czech public about the EU, Klaus declared that his party did not want to "play the role of enlightened teachers preaching to our supposedly benighted citizens about the 'advantages and disadvantages' of Czech membership in the EU" but rather, he argued, "it would represent their interests precisely in those issues, which have now become relevant to our newly free and sovereign national community" (Klaus 2000c). In political terms, this new 'populist' approach to EU accession by ODS's promotion of a rapid referendum on Czech EU entry, despite previous resolute opposition to the use of referenda to settle constitutional issues, such as the future of Czechoslovakia in 1992, and more generally as a supplementary democratic mechanism. The *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* develops this 'populist' theme by arguing that 'European integration must develop from below from the nations and citizens of member countries as represented by their parliaments and governments, not from above from the drawing boards of European political and bureaucratic elites' (ODS 2001a: 8). It is notable, however, that this vision of a people's Europe constructed 'from below' is seen as mediated only by national states, excluding regional bodies and actors from European or national civil societies, in keeping with the party's well known suspicion of social movements and interest groups and non-state actors (ODS 2001a: 8)

However Klaus's criticisms of Czech Europhile elites have been made not just on a populist and neo-liberal basis, but also on patriotic and national grounds. In Klaus's view Czech EU accession

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implied, above all, the assertion and defence of Czech interests as a national community: "We want to enter the European Union with our sovereign interest and positions. We don't want to become Euro-Czechs or Euro-Germans, Euro-French or Euro-Italians. We want to enter a community in which we will be able as sovereign citizens of the Czech Republic to defend our own ideas about our lives, customs, interests and national prosperity" (Klaus 2001). In failing to understand this, Europhile elites' attitude towards the EU, he argued, was a manifestation of a historically rooted problem of a lack of Czech national self-confidence "a constantly returning feeling that our state and national existence is not self-evident" which - in an allusion to the German occupation of the Czech Lands in 1939-45 - Klaus provocatively termed 'a protectorate mentality' which showed itself "not only in underestimating ourselves and accusing ourselves on one hand and in submitting to great powers and strong allies on the other, but in accusing and denouncing domestic political opponents for a lack of devotion to foreign countries" (Klaus 2000c). Not only did the implicit comparison of Western Europe and the European Union with the Third Reich mark a radicalisation of Klaus's earlier Eurosceptic rhetoric, but was an illustration of a thinly veiled anti-German undercurrent characteristic of many ODS statements on European integration. ODS leaders have, for example, referred to "German" visions of a federal Europe or to a "dominant German conception of the EU" (Zahradil 2000k; see also Klaus 2000a, Zahradil 2001a, Bazin 2000), reinstating a dominant trend of historical Czech nationalism define Czech interests and the Czech nation in opposition to those of Germany and the German-speaking world, previously only seen on the Czech left and far right after 1989.<sup>14</sup> Such 'national' euroscepticism represented a sharp reversal of ODS's populist European discourse of 1990-91, when political opponents were lambasted for a lack of support for existing West European institutions. It was paralleled by a number of initiatives and reflections suggesting a possible realignment of the Czech party system away from the left-right polarisation characteristic of the 1990s towards a model of broad coalitions straddling left and right based upon co-operation (and competing) over issues of the national interest - a pattern well established historically in the Czech lands. In concrete strategic terms this was expressed in a new ODS policy adopted in summer 2000 advocating a "super grand coalition of all non-communist parliamentary parties, rather than the formation of a centre-right coalition of the type that existed between 1992 and 1997 (Neëas 2001). At the party's most recent congress in Ostrava in November 2001, Petr Neëas suggested, much to the displeasure of Klaus, that ODS should signal clearly to the

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<sup>14</sup> Miloslav Bednáø, one of the co-authors of the *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* recently termed Austria, Germany and Hungary 'an axis of evil' in relation to their demands for the revision of the Beneš Decrees. Although he later apologised for the remarks, both their context and the recent adherence to the party of an intellectual, such as Bednáø, who has strongly asserted the validity of traditional Czech political thinking against newer intellectual paradigms imported from the West, are notable. See [RFE/RL Newslines](#) 15 March 2002 or [Lidové noviny](#), 14 March 2002.

electorate before voting whether it would give preference to a coalition or working arrangement with centre-right opponents such as the Four Party Coalition or with the Social Democrats, as at present. In Nečas's view the latter was a more attractive option and could, he argued, become a firm and durable arrangement based upon left-right cooperation on such issues of national importance as reform of the welfare system and EU entry.

#### 4c. Alternatives to EU Accession?

ODS leaders' 'realist' assessment of the enlargement process as based almost entirely upon competing national self-interests led them to conclude that existing member states lack a strong interest in enlargement (Zahradil 2000a, Klaus 2001a). This logically implied a significant delay in EU enlargement or the offering of a diluted "second class membership" (Zahradil 2000k, 2000i), necessitating both a tougher negotiating stance on the part of candidate states and the exploration of a variety of alternative scenarios to (rapid) Czech accession to the EU. The *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* envisages five possible sets of circumstances through which this might occur: 1) that Czech accession might be delayed by the EU side because of the country's resolute defence of its national interests; 2) that the Czech Republic might review its request for EU membership if it 'was unfavourable from the point of view of foreign policy or national interests' and, in particular, if it threatened to put the Czech Republic in an unequal position within the Union on a long-term basis; 3) if the Czech Republic was consistently marginalised and overruled within the decision-making processes of an enlarged EU in which case 'EU membership might even become a less favourable option than 'merely' entering the single market'; 4) if the Common Foreign and Security Policy led to the growth of anti-Americanism and the scaling back of transatlantic links, or if it entailed 'revising the results of the Second World War' through the official cancellation of the post-war Beneš decrees expelling ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia and 5) if the Czech Republic rejected EU membership in a referendum which, despite the consistent majorities suggested opinion polls, the *Manifesto* stresses is possible. Jan Zahradil has been a driving force in elaborating such 'alternative strategies and scenarios for' "the theoretical possibility of not joining the EU". In outline they amount to the Czech Republic revising its association agreement and orientating itself towards EFTA "detaching ourselves from Germany" and developing stronger links with Great Britain, Scandinavia, the USA and NAFTA (Zahradil 2001b: question 6, see also 2000k). These are explored in some detail in the *Manifesto of Czech Eurorealism* which suggests that the Czech Republic might be able to participate in the Single Market without the full legislative and administrative burden of the *acquis* in a similar manner to Norway, or through bilateral treaties with the EU on the Swiss model. The *Manifesto* depicts EFTA as 'an intergovernmental organisation which 'only' serves the trading interests of its members', which appears to approximate to the model of the EU that the party would ideally

support. The *Manifesto* also stresses the desirability and possibility of creating 'a broad Euro-Atlantic space linked in security, economic and political terms, rather than a Fortress Europe ranged against the USA' through linking EFTA and NAFTA and taking account of the fact that 'in globalised trade geographical distance loses meaning' (ODS 2001a: 12-13).<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to gauge how widely shared the *Manifesto's* speculations about possible Czech non-membership of the EU are shared within the party membership and leadership. It should be noted, however, that the possibility has been mentioned publicly by one of Vaclav Klaus's political advisors, the former rock musician and journalist Ladislav Jakl who has been quoted publicly as stating that Czech entry to the EU is unnecessary and that "other options do exist" and that "we would be able to function independently" (Tabery 2000). Contributions by speakers at the workshop on the Czech Republic in Europe at the third Ideas Conference in April 2001 generally avoided the theme and, it would appear, that, whilst supporting the party's assessment of European integration, some within the party have doubts about the extent to which the issue of Europe should be politicised (ODS 2001b).

ODS concerns that the European Commission or coalitions of EU members could pressurise small, newly admitted member states and impinge on national sovereignty by seeking to influence their domestic politics are seen in the party's response to the sanctions directed against Austria in early 2000, when the far right Freedom Party (OVP) led by Jorg Haider entered a coalition government with the Austrian People's Party (OVP). Despite Haider's frequently voiced hostility to the eastern enlargement of the EU, depiction of Central European countries as a source of illegal immigration and crime and criticisms of the Czech Republic in particular because of the Czech government's plans to complete the Temelin nuclear power plant and its refusal to repeal the Beneš Decrees of 1945 expelling German-speakers from Czechoslovakia, ODS rallied to the defence of the new OVP-FPO government (Klaus 2000e, 2000b; Zahradil 2000a). In the ODS view the political stance of the new government and its possible extremist associations was "the lesser evil" (Klaus 2000e).

## **5. Explaining the Euroscepticism of ODS**

There is rapidly emerging literature on the comparative politics of party-based euroscepticism (for an overview see Taggart and Szcerbiak 2001). Most of this work has concentrated on the definition and typology of euroscepticism(s) and the empirical mapping and analysis of

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<sup>15</sup> The *Manifesto* also somewhat fantastically proposes the Czech Republic's 'full and active engagement in

euro sceptic parties and party-based euro scepticism, with relatively little direct consideration so far of the causal mechanisms underlying them. Nevertheless, the associations and linkages empirically highlighted, in conjunction with studies using explicit model of causations, a number of hypotheses can be identified, which can be explored in relation to ODS and its post-1997 'national' euro scepticism.

#### 5a. Euro scepticism as a Response to Social and Historical Cleavages?

In Central and East European states such as Poland and Hungary nationalistic rejection of, or scepticism towards, European integration can be mapped onto long standing socio-cultural and historical cleavages opposing traditional and modern cultures, or Westernising liberals and conservative national-populists. This is, however, clearly, not the case with the Czech Republic, where the dominant cleavage in the party system has been a conventional, single dimension, left-right division over the extent to which resources should be allocated by the market or the state (Kitschelt et al 1999). Euro scepticism has also been related to the more fundamental division in post-communist societies between 'winners' and 'losers' in transformation, with the former tending to be more Europhile, given the role of European integration in reinforcing the market and liberal institutions and values from which these groups benefit, and the latter more euro sceptic, given their disempowerment by such institutions and values (Henderson 2001; see also Agh 1998). To the extent that Czech voters' views on EU membership correspond to this left-right division, it is supporters of the right, including ODS, supporters have consistently been strongly in favour of Czech EU membership, while voters on the left have been least favourable. Thus, for example, recent opinion poll data from the IVVM polling organisation showed that 75% of ODS supporters favoured EU entry (11% opposed), compared to only 45% of those who supported the Social Democratic Party (24% against) (*Integrace.cz* 2000), which is essentially europhile (Bugge 2000). However, while the positions of parties such as the Communists (KSĚM) and far-right Republicans (SPR-RSĚ) reflected the euro scepticism or europhobia of electorates of 'losers', this quite clearly not the case with ODS and its relatively young, wealthy, educated and urban electorate. This suggests, therefore, that the growing euro scepticism of ODS - and indeed the Europhilia of the Social Democrats - has not been propelled by underlying social cleavages within Czech society, to which the party might have adapted in the course of the 1990s. We should note, however, that, as such polling data measures only outright rejection of EU membership, rather than degrees of scepticism or opposition to political integration, the

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the American Anti-Missile Defence project, to which the EU currently has reservations' (ODS 2001a: 12).

mismatch may be smaller than these figures imply.<sup>16</sup>

#### 5b. Euroscepticism as a an Aspect of State- and Nation-Building ?

A further 'structural' association suggested by early comparative research on East and Central European party-based euroscepticisms is that of 'state longevity', which highlights the political salience of nationalism and issues of national identity in 'new' states in the region. This seems a relevant factor in relation to ODS, given that debates on Czech state and national identity following the break-up of Czechoslovakia seemed to have informed the development of its ideology and coincide with the emergence of its initial, post-Maastricht euroscepticism. However, given the strong identification of Czechs with the Czechoslovak state and Czechoslovak state identity, which acted historically as surrogate for Czech national goals (Holý 1996), the Czech Republic cannot be considered a 'new' national state in the same way as other newly emerged states in the region. Nor in the Czech Republic were more conventional dimensions of party ideology and party competition overridden by issues surrounding 'state-building' and a dominant 'state-building' party, as, for example, in Slovakia or Croatia (Henderson 2001). Furthermore, while nationalism and the defence of a Czech national interest were a consistent factor in the euroscepticism of ODS, 1991, they do not in themselves explain its increasing euroscepticism and, in particular, the 'national' Eurosceptic turn of 1999-2000, which took place almost a decade after the (re)founding of the independent Czech state.

#### 5c. Euroscepticism as a Vote Maximising Strategy in Electoral Competition?

Similar objections seem to apply to the notion of ODS euroscepticism of the late 1990s as a rational electoral strategy aimed at vote maximisation. Given the pro-EU views of the vast majority of Czech right-wing voters, both ODS supporters and those of more Europhile rivals, such as the Freedom Union, a eurosceptic electoral strategy intended to boost the party's electorate would necessarily have to be one of issue-leading intended either: 1) to realign the Czech electorate over the issue of Europe at the expense of existing left right divisions, in order to create a large popular constituency around ODS or 2) to realign the right wing electorate in the Czech Republic by distinguishing ODS from its smaller Europhile rivals. However, despite the fact that ODS's Eurosceptic turn coincides with its move to opposition, clearly freeing it from the constraints that government responsibility for Czech accession would impose, neither hypothesis seems very plausible. Experts on Czech public opinion have estimated that the non-aligned Eurosceptic electorate that ODS might stand to win over at only 4%-5% (Herzmann 2000) and,

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<sup>16</sup> Perron's qualitative research (2000) on the attitudes of Czech local elites (municipal councillors) suggests a considerable degree of Euroscepticism, broadly coinciding with the ODS agenda, among representatives of all major parties.

more significantly, given the strongly pro-EU position of the right wing electorate, such a European issue leading strategy might be as likely to alienate existing supporters as to win over new ones.

#### 5d. Euroscepticism as Ideological Imperative?

A further explanation for party-based euroscepticism is to view it as essentially a function of party (families') ideology, although a often studies tend to conflate such ideology with societal and historical cleavages, or use it as a proxy for them (see, for example, Marks and Wilson 2000). ODS concerns with the possible overriding of national policymaking in unacceptable ways by an expanding, nationally illegitimate, bureaucratic and 'left wing' Euro-institutions have much common with conservative and liberal-conservative parties in Western Europe, with which it identifies and with which its is usually grouped by scholars (Agh 1998; Lewis 2000). Moreover, ODS's increasingly Eurosceptic trajectory seems to match closely the course predicted by Marks and Wilson (2000) for neo-liberal and liberal-conservative parties in their analysis of party families' evolving responses to European integration. Liberal-conservative parties, they argue, have naturally tended to evolve from initially enthusiastic support for European integration when it was viewed primarily as an economic project centring on a single European market to one of euroscepticism, when the political implications of such integration became clear and gain practical momentum. However, the cleavage/ideology explanation of ODS's Eurosceptic turn towards the defence of the nation and the 'national interest' in 1999-2000 represents less a response to the logic of European integration, than an ideological shift in itself. This suggests that in a Central European context, the often identified relationship between party euroscepticism and party family/party cleavage (Taggart 1998; Marks and Wilson 2000; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2000, 2001) - is more complex given that party identity and ideology in the region is less consolidated and may still be evolving. Indeed, it may be the case that attitudes to European integration have shaped party identity, ideology and 'family' ties, rather than party ideology and cleavage-derived identity shaping attitudes to European integration, as seems to be the case in Western Europe (Taggart 1998, Marks and Wilson 2000). Batory's (2001) study of Hungarian party responses to Europeanisation, which suggests that such responses can in certain contexts be 'decoupled' from party ideology, reinforces this points, suggesting that 'ideological' euroscepticism can, in fact, be a strategic choice, albeit a more complex one than the straightforward rationalistic calculation assumed by theories of party competition. In the case of ODS, the initial emergence of theme of defending national interests as one of several policy themes for a relaunched ODS in 1998, contrasted with its subsequent role as the party's most prominent theme in 1999-2000 and explicit dissemination through the newly established Ideas Conferences from mid-1999 onwards, clearly suggest that just such a strategic choice was made.

## **6. Party Institutionalisation and the Turn to Euroscepticism**

The case of ODS also demonstrates how problems of party institutionalisation within individual parties can function as an intermediary variable or 'facilitating factor' (see Bozel and Risse 2000) explaining not only the adoption or modification of a Eurosceptic agenda by a single party, but also the introduction into a party system of 'Europe' as a competitive issue.

### 6a. The Concept of Institutionalisation

The concept of institutionalisation, particularly is a complex one. The nature and development of (new) political parties' institutionalisation, in particular, has been discussed and disputed in a small, but developing dedicated literature. A full review of these debates is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this case study, a political party will be viewed as an organisational solution to a collective action problem, in which participants contribute and exchange a variety of resources (financial, material, technical, time) in order to generate political outcomes that would not otherwise be achievable acting on an individual or *ad hoc* basis. A party becomes organisationally stabilised when such resource flows and exchanges become regularised in some kind of equilibrium, the establishment of which is typically a major challenge for newly formed parties (Panebianco 1988; Aldrich 1994; Hopkin 1996, 1999). Such organisational stabilisation may subsequently give way to a deeper sense of identification with and loyalty to the party on the part of its members and voters, where the party is, to a lesser or greater extent, seen as an end and a value in itself, going beyond the purely instrumental goals of its founders and initial participants. This process is one of institutionalisation, with the final phase representing institutionalisation in the most traditional sense of the term.

### 6b. ODS, Euroscepticism and Failures of Institutionalisation

In the case of ODS these can be summed up in two key points:

- The internal party crisis of the mid 1990s, which culminated in the split of 1997-98 represented a failure of institutionalisation - or a process of deinstitutionalisation - which saw the reassertion of the personal authority of the party's charismatic founder - Václav Klaus. This shift to a more overtly charismatic mode of leadership also entailed the extension of Klaus's own personal, highly Eurosceptical agenda to the wider party without his being checked by the rival elites and interests that had grown up in the party in the period 1991-

96, but were marginalised or driven out of the party during the open factional conflict of 1997-98.

- Secondly, the 'national' Eurosceptic turn of 1999 represented an attempt at programmatic renewal not only sense of attempting to generate a coherent range of themes and policies, but in the sense of creating an ideology, which could command the broad support of the disparate neo-liberal, neo-conservative and 'apolitical' local interests that constituted the post-1997 Civic Democratic Party.

In its first six years of existence, ODS can be seen as having stabilised itself organisationally, acquiring not only enough votes and resources to sustain itself, but also achieving a rough balance between its different internal interests and elite groups and between the leadership and the grassroots. However, despite generating electoral support and a degree of voter identification unusual for a 'new' party in East and Central Europe, in its external relationships with ODS had relatively weak and unstable social implantation, reflecting the lack of a well-organised civil society and well-defined social structure.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, although Václav Klaus was as a powerful charismatic figure popularly credited as being the 'architect of economic reform' (Saxonberg 1999; Hanley 2000) and the dominant public face of the Civic Democratic Party from its foundation - leading to early accusations that it was 'a one-man party' - it is clear that from a relatively early he was constrained both by the party's grassroots (Hanley 2001) and by less prominent, but politically significant, figures in the leadership, who enjoyed a degree of political authority in their own right. Such figures included a number of neo-liberal economists such as Josef Zieleniec, the effective co-founder of the party, Jan Stráský and Ivan Koěárník, as well as a number of anti-communist or right wing dissidents such as Jan Ruml and Václav Benda (whose small Christian Democratic Party (KDS) was closely aligned with ODS from 1992 and formally merged with it in 1996). Zieleniec and others also seem to have exerted countervailing pressures on Klaus over the issue of Europe, explaining the

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<sup>17</sup> Like those of other post-communist Central European societies, the Czech Republic's post-privatisation economy was dominated by complex patterns of state, institutional, and cross-ownership (Szelenyi et al 1998), with no a distinct property-owning capitalist elite or identifiable middle-class, which might provide a clear social constituency for a centre-right party. This left ODS reliant on public funding and other state resources and a loose social and electoral constituency of 'winners' in transformation, in which rent-seeking groups with a vested interest in incomplete and partial market reform were strongly represented (see Hellman 1998)

division between the relatively balanced position of official ODS documents and Klaus's own more strident agenda.<sup>18</sup>

The mounting internal crisis in ODS in 1996-97, culminating in the fall of the Klaus government in December 1997 and the internal challenge to Klaus's leadership of the party in 1997-98, which saw the departure of many such senior figures for the breakaway Freedom Union or political retirement. This represented not only a circulation of party elites and a shift in the party's internal balance of power (in what Panebianco terms its "dominant coalition"), but a failure of institutionalisation, rejecting the type of development that Zieleniec had sketched out in 1995-96 whereby the party would start to outgrow its charismatic founder and base itself on a set of values going beyond the concerns of the early period of post-communist transformation, simultaneously.<sup>19</sup>

Instead, in choosing to support Klaus almost regardless of the circumstances of the funding scandal or the party's record, the majority of ODS members in effect chose to make the party a formation based increasingly on a bond of trust with its charismatic founder and leader - as militant ODS members who gathered outside party headquarters during a crucial meeting of its Executive Council to demonstrate their support for him chanted "Klaus is ODS!" Although the ODS grassroots, which rallied to Klaus's support in 1997-98 had occasionally been able to challenge his organisational and personnel preferences through the party's internal democratic mechanisms, such as its Congress, they lacked the ability to generate any alternative policy or programmatic orientation, creating a situation in which Klaus's personal views on high policy were largely uncontested. Moreover, the new cohort of younger leaders such as Neèas and Zahradil, who owed their advancement in the party to their endorsement of Klaus's leadership during the 1997-98 split, both lacked independent political authority, having held second rank positions as party officials or personal advisors, and, having formed their political views largely in the ideologically-charged environment of ODS and the Czech right of the 1990s rather than as dissidents or as technocratic elites during communist rule (Hadjiisky 1996; Hanley 1999) tended to be more hard-line and radical than their predecessors.

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<sup>18</sup> Although one Czech political scientist close to ODS (Mareš 2000) has questioned the extent of Zieleniec's opposition to Klaus's more strongly Eurosceptic views, close analysis of the former Foreign Minister's public statements of the 1990 (Bugge 2000; Bazin 2000) as well as his own post-1997 interviews (Zieleniec 1999; 2002) and his subsequent alignment with the Europhile Freedom Union suggest the opposite. Indeed, there is evidence in Klaus's own published writings that at least on one occasion in 1994 pressure from Zieleniec made him abandon a series of highly critical remarks on European policy directed at the Visegrad group.

<sup>19</sup> Similar views of ODS's future development have been recently outlined by Petr Neèas (2000a, 2000b).

### 6c. Euroscepticism as an Internally Unifying Ideology

In addition to the 'personalisation' of ODS its new emphasis on the defence of national interests against the EU can also be seen as a means of stabilising and overcoming the divisions between its component elements in the wake of the unravelling of the ideology of 'Czech Thatcherism' predicated on a supposed neo-liberal economic miracle rooted in the Czech national character (Hanley 1999). The ideological vacuum that opened on the Czech right in this period saw the emergence of growing tensions between neo-liberal and neo-conservative elements within the party over its future political direction. The unifying role of the new post-1997 ideology of national euroscepticism centring on the defence of the nation state and national sovereignty against European political integration can best be illustrated by examining the political background of its two most vocal advocates after 1997: its Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Jan Zahradil and its Defence Spokesperson Petr Neèas, both also Deputy Chairs of the party. Zahradil, a former hippie (before 1989) who has spoken publicly of his appreciation of punk rock and was a parliamentary co-sponsor of a proposed law to introduce registered partnership for gay couples<sup>20</sup> stands firmly on the party's liberal or libertarian wing, while Neèas is a neo-conservative who keen to introduce a US-style social agenda of 'family values' to Czech politics with strong ties to the Brno-based group of conservative intellectuals around the magazine *Proglas*. Despite the tensions evident when the new 'national' line was first introduced, the post-1997 Eurosceptic agenda clearly provides a set of themes around which such different figures can unite with relatively little difficulty. This would also seem to be true, moreover, of ODS's core of local activists and representatives, who, as noted, occupy a relatively important position in the party's internal power structure and whose views on European integration seem to be both sceptical, if uninformed, and concerned over a perceived threat to Czech national identity and sovereignty (Perron 2000).<sup>21</sup>

## **7. Conclusions**

This paper has examined the relationship between the development of the centre-right in post-communist Central Europe as an organisational, social and political force and the 'soft' euroscepticism characteristic of this part of the political spectrum in the region using a case study of the Czech Civic Democratic Party (ODS) after 1996-97. It has mapped the evolution of the party's position on the issue of European integration, distinguishing a relatively restrained multi-layered euroscepticism in the period 1992-97 which included neo-liberal, Central European and

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<sup>20</sup> The proposed law was unsuccessful.

<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, this also, seems true of local representatives of other parties.

'national' elements and a more strident and explicitly 'national' post-1999 critique occupying a more central place in the party's programme and rhetoric. It has also sought to distinguish between the 'personal' euroscepticism of Václav Klaus and the somewhat different official position of the party before 1997. The paper has further related these euroscepticisms to the broader development of ODS and the Czech right within Czechoslovak and Czech domestic politics.

In analytical terms, the paper has sought to reflect upon the causal mechanisms leading centre-right parties in the region towards a Eurosceptic position. The case of ODS suggests that only a limited number of factors may be present in any given case and, more significantly, that a shift towards euroscepticism can take place without being underpinned by the cleavages - understood in the traditional sense as societal or historical divisions and distributions of preferences within mass electorates - that have played a role in shaping the recently formed party systems in the region. 'Political' factors such as changes in the context of party competition or ideological consistency therefore seem to be more important. However, to construct a clearer chain of causation for the development of party-based euroscepticism we may need, the case of ODS suggests, to consider the problems of ideological, social and organisational consolidation that these parties still face as revealed in their internal dynamics. These may represent an opportunity structure for the development of euroscepticism, which, in most cases, did not (and does not) exist to the same extent in their well-established, well institutionalised West European counterparts. In the case of ODS, both the views of the neo-liberal elites who founded the party and their decision to attempt to base its ideology and identity on the model of Anglo-Saxon conservatism made euroscepticism to some extent a subsidiary component within the party almost from its foundation.

However, it was the interaction of the domestic structural weakness of the Czech right and the unravelling of the project and ideology of a 'Czech Thatcherism' with the acceleration of enlargement and integration processes at a European level in the mid-late 1990s which resulted in the adoption of a radical 'national' euroscepticism driven both by the renewed personal dominance of Václav Klaus and related circulation of party elites, and by the need to fill an ideological vacuum with ideas and themes commanding broad majority support. The new 'harder' euroscepticism of ODS of the late 1990s radicalised elements of the party's earlier programme and ideology, laying greater emphasis on the previously submerged theme of a distinct Czech national community, whilst downplaying neo-liberal aspects which were given great prominence in the early-mid 1990s. In some respects, therefore, the euroscepticism of ODS - or rather the mechanisms promoting the party's turn towards a more radical euroscepticism - may resemble

those of some similarly weakly institutionalised 'new' centre-right formations in Western Europe with a highly personalised form of leadership such as *Forza Italia* in Italy, the anti-European wing of French Gaullism or, in certain respects, those of a more obviously 'new populist' party such as Jorg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria.

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