



Pariah Party and the Populists

- A case study on post-communist legacies in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

Like dominos falling, several of the Central Eastern European nation states dismantled in 1989 the long-standing communist regimes and each on their own terms, they began the long path towards liberal democracy. Some states were more successful than others, namely Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. However, since the mid-2010s there has been an increased interest in the presumed democratic backsliding happening, not just in Hungary, but in most parts of the post-communist Central European region. Academic attention has focused on the immediate context preceding the events of undermining the democratic principles within the nation states of the region.

I wish to understand these concerns specifically with the Czech context in mind, as I ask: *How can the post-communist legacies of the Czech Republic explain its current state of democracy?* By asking thus, I aim to follow in the footsteps of Milada A. Vachudova's theory presented in her book *Europe Undivided* (2005) to understand the legacies surrounding the democratization processes in the Czech Republic. My thesis will be using process-tracing, as presented by Derek Beach and Rasmus B. Pedersen, to understand the mechanisms that happened between the beginning of democracy in the Czech Republic to the emergence of populist movements.

The analysis focuses on how the presence of the unreformed communist party have obstructed space for straightforward political competition and have complicated the processes for forming governments. My argument is that by winning seats in the Chamber of Deputies, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia poses as a challenge to the rest of the party system. They represent an awkward adversary that is constantly needed to bypass from cooperating with by other parties, leading to clumsy cooperation and low decision-making abilities.

I propose that what was established in fall of 1989 was not a continuation of a legacy driving the democratization processes forward, but rather an underlying anti-system legacy, that legitimized firstly the presence of the communist party but later also the technocratic populist party, ANO 2011. The rejection to cooperate with the communist party led to clumsy and too often unstable government formation, crippling the parliament's ability to implement legislation and thus in some ways neglected the very thing they were elected to do. This has sparked a general distrust and frustration with the electorate, who then looked towards alternatives to the established political parties and finding a populist, who swore he could fix what the allegedly corrupt politicians evidently could not. Thus, this thesis is about finding the connection between the unreformed communist party and the current state of concerns for democracy in the Czech Republic represented by the party ANO 2011 and its leader, Andrej Babiš.

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Introduction

In July 2018, eight months after the Czech parliamentary election, the center populist party ANO 2011 won a vote of confidence for government in coalition with the Czech Social Democrats, ČSSD. This government was significant in one way specifically – because for the first time since 1989 a government was openly dependent on the support from the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Mortkowitz 2018). What had happened in Czech politics in the past nineteen years that warranted led to this absurd combination of a populist party, social democrats, and an unwanted communist party, supporting each other in parliament? My thesis seeks to shed light on what has been leading up to this point.

The Czech Republic is a young nation state and likewise a young democracy. Although, the state has democratic traditions dating all the way back to its time under the Habsburg rule and was indeed also the only state of the region to be fully democratic in the interwar years, and the state of Czechoslovakia was not an independent nation until the fall of the Austrian-Hungarian empire succeeding the First World War, and the Czech Republic for that matter, was not established until January 1993 after the Velvet Divorce between them and Slovakia (Agnew 2004:174-80).

Since 1948 and forty years forward, Czechoslovakia was part of the Soviet satellite states of Central Eastern Europe, ruled by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, or the KSČ. The communists ruled exclusively in this period, and the state only saw the shimmer of political reform in 1968 during the Prague Spring, which concluded violently with the invasion by the Warsaw Pact in August that same year. The invasion led to a collective disenchantment with the communist ideals, but it also resulted in the removal of any reform-minded members of the communist party. The regime in Czechoslovakia would become much more rigid in the following years, a period coined as the normalization-period. It was met with some degree of resistance, namely by the informal group of dissidents under the name Charter 77, named after a signed document from 1977, that criticized the communist government for not keeping their words after having signed the Helsinki Agreement only a few years prior. Charter 77 and especially one of its front figures, the playwright Václav Havel, would only a decade later become part of the Velvet Revolution that led to the end of the communist rule (Agnew:232-83).

November 1989 marks the beginning of the end for the communist rule in Czechoslovakia. In the following decade, the country split into the two separate states Czech Republic and Slovakia, and began processes to secure democracy, privatization and market-based economy. EU accession was a self-evident goal during this time, as a slogan of this period “Return to Europe” sounded. In 2004 the

Czech Republic became a member of the EU, along with its neighbors Slovakia, Hungary and Poland, and six other countries. Around this time, the Czech Republic was perceived as a 'posterchild' for a good democracy within the region. But this has since changed. The CEE region has been the topic of debates due to the concerning political events that has happened in the past few years. Poland and Hungary have been the center of media and academic attention due to the undermining of the rule of law (Beauchamp 2018; Taylor 2021). The case of Hungary has erupted an avalanche of academic attention to the term democratic backsliding. Is there a threshold at which point we should be concerned that a democracy can fall back into authoritarianism? And where is that threshold?

Research question

While a lot of debate surrounds the cases of Poland and Hungary, this thesis has been motivated by looking at the Czech Republic for understanding, in which ways the Czech case is either similar or different from its neighboring counterparts. The Czech Republic saw the election of billionaire Andrej Babiš, the leader of a centrist populist party, as Prime Minister in 2017, and his term has been influenced by allegations and scrutiny of fraud and corruption. Is this presumed democratic backsliding thus a regional trend in the Central Eastern Europe? This is the questions that initially led my motivation for this thesis. The intent is to understand the processes of what is going on the region but mostly from a Czech perspective.

Through Milada Vachudova's (2005) book *Europe Undivided*, I was presented with the studies of legacies as a way to understand the trajectory of democratization processes in CEE. It inspired me to follow the tracks that Vachudova had laid out to see what has happened since her research and to see can explain the current political circumstances. My research question is formulated as follows:

*How can the post-communist legacies of the Czech Republic explain its
current state of democracy?*

To answers this question, I will be using a process-tracing method, to trace certain mechanisms that has been happening since 1989 and up to now. Process-tracing is mostly interested in confirming or disconfirming theories, and I am aiming to do exactly that with Vachudova's theory. Her theory explores the democratic trajectory of the CEE states, and she argues that we should expect that the Czech Republic, along with Poland and Hungary, would build a strong, competitive democracy. As this seems evidently not the case anymore, I intend to understand where the trajectory changed. If anything disrupted the post-communist legacies of the liberal democracies in CEE, or if it has to do with underlying circumstances invisible during Vachudova's study.

A central point to Vachudova's argument is that if the communist party reforms, the nation state is more likely to experience a successful democratization towards a liberal democracy. But the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia never reformed in any fundamental way, which contradicts her theory. Vachudova says that the Czech Republic is a hybrid case, but I would counter that it is not a hybrid case, but a completely different legacy that is at fault for the current assumed crisis of democracy. I am thus confirming her theory, that a reformed communist party was essential as a part of the democratization process, but disconfirming that the Czech case wasn't a hybrid case – however that the unreformed communist party has indeed had significant consequences of the democratic trajectory in the Czech Republic.

Based on the body of literature read in connection with writing this thesis, my hypothesis is that the Czech democratic is not in a deep crisis, at least not yet, but the amassing of power by ANO 2011, or Andrej Babiš, should not be taken lightly either. In my thesis, I will be exploring if the political legitimacy of the communist party, a perceived anti-system party, has created a different legacy in the Czech Republic, one that validates the presence of anti-politics, or anti-establishment, parties such as either ANO 2011 or the KSČM.

Thesis outline

This chapter will be followed by an elaboration of the political context relevant to my study. I will present the political and electoral structure of the Czech Republic, briefly present the four most important parties, including a more comprehensive exploration of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, followed by an introduction to the other key party of this study, ANO 2011, and the current political context. This will be followed by a short literary review on the topic of democratic backsliding, focusing mostly on literature looking at CEE and the cases studied there. This chapter is to give the reader an overview of what democratic backsliding is, as it is a focal point of my study, but also why the term might be misleading and why it might be time to abandon the backsliding paradigm.

In the following chapter I will explain what process-tracing methods are and how to do what is called in-depth theory-testing process-tracing, which is what I will be using as my method. Vachudova's theory on democratization in CEE will be presented after the methodology chapter, in which I will present her theory but also why I choose her theory to begin with. Next is the analysis, which is divided into three sub-chapters according to three main phases of the process-tracing method that I will be using. Finally, I will present my findings and conclusions from this study.

Chapter 1: Context

1. 1. Electoral System and Political Structure of the Czech Republic

The following subchapter is sourced from informational pdf-sheets from the website of the Office of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The current electoral system in the Czech Republic is provided by the constitution from 1992. It is a bicameral, parliamentary system and is a continuation of the system of the Czechoslovak parliamentarism that was in place during the First Republic of the interwar years. The two chambers of the parliament are the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The Chamber of Deputies consists of 200 seats, so a majority of the Chamber is 101 deputies. The mandates are divided into seats using the proportional electoral system, the d'Hondt formula, and anyone of the age 21 or older can apply as a candidate. The length of a term for the Chamber of Deputies is four years. Election of deputies to the Chamber is by proportional representation (Chamber of Deputies 2006a; 2006b; 2017).

When it comes to the legislative process, at least three individual Deputies or groups of Deputies, the entire Senate, the Government, and the Regional Assemblies hold the right to initiate a piece of legislation, but it is commonly exercised by the Government and Deputies or groups of Deputies. There are three main procedures to adopt a piece of legislature, depending on the type of law that is to be passed. These are: The approval of bill by both chambers of Parliament; approval of bill by both chambers of Parliament where the Chamber of Deputies have the right to overrule the Senate; and the approval of a bill solely by the Chamber of Deputies. There are some exceptions that may apply to these though. It is most common that the Chamber of Deputies will be the first to deliberate on a proposal and they may spend three readings of a bill before approving it and pass it to the Senate, which will then have thirty days to either approve of the bill, reject it, return it to the Chamber of Deputies for amendments or pass it directly to the President for signature. The Chamber of Deputies can choose to approve of a bill by the conclusion of the first readings. This can pass unless two Deputies Clubs or at least fifty Deputies raise an objection before the end of the general parliamentary debate in the first reading. The final part of the passing of a bill is the signature of the President. The President has veto power and can with reason return a law within fifteen days of receiving it. If so, the Chamber of Deputies must hold a vote on the law and if the Chamber upholds the law by an absolute majority, the law is declared in the Collection of Laws, without the signature of the President. If not, the law is considered defeated (Chamber of Deputies 2006b).

Most laws require more than one-half of those who are voting in favor to be passed. There is a need for at least half of all deputies voting in favor, meaning at least 101 deputies, if it is a matter of overturning a veto by the President, declaration of war, vote of no confidence of when a bill has been returned by the Senate. Furthermore, in the case of passing constitutional acts, dissolving the Chamber of Deputies or ratifying international treaties, there is a need for a majority of three-fifths, 120 deputies (Novotný 2021:115).

The electoral system of the Czech Republic is through proportional representation. This method has been criticized and under the discussions of need of reform since 1996, as the Czech parliament continuously has difficulties with forming stable coalitions, resulting in governments of minimum majorities or fragile governments. Right-wing parties, primarily, have proposed to change the electoral form to a majoritarian system, as they argue it would have the power to stabilize government formation, in contrast to the current electoral system (Brunclík & Bureš 2009).

1. 2. Political system of the Czech Republic

1.2.1. *Established Parties*

For a most of the late 90s and early 2000s, the Czech party system was dominated by four political parties. This quartet was the Civic Democratic Party, ODS (*Občanská demokratická strana*), the Czech Social Democratic Party, ČSSD (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická*), the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party, KDU-ČSL (*Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová*) and lastly the protagonist of my thesis, The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, KSČM (*Kommunistická strana Čech a Moravy*). Here I will briefly present the three first parties, followed by a more elaborate presentation of the KSČM.

The ODS was initially a division within the Civic Forum but was later created as a right-wing liberal conservative party established by Václav Klaus. The party looked up to the British Conservatives and Thatcherism as their model of forming their ideological framework (Línek & Mansfeldová 2006:21). ODS has been the strongest right-wing party in the Czech Republic since the early 1990 and under the leadership of Klaus during the 90s, the party's policies were strongly Euroskeptic and even nationalistic, but this approach has gradually been abandoned after Mirek Topolánek was elected as party chairman in the early 2000s (Hloušek & Kopeček 2010:169-70). The KDU-ČSL is positioned as a liberal-conservative party with Christian and social values. It promotes a social market economy and due to its political position on right-of-center, it has enjoyed being in government several times, both in coalition with the right-wing ODS and the moderate left-wing ČSSD (ibid.20). KDU-ČSL is

technically an electoral coalition between two parties, the Christian and Democratic Union with the Czechoslovak People's Party, the latter having been established in 1918-1919 during the First Republic, as a unification of catholic political formations (Hloušek & Kopeček 2010:142). The Social Democrats, the ČSSD, was founded in November 1989 but has root that dates back to 1878, however the party had little continuity in terms of organizational structure and elite formation, and they were probably the weakest of the peer social democratic parties of CEE in the early 1990s (Bakke & Sitter 2021). The ČSSD is a center-left positioned party and is the strongest left-wing party in the Czech Republic, however, it is also the only strongly established party on the left besides the extreme KSČM, which means the party usually has no options for forming coalitions with other left-wing parties.

1.2.2. *The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, KSČM*

Since the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia plays a central role in my thesis, they require a paragraph entirely for themselves. Essential to understanding the KSČM is that they are the direct successor of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, KSČ (*Kommunistická strana Československa*), which was at the ruling party of the country from 1948 to November 1989.

The party, KSČ, was established in 1921, technically as a secessionist to the Czechoslovak Social Democracy party, and it joined the Communist International (CI), a Moscow-based organization that sought to promote Bolshevism to the rest of Europe, shortly after. In the years of the First Republic the KSČ consistently won somewhere between 10-13 percent of the total vote, much like the KSČM has done in the past two decades, but did not form coalitions with the governments, as their "radical ideology" kept parties on both the left and right from cooperating with them. The only time the KSČ was a member of a coalition was in 1946, in which they held 40 percent of the total vote (Lach et. al. 2010:365). Two year later, in February of 1948, following the mass resignation of ministers as an act of protest, the KSČ committed a, formally legal, coup d'état which led to their forty-year long totalitarian reign (Rothschild & Wingfield 2008:75). The historic roots of the KSČM that stretches before the communist era is argued to be the reason behind the party's current public support (Stegmaier & Vlachová 2009:801).

Round table agreements after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 listed which parties were to be declared legal, and this included the KSČ, thus despite their part in the previous totalitarian regime, they did not have to register as a new party and was one step ahead for the first round of democratic elections in 1990, alongside with Civic Forum and Public Against Violence (the Slovak counterpart to Civic

Forum). Already in March 1990 the KSČM was established as a territorial group under the KSČ, meant as a counterpart to the Communist Party of Slovakia, KSS (*Komunistická strana Slovenska*). Despite internal debate on how to adopt to the new democratic political environment, the party stuck to its communist ideological principles and did not reform to more moderate left-wing standpoints. They did make a declaration of apology to all citizens for the party's [...] „past mistakes and injustices“, however the party has never really distanced itself from its past so the sincerity of its apology is questionable (Stegmaier & Vlachová 2009:803; Czyżniewski 2016:65). Relating to the lack of reform, Rotschild and Wingfield describes the KSČM in their book thus:

“Throughout the 1990s and into the next decade, the Czech Communist Party neither repudiated the authoritarian regime it had built and controlled in Czechoslovakia nor rejected Communist doctrine. It employed chauvinism and xenophobia together with criticism of economic reform and nostalgia for the Communist past to gain votes” (ibid.:217).

According to the Czech Election Study 2006, the supporters of the KSČM are mostly older and lesser educated demographic, many are retired and worked with manual labor before they went into retirement. Stegmaier and Vlachová also points out that it appears that there is a low household standard of living among the communist supporters. Also, almost two-thirds of the voters have been members of the party for more than 40 years. The apparently loyal group of supporters for the KSČM can help explain how the party has managed to keep approximately 10 percent, or more, of the total votes from 1990 to 2017 (Stegmaier & Vlachová 2009:805-8). As Hanley argues, the KSČM can be interpreted as a ‘subcultural party’, which is a party that is “[...] based on a distinct, culturally defined segments of society with similar lifestyles [...] which is organizationally expressed by the party and affiliated organizations” (Hanley 2001:106). Due to its ability to retain mass membership and organization, and its electorate mainly being composed of retired people, meaning that the party one can conclude that the party has a relative narrow social base of supporters.

The KSČM appears to attract voters that are experiencing some sense of discontentment. Hanley describes what the party's constituency as the ‘working people’, or anyone who is perceived as threatened by the capitalist system (ibid.:108). The study by Lach et. al. (2010) also suggests that strong predictors of electoral support for the KSČM are variables such as unemployment, population density of one's region and crime rate in their region. The same article also quotes the abovementioned 2006 Czech Election Study, revealing that the KSČM voters are also the voters that

express “[...] the highest dissatisfaction of democracy and the highest distrust in institutions” (ibid.:380). Another study done in 2010 indicated, that 72 percent KSČM voters consider the situation in the Czech Republic to be bad, and only 7 percent consider it to be good, indicating the supporters of KSČM belong to a group that is generally dissatisfied with the way things are (Czyżniewski:67).

It makes sense that the KSČM is appealing to this group of the Czech population, especially if we interpret the status of the party as an anti-system party. Their party platform of 2004 was characterized by ‘practical Marxism’, as they do not reject the democratic system in which they exist, but still reject capitalism as the main antagonist of the world order. In the mentioned party platform, they called for job creation in the Czech Republic, both within the private and industrial sector, recognizing the need for improvement within both state, cooperative and private sector, which indicates a step away from Marxist dogmatics (Lach et. al. 2010:374-7). Still, the KSČM enjoys the image of being perceived as an alternative to the political reality. Anti-system parties can be interpreted as “[...] a threat to the regime, even to democracy” (Czyżniewski 2016:68) but also simply as a party of different ideological positioning than the rest of the party system, the latter being an important part of political systems in democracies. Czyżniewski refers to Bureš, who said that anti-system parties express a non-acceptance of the contemporary political and economic system, but that this does not necessarily mean that a party would pursue fundamental change to the system. It is argued, that the KSČM does not have any intentions of realizing system reform through violent or undemocratic means, and that the party does express respect of the norms of parliamentary democracy (ibid.:68-69). However, it appears that the party is still perceived as an anti-system party by its electorate, who supports the party in the search for an alternative to the current system, and by the rest of the Czech party system, who express reluctance to accept the KSČM in the democratic institutions.

1.2.3. ANO 2011

ANO 2011, henceforth referred to as just ANO, will also be a prevalent character in this thesis, so in this subchapter I will briefly introduce the party. ANO was initially formed in November 2011 as a civic movement, motivated to address „the dissatisfaction with the state of politics and economy“ (Cirhan & Kopecký 2020:98), which has also become a large platform for the party itself. It is led by billionaire and holder of Agrofert, Andrej Babiš. The party saw a great success at their first parliamentary election in 2013 and Babiš was held the office as Prime Minister of the Czech Republic from 2017 to 2021.

The party is according to both scholarly literature and the media regarded as a populist party (Hanley & Vachudova 2018; Kopeček 2016, Bernhard, Guasti & Buštková 2019) but is also categorized as “technocratic” (Buštková & Guasti 2017). Buštková & Guasti specifically defines ANO as ‘technocratic populist’: “[...] a ‘thin’ ideology that rejects the traditional political parties on the left and on the right and promises a-political expert solutions that will benefit the ‘ordinary people’” (ibid.:304). The rise of ANO happened succeeding a culmination of political scandals and allegations of corruption in the Czech Republic, which can help explain the popularity of the party. It offered to fix politics from within, campaigning with the slogan “We are not politicians, we work” during the 2013 electoral campaign (Stegmaier & Linek 2014:387). The party structure is described as entrepreneurial or a ‘business-firm party’, partially because it was founded by an entrepreneur, and his role as the leader is very much the center of the party. Babiš leadership is rather essential in the understanding of the party as an entrepreneurial party, as his recourses are argued to have had a large impact of their access to the public media, their campaign financials but also the proposition of leading the country and fixing its issues as one would with a company (Kopeček 2016).

However, even though the party platform was largely anti-corruption, Babiš has faced several allegations of fraud and corruption himself. He has faced criminal allegations and criminal investigations, as a leaked EU report by the European Commission stated that he was „Guilty of conflict of interest on further EU subsidies worth €17.5 million“ (Rettman 2019). He has been involved with a case about the kidnapping of his son, allegedly to prevent him from testifying in the case about his father committing fraud (Czech PM Denies 2018) and was revealed in the infamous Pandora Papers to have “[...] used shell companies to buy property and a luxury chateau on the French Riviera in 2009” (Mortkowitz 2021). He is also listed as beneficial owner of Agrofert's German subsidiaries by Transparency International (Transparency International 2021), an organization that he himself has labeled as corrupt (Enyedi 2020:370). The leader of the party is arguably the core of the party itself, as Babiš is quoted to have said himself: „The party is me“ (Foy 2016).

The main relevancy of ANO in this thesis, is how the party and its leader has been examined through the lens of democratic backsliding a lot in recent academic literature. Most notably is the article by Hanley and Vachudova (2018), which sets out to examine in which ways ANO has been or is causing democratic backsliding. They conclude that while similar processes of democratic erosion are related to ANO and Babiš, the Czech case in a few ways. This has mostly to do with the sequence of events leading to the aggrandizement of power, but also that Babiš seems to be the main actor of centralizing

power, in contrast to Poland and Hungary where the party is just as important. Babiš' rhetorics are also significantly less nationalistic and rather technocratic, compared to his regional counterpart.

1.3. Context - Diagnostics of the Czech democracy

CEE states, including the Czech Republic, have been under heavy research in terms of how to understand democratization processes, or the 'opposite' directions as it appears to be the current case. I will present some of the literature on how some scholars would diagnose the Czech Republic.

Bönker (2020) approaches the issue of 'how is the state of Czech democracy?' by looking at different indices of democracy. He takes indices from the Polity, Freedom House and V-dem and points out that the Czech Republic had a change of +10 to +8 of their score with the Polity, which is cited to be due to the fact that "[...] political competition in the Czech Republic has increasingly exhibited characteristic of political factionalism" (Polity IV 2011, as cited by Bönker: 24). He points out that The Freedom House Index reports of a good quality of the Czech Democracy since 1993. Lastly, he looks at V-Dem indices for 'electoral democracy' and 'liberal democracy', which shows fluctuations. He determines that quality of democracy have been relatively high since the independence of the Czech Republic, but that is has declined significantly since 2008 (ibid.:24-26). He notes, that EIU's Democracy Index in 2014 no longer classified the Czech Republic as a 'full democracy' and was instead labelled as a 'flawed democracy'. In comparison, according to different assessments that Bönker provides in his chapter, the Czech Republic is categorized as 'consolidated democracy', by Bertelsmann Transformation Index, 'liberal democracy' by Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Index, 'consolidated democracy' by Nations in Transit, and the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index calls it 'liberal democracy minus', meaning that it is scoring on the lower levels of other liberal democracies (ibid.:27). As Bönker points out, there seems to both a consensus among the different indices, that the status of democracy in the Czech Republic has declined, but just how severe the diagnosis is, is unclear.

In Andrew Robert's (2017) book review of six different book by Czechs, he offers a neat overview of some of the native's own diagnosis of 'what is wrong with democracy in the Czech Republic today'. Michael Kubát is cited to understand the issues of the Czech democracy to be due the national government and parliament's inability to act comprehensively nor effectively. Vladimíra Dvořáková blames the increase of corruption within the nation. Michael Klima agrees with Dvořáková and considers the Czech Republic to have been clientelized from above as well as below; above by large business that use their influence on national leaders and below by local businessmen and 'godfathers'.

He sees the corruption as worsening, but also „abuse of intelligence services, unstable and ineffective government, and the declining significance of elections“ (ibid.:565). Petr Fiala, the current prime minister of the Czech Republic, also acknowledge corruption as an issue but not directly part of the diagnosis, rather a symptom. In his opinion, it is underpoliticisation of institutions that poses as the real issue to Czech democracy. He says, that there is a disconnect between the electorate and the elected, that needs to be bridged. Lastly, Ilona Švihlíková's book blames the economy for the major problems of the Czech Republic. She says they have become “a colony of its richer neighbors” (ibid.: 565). This mélange of opinion about what is wrong with the Czech Republic today includes issues with the institutions, political culture, policies or lack of participation, however, it seems to clear, that all six agree on one thing – there is something rotten with the democracy of the Czech Republic.

Recently, the book appropriately titled *Czech Democracy in Crisis* (2020), edited by Lorenz and Formánková, presents a variety of explanations of what is threatening the Czech democracy right now. Lorenz herself presents how the political system of the Czech Republic seems to include several issues to look into, to promote a healthy, liberal democracy in the state. She highlights the need for studies within policy fields, relationship between society, media and political decision-making arenas, the relationship between Czechs and the EU, and so forth (Lorenz 2020:10). Peter Guasti reflects upon the effects of populism and technocracy in the Czech Republic, citing Babiš' use of political power to weaken his adversaries along with the rejection of both horizontal and vertical accountability to stay in office, as a major issue for the Czech democracy (Guasti 2020). The Czech civil society has experienced a rapid pushback the past years, especially during Babiš' last term in 2019, that made it hard for NGOs and civil organization to stay relevant and keep in good relations with the government and businesses, which in turn is furthering the distance between the citizens and the democratic institutions, which is covered by Stephanie Weiss' chapter in the book (2020). The characteristics of the electoral system itself is criticized by Balík & Hloušek (2020), because the Czech political cycle forces their politicians to be in a state of perpetual campaigning and the voters always have yet another election to look into, leading to a mistrust in the electoral system, expanding the growing distance between the political elite and the voters.

There is a wide collection of academic literature exploring the state of democratic backsliding in CEE. Cianetti, Dawson & Hanley (2018) argues that there at variety of patterns of democratic backsliding present in CEE, some of these being: that EU member states are stepping away from some of the accession conditionalities, the EU's inability to sanction these members, the lack of shared liberal-democratic values, frustrations following the great recession of 2008-9, patterns of populism and the

geo-political influences by Russia. Specifically, they argue that these issues represent more than just post-communist legacies.

The notion that the CEE states are motioning towards authoritarian regimes is shared by Zsolt Enyedi (2020), who presents what he calls the 'five innovations of the authoritarian elite'. He presents how the CEE nation states exhibits these 'innovations' to some degree. The innovations presented involve self-victimhood, cross-nationalism, anti-immigration platforms, condemnation of the state and civil society but also an incorporation of the rhetoric of the radical right (ibid.:2020).

However, some scholars argue that what is observed in CEE is not exactly democratic backsliding, or at least not in as severe a case as suspected. Buštiková and Guasti's article on this topic, argues that what we are seeing is not a 'turn' but rather a 'swerve', and that Hungary is the only case where it is truly at a risk of turning entirely authoritarian at this point (Buštiková and Guasti 2017). They are somewhat supported by Fagan, Kopecký, Buštiková and Pirro (2020), who argues that the processes happening the region are not unique here but can be interpreted as "[...] a precursor for what is to follow further west; an extreme reaction at the periphery or a more rapid and far-reaching impact amongst countries that are more vulnerable to economic crisis or other existential threats" (ibid.:315). Bochsler & Juon (2020) agrees, that the crisis of democracy in CEE is not as severe as academics and political analysts consider it to be. According to them the most significant patterns of democratic backsliding in the region are the reduction of political competition and lesser transparent governments in populist rule. They also argue that the populist rule is not a sufficient way to explain the status of democracy in the region and that these cases should be treated very context-dependent and not as a regional trend.

Chapter 2: Democratic backsliding

Since I have now presented a series of scholarly diagnostics of the state of Czech democracy and the current context of democratic backsliding in the region, this chapter will present some recent literature on the topic of democratic backsliding and why the term should probably be abandoned for better ways to understand young democracies. Democratic backsliding has been closely connected to the term illiberal democracy which saw a rise in popularity by academic scholars in 2014 due to the political shift in Hungary and Poland (Surowiec & Štětka 2020:3; Cianetti & Hanley 2020). Indeed, in a study based on data by V-dem conducted by Lührmann & Lindberg (2019), the authors conclude that we are currently in a 'third wave of autocratization'. According to them, an autocratization wave is a period of time when nation states in transitioning democratization processes starts to decline and affect more countries into autocratic-like states (ibid.:1102). Despite this gloomy outlook, they confirm that this third wave of autocratization may turn out to be milder than the previous two, this study does emphasize the need for further understanding of the transitions between democracy and autocracy, possibly through the lens of democratic backsliding.

Possible definitions of democratic backsliding could either be: "At its most basic, it denotes the state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy" (Bermeo 2016) or as "[...] changes in formal or informal institutions that move the polity in the direction of a hybrid or authoritarian regime" (Hanley & Vachudova 2018). According to the former, whose definition is relatively vague, political institutions are diverse and so is the ways to undermine these as well. Thus, there are multiple ways to observe democratic backsliding a definition needs to embrace these. The major take-away from Bermeo's paper is that sudden regressions of democracy, such as coup d'états, promissory coups or executive coups, have declined in frequency while three other variants are happening increasingly. These are executive aggrandizement, election day fraud, and manipulating election strategically (Bermeo 2016). Hanley & Vachudova agree with Bermeo on the point that democratic backsliding is almost a counterpoint to sudden regime shifts in the shape of i.e. coups, and that it is committed by those who are already in the position of power. To them, targets of democratic regression would be institutions such as constitutional courts, the judiciary, media, top appointments to state-owned companies and agencies, educational and cultural institutions, rules governing elections and party funding and campaigning (Hanley & Vachudova 2018). This also supports what has been concluded by Lührmann and Lindberg, which is that autocratization processes

no longer happen violently and sudden but has taken a slow and gradual nature instead (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019).

Erosion of democracy is explored as the rejection of horizontal, vertical and diagonal accountability by Peter Guasti (2020). In his optic, democratic erosion can happen at either of these three variables. Vertical accountability can take the form of mechanisms in formal political participation, such as electoral accountability and political parties. Horizontal accountability is about the extent to which state institutions can hold an executive branch of government accountable, which is to say in the legislature, judiciary and oversight bodies. Diagonal accountability is when citizens can hold their government accountable outside of formal participation, such as through their media freedom, civil society characteristics, freedom of expression and the degree to which citizens engage in national politics.

Democratic backsliding, quite naturally, poses as a challenge to different parts of democracies. Haggard & Kaufman (2021) identifies how democratic backsliding challenges the three pillars of democratic rule. The first is its ability to undermine the separation of power, which is set in place to hold each institution accountable and independent from one another. The second is the way democratic backsliding can erode the protection of citizen's rights. And thirdly, it challenges the electoral process itself, which has to do with vertical accountability, as Peter Guasti also identifies as a main part of democratic backsliding, as stated above. They also very aptly reveal that polarization can be the source of democratic backsliding.

However, it seems that the academic discussion is shifting now. Bustikova & Guasti 2017 tries to confront the concepts of democratic backsliding and illiberal turn by looking at turns and swerves of the state of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. To them, democratic backsliding and illiberal turns assumes a destination at liberal democracy and anything that works against this trajectory is an act of falling or turning 'backwards'. They propose the concept of 'swerving' as it assumes natural waves of weakened pluralism that is likely to happen in any democracy due to variety of reasons. To them, there are three possible conditions for illiberal turns: 1) Executive aggrandizement, 2) Contested sovereignty that increases polarization and 3) Dominant party winning two consecutive elections. If only the first two conditions are observed in a case, it is 'only' a swerve, not a turn. For a swerve to become a proper illiberal turn, they demand the presence of five conditions: 1) Political polarization that prevents consensus of democratic polity, 2) Capture of courts to dismantle rule of law and balance of power, 3) Political control of media, 4) Legal persecution of civil society to disable

mobilization and protests and 5) Change in electoral rules and the constitution to permanently weaken the political opposition.

Cianetti & Hanley (2020) also addresses the issues with the concept of democratic backsliding. One of their points of critique is that this paradigm only allows for three possible directions of movement which could lead to blind spots in the area of study. This is also a point that has been critiqued by Lührmann and Lindberg, saying that the analogy of spatial movement by 'sliding' backwards, leaves some problematic implication of our understanding of both democracy and autocracy. They argue that a regime cannot slide 'further back' into deeper autocracy if it is already such, that implies a narrow sense of direction for democracy, just as Cianetti and Hanley says, and that the 'sliding' metaphor makes it sound like it happens on accident, not through well-calculated and deliberate choices by political actors (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019:1099). The term also implies that any non-democratic change or event is at risk of being interpreted as sliding 'backwards' into autocracy. As Cianetti and Hanley writes:

"Many accounts of backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe have tended to dwell on the immediate political context such as electoral volatility, polarization [...] or changes in external actors' policies such as the fading of the EU's accession conditionalities. The fact that one-time democratic front-runners such as Hungary and Poland succumbed to backsliding has tended to reinforce the view of backsliding as a contagion – driven by the rise of illiberal ideas and unscrupulous elites – that can spread regardless of structural conditions" (ibid.)

The regime changes seen in Hungary and Poland might have set the spark for the wide examination of democratic backsliding, but one should be careful not to assume that the entire region is infested with the backsliding-virus. This is partially what has sparked the motivation for the topic of this thesis. While I both intend to explore in what way the Czech case differs from Hungary and Poland, I also wish to understand the assumed crisis of Czech democracy, in a larger context that goes beyond the 'immediate political context', by looking at how the simple presence of the communist party in the parliament can have had a severe effect on the political and democratic processes itself. I need to emphasize, that this thesis does not intend to prove that the Czech Republic's democracy is backsliding, nor do I aim to use this term in my way of analyzing the Czech democracy. What I do want to attempt is an understanding of the Czech democracy through the current context of democratic backsliding in CEE.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I aim to show the connection between a set cause and an outcome, so I have selected to use process-tracing as my method for my thesis. In this chapter I will present what process-tracing methods are and how to conduct a case study using theory-testing process-tracing. I will be following the method as presented by Beach and Pedersen in their book *Process-Tracing Methods. Foundations and Guidelines* (2019). First, I will present what process-tracing is, elaborating on what causal mechanisms and mechanistic evidence are and follow this up with how Beach and Pedersen suggest conducting an in-depth theory-testing process-tracing. The chapter will finish with a short discussion of chosen data and how it will be used in the analysis.

3.1. What is process-tracing methods?

In Beach and Pedersen's own words: "Process-tracing is a research method for tracing causal mechanisms using detailed, within-case empirical analysis of how a causal mechanism operated in real-world cases" (Beach & Pedersen 2019:1). In its essence, process-tracing is learning about how things work by observing causal processes that binds causes and outcomes together.

In process-tracing, it is important to keep in mind that it is not simply a matter of describing a series of event in chronological order, but rather revealing what happened and for which reasons. It is about understanding underlying patterns of the subject of the case-study and how each part is connected to each other.

When using process-tracing, the researcher is looking at causes and outcomes, and intends to analyze the processes that has happened in between the two. Beach & Pedersen strongly emphasizes that if you think of process-tracing as follows: [Cause → Outcome], what the method aims to do is to unpack that arrow in between the two in full detail. These are what is called *causal mechanisms*, or *causal processes*. I will be using the term 'causal mechanisms' in my thesis.

Beach & Pedersen presents three core components of process-tracing:

- 1) Theorization about causal mechanisms linking causes and outcomes together.
- 2) Analysis of the observable empirical manifestations of theorized mechanisms.
- 3) The complimentary use of comparative methods to select cases and to enable generalizations of findings from single-case studies to other causally similar cases (ibid.:1)

The goal of process-tracing is to evaluate if the evidence that is collected in the single case-study proves that the hypothesized causal mechanisms, that is supposed to link a cause and outcome together, functions in the way that is expected to do.

3.2. Causal mechanisms

As previously stated, causal mechanisms are what links the cause and outcome together and they are the center of the process-tracing analysis. A cause will necessarily have to be something that triggers a causal mechanism to happen, leading to either other parts of a causal mechanisms or an outcome. Beach & Pedersen presents three criteria for the relationship between cause and outcome. These are: 1) That cause and outcome must be contiguous in time, 2) the cause must have occurred before the outcome, which has to do with temporal succession and 3) there has to be a regular conjunction between the cause and the outcome (ibid.:35-41). Cause and outcome should be connected by mechanisms in a productive relationship, meaning that the causal mechanism or parts of a mechanism should logically lead to the next set of a mechanism or an outcome.

3.3. Systems understanding

According to Beach & Pedersen, the literature on process-tracing do not form a comprehensive consensus of what mechanisms actually are and how they are used. They present two different variants of causal mechanisms that they judge have appropriate consensus among researchers. These two variants are minimalist and systems understanding. Since I plan to use the systems understanding, thus I will only present this way of understanding causal mechanisms.

Systems understanding is operating at a relatively low level of abstraction as it attempts to be incredible specific and detailed in its unpacking of causal mechanisms that links to a cause and an outcome. Beach & Pedersen defines the systems understanding as: “[...] systems of interlocking parts that transfers power or forces between a cause (or a set of causes) to an outcome” (ibid.:38). The goal of using the systems understanding is to follow the processes and unpacking the mechanisms in detail. All the parts of the causal relation need to logically lead to the next part, binding them in a productive continuity. This approach is very holistic, seeing as the mechanisms present are not variables, and should never be considered as such, since they have no inherent value on their own, rather they are “[...] integral elements of a system that transmits causal forces to the outcome” (ibid.:38).

A systems understanding of causal mechanisms can be illustrated as followed:

$$[\text{Cause} \rightarrow \text{Pt}_1 (e_1 * a_1) \rightarrow \text{Pt}_2 (e_2 * a_2) \rightarrow \text{Outcome}]$$

Here we see that the two parts of the mechanisms are unpacked ($Pt_1 (e_1 * a_1)$). *e* stands for *entity* and *a* stands for *activity* – this means that every single part of a mechanism should be defined and understood as entities, or actors, participating in activities, that are able to transfer energy or power to the next part of the mechanism or the outcome.

3.4. Mechanistic evidence

Mechanistic evidence can be interpreted as the ‘relevant evidence’ in the causal relation that “[...] offers an appropriate standard for defining which forms of empirical material can act as mechanistic evidence in case-based designs” (ibid.:171). The thing about mechanistic evidence is that it is dependent on the context of the case that is being studied, so the manifestations of mechanistic evidence can be rather unique.

3.5. Empirical fingerprints

Empirical fingerprints describe the sort-of ‘clues’ left behind by causal mechanisms. They are like footprints in the snow; we expect them to be there if someone has been walking through the snow, and if we do not find footprints, we have no reason to believe anyone has been here since the snow fall. Prior to looking for the empirical fingerprints, Beach and Pedersen asks the researcher to formulate propositions of empirical fingerprints, which are hypothetical proposals as to what kinds of ‘footprints’ we would expect to find after our metaphorical snowfall.

3.5. In-depth Theory-testing Process-tracing

Beach & Pedersen identifies four different approaches or ways to do process-tracing: Theory-testing, theory-building, theoretical-revision and explaining-outcome process-tracing. I intend to use in-depth theory-testing process-tracing in this thesis, thus I will only present this approach to process-tracing.

3.5.1. Conceptualize

The first phase to in-depth theory-testing process-tracing is to define concepts as concretely as possible. This is where Beach and Pedersen emphasize, that one should not think of mechanistic explanations as variables, but should be considered asymmetric causal claims, meaning that “[...] if the causal and contextual conditions are present that trigger a mechanism, the mechanism will be present in the case” (ibid.:55).

Defining concepts is a theorizing step, where we need to define the aspects of concepts that make them causally related to a mechanistic explanation. This means that the researcher has to understand the essence of what a particular concept means as either concept or outcome. In my case, I need to

define 'unreformed communist party' as a cause and 'emergence of populist movements' as the outcome and how these relate to the entire causal relation. They present a three-point guideline of how to properly define one's concepts: Firstly, concepts should be defined thickly, secondly, they should be compatible with mechanistic claims and lastly, they should focus on the positive pole of the definition (ibid.:57).

In terms of defining our concepts as narrowly as possible, it is to avoid that we have too large populations that would correspond with cases with different causal properties. They ask that we understand our concepts as unique and consider clearly what, so to speak, 'powers' they have that trigger the causal mechanism. It is important to keep in mind, that every part of the causal relation, need to connect strongly with each other, which is related to the second point. We cannot simply define concepts vaguely but need to make sure that they are causally relevant, because we need to be able to observe that they do indeed trigger the hypothesized or empirically observed causal mechanism. Lastly, Beach & Pedersen argues against defining one's concepts in a negative-positive binary spectrum but rather focus on the definition of the positive pole of the concept. In terms of defining concepts by their positive pole, Beach & Pedersen elaborates that since causal claims are inherently asymmetric, this means we are only consider the positive pole to contain any power in the causal relation, not the negative pole, which is why it is unnecessary to define concept by negative-positive poles (ibid.:57-62).

The second step of the conceptualizing phase, says that the researcher need to formulate the causal mechanisms as *entities* engaging in *activities*. It is tempting to conduct process-tracing as if following the string of a narrative, but by solidifying in terms of *who* is doing *what* and how these are causally related, we have a much stronger mechanistic explanation. They expect the researcher to define entities by nouns and activities by verbs. By 'entities as nouns', they elaborate that the entities should be described as things that have "properties, structures, or orientations that enable them to engage in activities" (ibid.:71), meaning that it is important to pay attention to formulating the entities as something that is inherently related to and naturally able to engage in the defined activities. It is vital that we pay close attention to how we define these activities, as we need to be able to explain why those activities have the ability to transfer causal forces to the next parts of the mechanism in such a way that we can formulate our proposition as to how they will appear in observations. They encourage researchers to define activities through verbs, as this ensures a definition where the activities transfer power to the next part of the causal relation. Beach and Pedersen calls to attention that every part of

a causal mechanism has to logically lead to the next, which is what they call *productive continuity* (ibid.:70-71).

After these two initial steps, Beach and Pedersen's guidelines ask the researcher to take into considerations whether their case study is appropriate for a minimalist or a systems understanding of causal mechanisms, the level of abstraction of concepts, the context of the case and what they call 'scope conditions', the temporal dimension, and lastly the level of analysis.

3.5.2. Operationalize

The second phase of theory-testing process-tracing is the operationalization. This phase takes a step away from simply looking at the case at a theoretical level by using one's prior knowledge to build a bridge between the hypothetical mechanisms and what could be expected to find during the collection of evidence. This means determining what kinds of empirical fingerprints the researcher expects to find, as if they were clues left behind. It is important to note, that this part is not the same as connecting empirical material with the theorized mechanisms, but it is about theorizing how the mechanism would work if the theory were correct. This step prepares the researcher for what exactly to look for in the collecting of empirical evidence.

To identify the empirical fingerprints of the case study the researcher has to formulate propositions. Beach and Pedersen present a three-steps guide to do so: 1) Get to know the empirical record to get ideas about potential empirical fingerprints, 2) be creative when formulating observables and 3) justify the theoretical certainty and uniqueness (ibid.:186-193).

The first step is to have a deep understanding of the context, or 'evidential setting' as they call it, of the case being studied. Not every case is the same, which means that mechanisms are likely to be different mechanisms which leaves different empirical fingerprints. This step is about gaining an overview of the setting of the chosen case study to have a better understanding of what is being looked for and where to look for it.

The second step concerns the propositions and how to formulate them. After getting a proper overview of the case-setting, the researcher must articulate how they expect to find the expected empirical fingerprints. The specific advice by Beach and Pedersen is to be very creative at this step, as to make sure that the types of evidence that one is looking for is clearly defined, since the clearer the definition, the easier it is to determine if the empirical fingerprints has indeed been found.

The last step to this process, is about evaluating the hypothesized empirical fingerprints by determining their theoretical certainty and uniqueness. What Beach and Pedersen is asking of the researcher, is to develop a reasoned argument for why the evidence-generating process of the causal mechanisms being studied would leave these particular fingerprints that is being proposed. It means that one must make both theoretical and case specific arguments about what the postulated observables would mean in a given context by asking where it would be expected to find the evidence and why it would leave this specific fingerprint. Theoretical certainty concerns itself with what kinds of empirical fingerprints one expects to find. If a proposition is theoretically certain, it is essential that it is found in the study. On the other hand, we need to also look into other alternative explanations for finding empirical fingerprints. Could this be found while being part of a different set or part of a mechanism? If there are no other alternative explanations to the discovery/finding of the observable, it is an indication that it is theoretically unique.

A third thing to do when formulating one's propositions, is to determine the prior confidence in the mechanisms. Prior confidence has to do with the validity of a causal mechanisms, which is based in preexisting research of the overall causal relation. This is relevant, especially in the process of choosing a case to study, as mechanistic evidence with very high confidence makes little sense to study to disconfirm and learn something new, and vice versa, it doesn't make sense to try and confirm evidence with very little confidence (ibid.:182).

3.5.3. Collect and evaluate empirical evidence

The third phase of in-depth theory-testing process-tracing is about collecting and evaluating evidence. One needs to make a comprehensive search for observables of empirical fingerprints, and make sure that the chosen material is selected widely and not just if it suits the hypothesis. After the collection-phase, all of the found or not found material needs to be evaluated in terms of its empirical uniqueness, certainty, trustworthiness and if it can be justified to say what it is expected to say. The final part of the evaluation-phase is to make an aggregation of the mechanistic evidence (ibid.:259).

When collecting empirical material, Beach and Pedersen emphasizes the need to be strategic and not selective when looking for evidence, as 'cherry-picking' evidence to support one's hypothesis does not make a satisfying case study of process-tracing. This may seem like an obvious point, however, when looking for 'clues', it is much easier to be more attentive towards the material that supports the case, rather than the ones that does not (ibid.:197-9). They suggest using materials from interviews,

archival materials, memoirs, speeches, historical scholarships, any kind of primary sources or newspaper sources (ibid.:213-22).

Proceeding the collection of evidence, one has to evaluate what evidence was found or not found. If an observable was not found, it should be evaluated in terms of empirical certainty, and if it was indeed found, it should be evaluated by its empirical uniqueness.

Empirical certainty asks the researcher to consider why the evidence was not found. If it was due to a scarce access to the empirical record, meaning that there might be evidence of the proposed observable, but it was not found due to the lack of access to it, then it is considered to have low certainty. On the other hand, if there was abundant access to the empirical record and the observable still was not found, it has a high certainty. An unfound empirical fingerprint of high certainty would mean that the hypothesized mechanism can be disconfirmed.

If an observable was found, we need to determine its empirical uniqueness. Here, the researcher needs to determine whether the finding of the observable confirms the existence of the mechanism or if it is an indication of a deviation. Beach and Pedersen ask the researcher to reflect the content of the individual observations to determine if truly reflects evidence of the proposition. What does the observation tell us, what can it say of its source and the context of its production? One needs to take into account if the observable is trustworthy and we can justify that it actually is telling of what we expect it to be telling of, if this is the case, the evidence has a high empirical uniqueness. If the evidence is not to be trusted, it can have alternative explanations or if the observables were consciously selected to support one's research question, the evidence would have a low empirical uniqueness. When looking into the trustworthiness on either found or non-found observables, one has to look into systematic versus nonsystematic errors. Nonsystematic errors are random ones, while systematic errors look at the level of bias within the source. One also must consider the degree of confirmation of the evidence. If it is possible to document that an observable means what we have hypothesized that it does, then it has a high degree of confirmation, and vice versa, it has a high degree of disconfirmation if we can document an abundant access to empirical record while not finding the proposed observable (ibid.:199-207).

Aggregation of mechanistic evidence

When conducting the evaluation-phase of a process-tracing case study, Beach and Pedersen recommend evaluating the observables for each proposition individually, looking into its empirical certainty and uniqueness, its trustworthiness and finally determine what the existence of this empirical

observable says about the proposition before moving on with the evaluation. They suggest starting at the 'lowest level' of the propositions, working one's way higher as propositions are found or not found. They present this as an 'argument road map' (ibid.:223-229).

Beach and Pedersen present two main rules for aggregating mechanistic evidence. The first one says: "The additive properties of independent evidence, but with diminishing returns". This means that if a piece of evidence can update the posterior confidence in the causal mechanism, this piece of evidence will serve as prior confidence for the following pieces of evidence. Thus, when evaluating the mechanistic evidence, each piece builds upon each other. It is important that separate pieces of pieces should be independent from each other, because then they have an 'additive effect' on updating our knowledge, and if not, they do not tell us anything new. The second rule says: "Using the road map to evaluate the inferences enabled by empirical evidence". The argument road map works in the sense that the researcher should work their way from the bottom and upwards. This means that any claims about a proposition cannot be stronger than the pieces of evidence that it is supported by. If certain pieces of evidence are either not found or do not support the propositions properly, we can assume that the hypothesized causal mechanisms do not work the way it was expected (ibid.:234-236).

3.6. Data and limitations

I will be presenting my process-tracing analysis in a following chapter, which will be divided into three subchapters according to the different phases of in-depth theory-testing process-tracing. I intend to pursue process-tracing following Vachudova's theory (elaborated in next chapter) by looking at the unreformed communist party as the set cause for a causal relation leading to populist parties and an anti-system legacy as the outcome. Considering the scope of this project, I will not be looking into primary sources for my data, as I am limited in time and access of empirical records as a master's student. Thus, I will be using articles from newspapers, academic journals, and especially election results. A large part of the observables for this thesis is found in the results and following formation of governments in the Czech Republic. I am very specifically going to only address the parliamentary elections for the Chamber of Deputies, not presidential nor election for the Senate, as I am mostly interested in the forming of governments and opposition. I will be supporting the election results with academic articles and assessments of the elections to understand how the collaborations have happened between the different parties, but especially whether or not parties choose to cooperate with the communist party or not. Since I only possess a very basic understanding of the Czech language, I am

not able to use Czech sources, which would have been a great asset in this case. Czech newspaper articles, speeches by politicians, party manifestos or press releases that haven't been translated to English would have been very relevant to include in my data, but my limited language skills prevent me from doing so.

Chapter 4: Theory

The theory that Vachudova present in her book *Europe Undivided: Leverage, & Integration After Communism* (2005) is based on the argument that studies of legacies of the past can help explain the political and economic trajectories experienced in CEE after the collapse of communism in 1989 in the region. She studies six different nation states of the region: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, and she uses the term patterns of political change to explain how a nation state would become a liberal or illiberal democracy. According to her, the presence, or absence, of an organized opposition to communism is practically determining to which path a particular nation state would follow.

4.1. Choice of theory

Vachudova's book was released in 2005 and she states in her book that "[...] where the collapse of communism was quickly followed by the creation and strengthening of a competitive democratic political system, we should expect relatively rapid progress in building liberal democratic political institutions and a market-based economy" (Vachudova 2005:11). Since the release, the political trajectory of the CEE nation states has changed, radically even in some case. Both Poland and Hungary, whom she strongly considers the successors of democratization in her book, are now under the scrutiny of not upholding rule of law by the EU. The term 'democratic backsliding' has become a stable in studies of democracy and autocracy in Central Europe since 2016 and the election of Victor Orbán and his party Fidezs, and as I have presented above, the Czech Republic has also been studied under the lens of democratic backsliding in recent years. So, it seems evident that Vachudova's study was wrong. Or at least her expectations for the future of the CEE nation states were very inaccurate. My intentions with using her theory, is to follow her line of thought about the importance for communist parties to reform after the regime change, and what this meant specifically in the Czech Republic.

4.2. Legacies

Vachudova understand legacies as: "[...] political traditions and economic development before communism, as well as protest, repression, economic reform, political organization, state institutions, and socio-economic changes during communism" (ibid.:21). Her study is interested the character of the groups of elites at the point of the regime shift in the region. The point of the collapse of communist in 1989 is, according to Vachudova, the "critical juncture", implying that the state of the

elite groups at that specific point in time would determine the development of democracy and political competition in that particular nation state.

4.3. Political competition

According to Vachudova, political competition is the most important of the transition to liberal democracy. This is due to its ability to prevent or limit rent-seeking and help overcome information asymmetries. At the vital moment of the collapse of communism in CEE, if a state already had an organized opposition to the communist, there would already automatically be some form of institutionalized political competition present, and according to her study, this factor is essential in the path towards democratization for the CEE states.

At the point of a regime shift, it is the respective elites that rewrite the new rules of the new regime. Without competing political groups, the old elites are likely to abuse this power and “[...] forsake political pluralism and economic liberalism in favor of rent-seeking strategies that channel benefits to narrowly defined interest groups at the expense of society as a whole” (ibid.:13). In the period of transition from a planned economy towards a market-based one, the elites have great incentives to pursue rent-seeking strategies. She writes that partial reforms, of the Hellman’s ‘partial reform equilibrium model’, leads to rising rents due to the prices differences between the liberalized sectors of the economy and those still not part of the market mechanisms. This also leads to arbitrage opportunities for those fortunate enough, making an incentive for elites to keep to only a partial reform, stalling full transition to market-based economy, to seek rent themselves (ibid.:14). Political competition, according to Vachudova, can limit or prevent rent-seeking and is thus essential in her theory of CEE states’ democratic trajectory.

Related to rent-seeking, political competition can also contribute to overcoming information asymmetries. In the event of transitions such as the ones that happened in CEE at the end of the 1980s, there is a need for overarching reforms. However, the average citizens very rarely possess thorough knowledge of how politics are made, meaning that the elites in charge of re-writing policies of the regime change are free to implement reforms or policies, without their citizens understanding them fully in order to criticize them. Without an informed public to hold the decision-makers accountable, elites are free to implement political strategies however they please. Political competition can hinder the implementation of these strategies. The presence of an organized opposition will have the desire to hold the elites accountable for their policies and thus share information about the potential

consequences of the reforms or lack of reforms to the public and present them with alternative policies (ibid.:16-18).

Thus, the presence of an opposition at the moment of regime shift creates at least two rivalry groups that can keep each other accountable, and limit illiberal policies being implemented. For political competition to stay strong and keep a nation states' democratic trajectory towards a liberal one, Vachudova says that reforming the country's communist party is another important 'ingredient'.

4.5. Reformed communist party

Why do Vachudova consider a reformed communist party important, if a country already has two rivalry groups that can ensure political competition in the party system?

Firstly, Vachudova's study involves the Central and Eastern European nations Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. Of the six, she divides them into two categories – the ones that followed a liberal or an illiberal pattern of political change. She considers Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to belong to the liberal group, and Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria belonging to the illiberal. In her observations, the liberal group had a reformed communist party after 1989, while the illiberal group did not see the emergence of a reformed communist party in their country. The Czech Republic is a somewhat deviant case in this matter, as the KSČ did not reform into a moderate left-leaning political party, however, what separates the Czech Republic from the Slovakian, Romanian or Bulgarian experience, was that the Czech Republic did see the establishment of the ČSSD shortly after 1989. Her theory is that the character of both the communist party and the opposition is important in the establishment of political competition. It matters greatly, that there is competition between moderate and strong programmatic parties, and that it doesn't fall into the 'perils of polarization' (ibid.:16).

The transition from planned to market-based economy led to economic crisis in the respective countries, Poland most notably with its 'shock therapy' economic reforms. According to Vachudova, the economic crisis was an advantage to the political competition, because it would inevitably have citizens concerned for their jobs and the potential decrease of their living standards, which created a demand for the political left. At this point, it was important that they had moderate left-leaning political parties to vote for, to manage the economic reforms in a way they considered to be responsible. The Hungarian and Polish reformed communist parties saw this to their benefits, as the economic crisis gave way for good results in the second elections, letting them re-enter the world of politics once again (ibid.:33).

The legacies of the communist past is what Vachudova identifies as the most important reason that the communist parties of Hungary and Poland were able to reform. She refers to H. G. Skilling who stated that there were some tolerance to opposition in these two states, as well as in Czechoslovakia, beginning with a rise in intellectuals in the 1950 during the de-Stalinization processes (ibid.:26). There was some form of reform within the countries and party in in the 1980s in Poland and Hungary respectively, which Vachudova considers to be the reason why the communist parties in these two countries have some seemingly ease to transforming to more liberal-like social democratic parties (ibid.:35). The Czechoslovak experience was significantly different from Poland and Hungary in this respect, as after the Prague Spring in 1968, practically any reformist member of the party was expelled, and any element of reform, internal change or dialogue with society was ruled out (ibid.:28-29).

4.6. Patterns of political change

Vachudova uses the term 'pattern of political change' to "show how the absence of political competition creates similar opportunities to concentrate political power and extract rents over time and across countries" (ibid.:22). As already mentioned, she considers the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to belong to the nations that experienced a liberal pattern of political change, while Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria belong to illiberal ones.

Liberal pattern of political change

Vachudova argues, that what is observed to be most important for a successful trajectory towards liberal democracy are "[...] the alternation in power of political parties that originated from a strong opposition to communism, and from a reforming communist party" (ibid.:13). She lists three main 'ingredients' observed to form a successful path towards liberal democracy: Open democratic institutions, ethnic tolerance and rapid economic reform. Building democratic institutions would open the political arena to people belonging to groups that were originally suppressed during the communist regime, which created a more level competition for anyone who wanted to participate in politics. This also created incentives for the (former) communist elite to adhere by the new political norms, which by extension strengthened the political competition. In contrast to the ways of the illiberal neighbors, the post-opposition of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic made sure to call for ethnic tolerance as part of the mainstream political discourse. Extreme nationalist views would not be welcome. It should be noted, that while CEE has been historically ethnically diverse region, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland were considerably more ethnic homogenous than their

respective illiberal counterparts. Vachudova says, though, that she does not believe that the ethnic constellations of the nation states are the only reason that the liberal democracies did not fall to ethnic nationalism and scapegoating as political talking points (ibid.:53). Economic reform was a necessary part of democratization in the region, as building democracy were intrinsically connected to building capitalism. These reforms could result in an economic downturn, and thus posed a risk for the elected elites of losing the next election. Economic reform and consequent crisis were, according to Vachudova, what earned the left leaning parties in Hungary and Poland their victories in the second elections, and also what gave the unreformed communist party in Czechoslovakia the place as the second largest party in the parliament at the time (ibid.:26-27).

Illiberal pattern of political change

Vachudova identifies the absence of an organized opposition at the point of communist collapse as the most essential determinant of illiberal pattern of political change. Without a strong rival to the (post) ruling elites at the time of the regime change in the region, there was a vacuum and no proper political competition to create the friction that would hold the elites accountable for the implemented policies that proceeded the communist rule.

While there were free and fair elections held in Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, respectively, there were no incentives to foster institutions of liberal democracy, on the contrary, the elites would do their best to undermine democratic institutions and reforms to prolong their position in power. In the case of Romania and Bulgaria, they did not have a strong opposition performing pressure for them to formulate liberal democratic reform program, so they did little to do so. Slovakia, after the Velvet Divorce in 1993, saw the rise of strong Slovak nationalism that would eclipse the previous opposition to communism, Public Against Violence (BPN) and eventually seized power.

Vachudova considers three policies by the ruling parties of the three countries to have been implemented that helped them preserve and rebuild their domestic power after 1989. These were: 1) a concentration of political power, 2) corruption of economic reform and 3) the use of ethnic nationalism in domestic politics. To summarize her first point, she observes that all three countries in one way or another managed to take power of national newspapers, television and/or radio, undermine the opposition and political competition, they made efforts to undermine the judiciary, even contravening with parliamentary procedures and ruling of Constitutional Court (ibid.:45-47). In terms of economic reform, Vachudova says that people expressed more suspicion of the market and free market forces, in comparison to the cases of Poland and Hungary. There was a lack of, or weak,

consensus of whether or not they wanted market capitalism, which enabled the countries to do very cautious, partial reform. This led to the elites seizing the opportunities to seek rent for their own benefits, implementing policies that would protect the rich, corrupting privatization processes, state institutions and lead to insider privatizations (ibid.:47-48). In contrast to their liberal counterparts, Romania and Slovakia, and Bulgaria to some extent, utilized a rhetoric that “the nation’s sovereignty and territorial integrity were under a threat from ethnic minorities and neighboring states (ibid.:52). Romania and Slovakia were much more ethnically diverse than their northern counterparts, due to the disputes of border after the Treaty of Trianon (ibid.:147). Vachudova attributes their success in exploiting ethnic national sentiments to three main factors: 1) That minorities formed a significant portion of the population, 2) that the history lend credibility to assertions that the minority would harbor a separatist agenda and 3) that minorities had formed a cohesive political organization (ibid.:52-56).

4.7. The Czech Republic as a Hybrid Case

Even though a reformed communist party represents one of the most important parts of the post-communist legacies to lead to a liberal democracy, Vachudova still categorizes the Czech Republic as one of the ‘liberal’ democracies of her study, despite the fact that the KSČM did not reform and neither led to new moderate left-wing parties. She argues that the Czech Republic is a hybrid case (ibid.:37). To Vachudova, a great incentive for the liberal reforms in the Czech Republic could be explained by the external passive leverage of the EU, rather than internal motivation. She claims that the political competition of the Czech Republic was restricted in the first decade since its establishments in 1993. The Czech Republic had a strong opposition to communism, as it would be indicated by the overwhelming electoral support for the dissident movement Civic Forum in the first election of summer 1990. Thus, there was some internal motivation for building democracy and liberal reforms, however, the 90s and early 2000s also saw efforts of restricting the political competition of the Czech system. First, Václav Klaus made overt efforts to undermine the political competition. The lack of experience within the free press meant that the media could not keep the government in check and since the opposition was relatively divided and also inexperienced, they also presented little resistance to Klaus’ government. Without the external incentive, Klaus stalled processes of establishing ways to channel dialogue between the political institutions and the civil society of the country. This means that there was few competent checks and balances for the center-right government led by ODS, providing free space for the government to concentrate power. The same can be said of the so-called opposition agreement made between ČSSD and ODS after the 1998

election shifted the power balance, favoring the center-left party of the Social Democrats rather than a continuation of Klaus' failed government. The opposition agreement essentially led to a two-party system and was a way for the ODS to secure power without forming government with their rivals. The opposition agreement was difficult for the other oppositional parties to challenge, due to the large fragmentation between them. However, it did serve as a steppingstone towards unity between both parties and civic groups to focus on and cooperate towards Czech EU membership. The active leverage of the EU provided an influence in both the aspects of informational and information environments. A publication by the EU's Opinion and Regular Reports disconfirmed the assumed superiority of the Czech economic reforms and privatization processes. This came in the light of the economic crisis of the 1997, which was also partially the reason for the failure of Klaus' government at the time. The EU also provided a kind of leverage directed at the government itself. The ČSSD government was motivated to implement proper reforms in the Czech Republic because of EU membership conditionality, credible commitment and also due to its influence of domestic groups (ibid.:194-8)

After the Prague Spring in 1968 in Czechoslovakia, any reform-minded communists were expelled from the party, leading to no prominent reformers within the party after the Velvet Revolution. This means that most politicians or civil servant with experience would either stay with the communist party, leading to a shortage of either in the years following 1989. This severe lack of experienced people within the political system is what Vachudova argues led to low quality of checks and balances in the Czech Republic, leaving ODS governments to manipulate the policies as they saw fit. She even says that this dynamic led the ČSSD to be „[...] less reformist and more populist“ (ibid.:196). But since the communist party refused to reform its ideology, the ČSSD was seen as the only ‚valid‘ left party in the Czech party system leaving the difference between the left and right lesser and lesser relevant and eventually led to a fragmentation of the left-wing that the ODS could take advantage of:

„[...] a united, experienced left would have served as a much better watchdog during the seven years of ODS rule, and such a left would not need to enter into an opposition agreement to govern. A united left would have also made the fragmentation of the center-right less tenable“ (ibid.:196).

5.8. How I intent to use the theory

According to Vachudova's theory, the Czech Republic, along with its neighbors Poland and Hungary, should be expected to experience a rapid democratization. Now, sixteen years after the release of her

book, all three countries are seeing an emergence of populism and 'backwardness' in terms of the quality of their democracy (Henley 2018). Initially, my personal interest in this topic was to understand, how the case of the Czech Republic differs from the situations in Poland and Hungary, and Vachudova's theory on the legacies of post-communism provides great insight and tools for understanding the major differences between the three CEE states.

Vachudova's theory has provided me with a theoretical framework for looking further into the past to understand the current political climate in the Czech Republic. It allows me to look at the Czech circumstances in a different way that most of the recent literature has, and thus also go beyond the democratic backsliding-paradigm. Using this theory as a point of departure, I intend to both look deeper into the political landscape in the 90s and the years after the book's release, to understand how the presence of the communists in the parliament influenced decision- and policy-making processes. It was due to her claim that reformed communists were essential for a successful democratization process, that gave me the theoretical justification to look deeper into the consequences of the unreformed Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, and if their political legitimacy in the party system has actually led to the emergence of populist movements in the Czech lands.

I will be following Vachudova's footsteps, exploring in which way her theory failed to expect the emerging populist parties and how the Communist Party is related to this. By use of theory-testing process-tracing I will be tracking how the lack of reform by the KSČM could lead to the emergence of populism, by looking at how the presence of KSČM in the Czech parliament could contribute to a weakened political competition. I aim to do this by looking at election results, government and parliament compositions, and relevant political events. By assuming that the mere presence of the KSČM in the Chamber of Deputies would take up uncooperative seats, I expect that this would undermine the parliament's abilities to make decisions or pass legislation. In other words, it could cripple the institution and the political powers, perhaps to a degree that the electorate's disappointment with the neglect of their representative, would lead them to elect politicians that promises to solve these issues – in slightly less democratic ways or not.

Chapter 5: Analysis

My analysis will be divided into three sub-chapters according to the three main phases of in-depth theory-testing process-tracing. These sub-chapters are conceptualization, operationalization and collection and evaluation of evidence.

I will first present the theorized causal relation, mechanisms and the definitions and elaboration of the cause and outcome of the relation. I will also need to elaborate on other parts of the concepts, such as the context, and what I consider to be the most relevant entities and activities in this study. It should be clear, that definitions for both the cause and outcome are very close to Vachudova's theory on legacies that determined the democratic trajectories of the CEE nation states, as I consider the cause in this causal relation to be about the unreformed communist party and the outcome to be an emergence of populist movements due to a weak political competition and polarization.

Following the definitions of different concepts, I will match the theorized causal mechanisms with what I expect to find in terms of empirical evidence. I will specifically investigate political competition as the sort of driving narrative of the causal relation of this case study. This part involves presenting my propositions to what the theorized mechanism will look like.

The last phase of the analysis is about collecting evidence and then evaluating it. As stated above, I will not be collecting my empirical evidence from first-hand sources but mostly from academic papers, news articles, election results and the following formation of governments. This part will be structured with firstly a presentation of the proposition, followed by each piece of observable. I will be considering the empirical certainty or empirical uniqueness and trustworthiness after each piece of empirical evidence, following the guidelines of Beach and Pedersen of aggregating the mechanistic evidence one by one in a bottom-up manner. My analysis considers two separate causal mechanisms: The continued political relevancy of the KSČM and their presence in the Czech parliament being an obstruction of space for political competition. I find that both mechanisms have smaller pieces that works as direct consequences of the mechanism, but I do not consider these to be entire mechanisms on their own.

5.1. Conceptualization

This first section will present the conceptualization-phase of the analysis. I will first state the definitions of the cause and outcome of the causal relation, which will be followed by the formulation of the theoretical causal mechanisms. These will be elaborated upon and here I will also go into details

about the definition of entities and activities, scope conditions and the temporal dimension of the study.

5.1.1. Cause

In theory-testing process-tracing, the researcher is aware of the cause and the outcome, which means that I have already considered the empirical observations of both the cause and outcome before setting out to define them. Thus, this paragraph involves a combination of both theoretical and some empirical considerations in terms of how to understand the cause and outcome of this study.

When determining the cause, or condition, of my study, I am following Vachudova's theory, as she considers the lack of a reformed communist party is a major determiner of the trajectory of democratization for the CEE states that she is studying. According to her theory, the former ruling communist parties of Hungary and Poland either reformed or branched out into moderate left-wing parties, leading to a larger political representation of left-wing ideology.

The clearest definition of the cause of this study is as follows: The Communist party does not *reform* immediately after 1989. While the process of reforming could or would probably have taken longer than a year, my definition assumes that there were no clearly apparent changes to the Marxist ideology of the KSČM between the Velvet Revolution and the first election in 1990. I will discuss some empirical evidence below that contributes to the confirmation that the years ensuing the first election was influenced by some internal division in the communist party as how and if the party should reform itself. Seeing as reform can be a gradual process over longer time, I set this specific time frame for the reformation of the party as the determinator of the causal relation. Would there be clear indication of significant reform of the KSČM, I would consider that the theorized causal relation was indeed wrong, however, that has not been the case.

According to Beach and Pedersen's guidelines to process-tracing, one should understand the concepts of the causal relation in accordance with the positive pole, and that the researcher must be conscious of the threshold that has to be passed for the mechanism to be expected to become operative. This poses a challenge to the definition of the cause in my study, as it appears that I define it through a sense of *inaction* rather than a tangible change or action. I therefore stress, that despite the passive nature of my definition, I will also add that the lack of reform should be indicated to be a *conscious* decision by the entity, i.e., the KSČM.

5.1.2. Outcome

“Electorate *seeks* alternatives to the current political parties” is the way I formulate the outcome. I specifically use an entity of the *electorate* as a representation of the disenchanted public rather than focus on either populist parties or politicians themselves, to stick to the narrative that this is a natural consequence of the previous mechanism. My thought is that the weak political competition of the party system leads to a series of difficulties to negotiate and implement meaningful politics, which deepens a public frustration with politics as a whole. The frustrated public turns to alternatives to represent them politically, since the established parties have presumedly neglected them, which creates a demand for populist parties offering solutions not just for political problems, for but politics itself. My point is that this formulation does not focus on the establishment of populist parties, but the electoral success of them due to an increased request for political change.

As Vachudova writes, political competition is the most important part of a democratic developments in the CEE states, and by following her theory, I argue that the Czech political system has had little space for proper political competition due to the unreformed communist party, leading to an ‘erosion’ of their democracy. By erosion of democracy, what I will be looking at in this analysis and consider an indication of confirmation of this outcome, is the emergence of populist movements and/or parties in the Czech Republic, specifically as a product of public dissatisfaction with the way politics are conducted as a whole. In terms of specific attributes to this definition, it is important that the parties or movements that represents an anti-system sentiment, are parties that explicitly express themselves as either anti-politics or ‘above’ politics in some sense. Their platform should also reflect an intention to ‘fix’ the way politics and the political landscape.

This definition seeks to explain the Czech crisis of democracy with their political system and institutions as the point of departure. Prior scholarly literature has already covered this issue with the focus on ANO by investigating the party’s power aggregation, media monopoly and especially corruption and clientelism. These aspects definitely relevant to help explain the current political situation in the Czech Republic, but my project is trying to look at this with a very different set of theoretical tools, which is why it is important for me that these are not part of my defining attributes of the outcome.

Formulation of the outcome is admittedly very vague. When can we determine that the electorate has been looking for an alternative for the established parties? My suggestion is that is relevant, when a political actor that represents as an ‘alternative’ to current politics is elected in the parliament, that is

when the outcome has happened. I will elaborate in the next subchapter when exactly I think that is in the Czech case.

5.1.3. Theoretical causal mechanisms

Figure 1: Theoretical causal mechanisms

Cause	Pt1	Pt2	Outcome
Theoretical causal mechanisms			
<u>Communist party</u> does not reform immediately after 1989.	(1a) <u>Communist party</u> stays in political system as an anti-system pariah party.	<u>Communist party</u> obstructs space for political competition.	<u>Electorate</u> seeks alternatives to the established political parties
	(1c) <u>Political parties</u> reject to cooperate with the Communists		

In this paragraph, I will present my thoughts behind the theoretical causal relation and mechanisms. As suggested by Beach and Pedersen, I have done my best to formulate the theoretical causal mechanisms in subject-verb-first formulations to emphasize how the mechanisms are representing activities engaged by entities. I will elaborate on the entities and activities of the theorized causal mechanisms in the paragraph below.

The overall narrative of the causal mechanisms driving this relation is political competition, and thus how the KSČM undermines this. The first part of the causal mechanism is divided in two pieces, the first part formulated as following (1a): “The Communist party stays in political system as an anti-system pariah party”, as the endurance of the KSČM and its ability to stay relevant in the political system, despite the radical shift of regime after the Velvet Revolution, is a central part of this case study. It is important that not only does the party continue to have political relevance, but also that they are an anti-system party or perceived as such.

Despite the lack of reform, if the KSČM stays relevant in the party system, it will most likely be an unwelcome entity in the liberal democratic institutions. Thus, this definition does not simply rely on the continued political legitimacy of the party, but also of its status as an anti-system party and a pariah party. Thus, the second piece of this causal mechanism is (1b) “Political parties reject to cooperate with the Communists”. Just as the status as a pariah party is important for the cause of the

causal relation, its consequence is that other parties have no intention, are unwilling or explicitly rejecting cooperation with the KSČM. Although we can assume that the KSČM may also be unwilling to cooperate with the newly established parties, once again the bare presence of the KSČM in the political sphere presents as a challenge to the political competition, this time due to the part they played during the communist era.

The second part of the causal mechanism is: “The Communist party *obstructs* space for political competition”. Where the previous part of the mechanism concerned itself with the *passive* ways in which the KSČM challenges the political competition, this mechanism articulates the *active* ways in which the political system experiences those challenges. The mutual rejection of cooperation between the KSČM and the rest of the parties in the Czech parliament results in challenges with government formation, since the KSČM continuously takes up at least ten percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

5.1.4. *Entities and activities*

In order to formulate the theoretical mechanisms and propositions, I need to define which entities are engaging in which activities. This step is important to specify what to look for both in the collection phase, but also to make a clearer argument of the validity of the causal mechanism.

The protagonist of the relevant entities in this case study is the Communist Part of Bohemia and Moravia, KSČM. But besides the KSČM, the study also involves a large *dramatis personae* of different political parties of the Czech Republic. First, we have ČSSD, the Czech Social Democratic Party, and their political rival, ODS, the Civic Democratic Party, a successor party of the Civic Forum, which political position is center-right. ANO, the center populist party led by Andrej Babiš will also be a relevant entity later in the analysis. I will also have to consider the political system, the parliament, the governments and the Czech electorate as entities of their own for the analysis to make sense. As these are more abstract as entities, I will outline their relevance and in what way during the analysis when it comes to it.

If we consider Figure 1, the first formulated theoretical activity, or verb rather, is *reform*. I understand reform as an activity as an intentional move away from a prior ideological framework to a different set of values that could be detected spatially in terms of political position. Of course, in this context, it is the very absence of an act like this, that is part of the defining mechanism. The activity relating to the first part of the causal mechanism is *stay*. A rather large part of this study is the static nature of the communist party; it *stays* in the political system, it *stays* the same ideologically, it *stays* as an

entity after the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state. As I have already discussed, the passive nature of the first activities relating to the non-reform of the communist party seems contradictory to the method, since the point of formulating causal mechanisms by verbs and nouns is to enable the researcher in tracking these specific activities, which is why the argument and evidence that the lack of reform of the KSČM was a very conscious decision of action. The main verb for the second part of the causal mechanism is *obstruct*. This verb is applied as an allegoric language for the political processes and system, implying that a party can take up (physical) space in the political system that blocks or disrupts (political) motions to pass through. The activity of the outcome is *seek*, which is the best way I would articulate the emergence of populist movements as something actively happening by a specified entity.

5.1.5. *Scope conditions*

This study centers around the post-communist legacies in CEE, so the context is very dependent on this. As such, some important scope conditions of this study are the strong historical roots of the communist party of Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic, along with the strong democratic traditions of the Czech lands. Besides this, the fact that there were no proper reform-minded party members left after 1968 is a relevant condition, just as the (mostly) non-violent end to the communist regime and the agreed legality of the communist party of the Velvet Revolution.

Since this analysis takes its point of departure from the behavior of either the communist party or other separate entities relevant to the political system of the Czech Republic, the aspect of political positioning is roughly neglected. This means that I cannot warrant that the ideological aspects of a particular previously totalitarian ruling party in a young liberal democracy is important for this mechanism to work or not. Arguably, it is the status of the party as an unwanted political player by the collective that is the most central part of this study, and thus the context of the nation state being studied having undergone the transition from authoritarian or totalitarian regime to a liberal democracy is probably the most relevant contextual condition.

5.1.6. *Temporal dimension*

The time frame of the analysis spans from the end of the communist era, November 1989, to 2017-8. The nearly twenty years span of this study is comprehensive, and it would be beyond the scope of this project if I had to pursue finding primary sources for the analysis. My argument is that for the causal relation to make sense, I need to include the beginning of the democratic Czech Republic,

which I will most simply date as the being in Summer 1990 after the first free election, and when ANO formed a new government with ČSSD and KSČM in 2018.

Arguably, this case study has a long-term time horizon. In Beach and Pedersen's words, both the time horizon of the outcome and the time horizon for the mechanisms producing the outcome is long. The effects of the cause are not sudden but very gradually leading to the outcome.

5.2. Operationalize

In this sub-chapter, I will not only discuss the propositions of the causal mechanisms but also for the cause and outcome.

Cause: The KSČM expresses a continued affiliation with Marxist ideology.

I find that there are a series of different way that a non-reformed KSČM can be found in the empirical material. One major piece of evidence would be a lack of publicly apologizing or distancing themselves from the past. Taking on responsibility and making a declaration of apology would be the clearest sign of a step towards reform and towards becoming a liberal democratic party. This means, that if such a declaration is to be found, this would disconfirm the cause of this causal relation.

Figure 2: Theoretical causal mechanisms linked to propositions

Cause	Pt1	Pt2	Outcome
Theoretical causal mechanisms			
<u>Communist party</u> does not <i>reform</i> immediately after 1989	(1a) <u>Communist party</u> <i>stays</i> in political system as an anti-system pariah party	<u>Communist party</u> <i>obstructs</i> space for political competition	<u>Electorate</u> <i>seeks</i> alternatives to the established political parties
	(1c) <u>Political parties</u> <i>reject</i> to cooperate with the Communists		
Propositions about empirical evidence			
The KSČM expresses a continued affiliation with Marxist ideology	(1a) The KSČM is elected to the parliament	Unstable center-cabinets and weak oppositions are formed due to the KSČM taking significant number of seats in Parliament.	Large public dissatisfaction with the political landscape lends its way for populist parties to see electoral success.
	(1b) Other political parties or entities declare unwillingness to cooperate with the KSČM		

Proposition 1a: The KSČM is elected to the parliament.

This first part of the proposition demands evidence that the KSČM stays in the political system. As such, I expect that I will see that the party reaches the 5 percent electoral threshold for the first election of the Czechoslovakia post-1989, but preferably also following parliamentary elections. The reason I would expect to see some electoral support for the KSČM, despite their insistence for not reforming their ideological framework, is not because I expect that at least 5 percent of the Czech population in the early 90s were still strong supporters of communism and the past regime - however this may actually be the case – but because we have already established, that due to the legacies after the Prague Spring of 1968, the party had no reform-minded members, which means that it is unlikely that any other left-wing party would have enough relevancy to attract left-leaning voters in the first couple of parliamentary election as the KSČM. As such, even if there were civic support for the communists at this point in time, the absence of other left-wing parties in the party system means that

there were no meaningful political competition for the KSČM in terms of attracting voters that, rather naturally, were concerned about their standard at the prospects of massive economic reforms towards capitalism.

This proposition has relatively high prior confidence, but mostly as a vague extension of Vachudova's theory. Pay in mind that Vachudova chosen cases of illiberal democracies involves states, Romania and Bulgaria, in which the communist party did not have to reform because they did not lose or lost little executive power as a result of the revolutions and could continue with the democratization and privatization processes as they saw fit. This is not the exact same case here; the communist party may not have reformed but they did pass their political powers almost absolutely after the Velvet Revolution and was afterwards democratically elected back into the parliament, which is a very different scenario than the ones Vachudova describes in her book. Thus, I will not say that the prior confidence of this proposition categorically high, but if by using Vachudova's theory as support, it has some confidence. This proposition also has a high theoretical certainty, since if this causal mechanism to be confirmed it is important that the communist party holds some power and relevancy in the political system, and are not simply another aspiring political party simply existing. It is relevant that they pose a challenge to the rest of the parties and the Czech public. It also holds a relatively high theoretical uniqueness, as it is difficult to find alternative explanations to this.

Proposition 1b: Other political parties or entities declare unwillingness to cooperate with the KSČM.

If cooperation with the KSČM was of no issue to other parties, this causal mechanism would be unable to be confirmed. Thus, it is important that I also find evidence of political parties or other politically relevant entities, such as the President of the Czech Republic, express resistance to working together with the KSČM. Such a declaration can also prove the status of the KSČM as a „pariah party“, since it indicates a clear connection between the communist party and the country's totalitarian communist past. This evidence could also come in the shape of other parties or the media labeling the KSČM as an unwanted or as anti-system. The finding of such empirical fingerprint would indicate that the mere existence of the KSČM in the system poses a challenge to the political competition.

At this point in the causal relation, I would argue that the prior confidence is relatively low. Vachudova spends little time in elaborating how the endurance of the KSČM shaped the democratization processes of the Czech Republic, thus I would argue that we have reached a point of low confidence in the proposition.

For this causal mechanism to work the way it is expected to, it is necessary that I find some proof that there was some collective unwillingness to work with the KSČM. This does not have to come in the form of declaration, press releases or party values, ideally I would have wanted to track this unwillingness through tracing negotiations and reading on the parliament floor. But it is important that I find an indication that the KSČM was not very welcome within the democratic institutions for this mechanism to logically lead to the next. The empirical uniqueness of this proposition may be neutral, for the reason that parties can have a myriad of rationales for not collaborating with other parties; this could be ideologically motivated or a matter of allegations of scandals, etc. What can justify theoretical uniqueness of this propositions, is that the unwillingness is specifically motivated by the aversion towards a formerly ruling party in a totalitarian regime, and not by any other relevant reasons.

Proposition 2: Unstable center-cabinets and weak oppositions are formed due to the KSČM taking significant number of seats in Parliament.

If the first mechanism is confirmed to be working, it makes sense that the unwillingness to KSČM would lead to uncertain governments and fragmented oppositions, assuming that the KSČM takes enough seats in the Chamber of Deputies. I reckon that the five percent election threshold is not quite enough for the party to pose as a challenge for political competition, thus by ‘significant number’ I consider that to be ten percent of the total vote or at least twenty seats in the Chamber. If the KSČM takes up this many seats in the Chamber, and they are not part of the negotiations of government formation nor takes part in collaborations with other parties of the opposition, then the KSČM takes up ‘space’ in the political system, that restrain successful political competition. This proposition implies, that simply the passive presence of the KSČM in the Chamber of Deputies can bring difficulties to collaboration and competition in the political system.

According to a study by Schmitt & Franzmann (2020) low political competition can lead to center-cabinets and weak oppositions, which in turn leads to party polarization. It is based on this study that I aim to look specifically at center-cabinets and the opposition formations in my analysis. This study can support prior confidence in this proposition, meaning that it has a high level of prior confidence.

If the presence of the Communist Party in the Czech Chamber of Deputies does not appear to obstruct or weaken the political competition of the party system, it would not confirm the hypothesized causal relation. It would not lead to the hypothesized outcome either, thus it is necessary to find indication

of the Communist Party's 'responsibility' of weakening the political competition. This means that the theoretical certainty for this causal mechanism is relatively high.

Arguably, there could be alternative explanations to a low political competition in the Czech party system, that doesn't involve the Communist Party, or at least does not center around the party. It could be due to the high level of allegations of scandals and corruption that divides the political system, it may be a matter of spatial divergences, or it could be a matter of political norm that compromise is immoral, as suggested by Vladimíra Dvořáková in her book 'The disintegration of the state' ('*Rozkládání státu*'). As summarized by Roberts (2017), she states that this norm is "[...] a prototypical Czech combination of arrogance and inferiority complex", which echoes both how Jiri Brodsky describes the Czech people as envious, lazy, cowardly kind of people (2003), who simply let things happen rather than do something about it or the way that Ladislav Holy (1996) describes the so-called 'little Czech man' ('*malý český člověk*') whose "[...] attitude is down-to-earth , and he is certainly no hero" (Holy 1996:62). Furthermore, an article in The Economist (Europe: Centre Holds 1998) stated that "[...] Czech politics is driven by bitter personal jealousies". In short, the political norms could be influenced by the Czech national identity, in a way that encourages small-mindedness and shady ways of conducting politics, which has nothing to do with the presence communist party. Thus, the theoretical uniqueness of this proposition is low, or at least lower than would have been preferred for this study. But this also highlights the purpose of this thesis, which is to explore if the KSČM has had a meaningful influence on the character of Czech politics since 1989.

Outcome: Large public dissatisfaction with the political landscape lends its way for populist parties to see electoral success.

This proposition is formulated in this way to ensure that the agency of the Czech electorate is at the center of the outcome, and not the populist movements. My hypothesis is, that the presence of the KSČM undermines the parliament's abilities to implement meaningful politics or forming stable governments, which results in a collective dissatisfaction amongst voters, who feels neglected by their representatives. It is this disenchantment with politics that makes populist parties offering solutions to politics themselves attractive to a large group of voters. The empirical fingerprints of this would first and foremost be in election results, if populist parties gain significant support, this would be an indication that their political program seems relevant for the Czech people.

As will be clear during the evaluation of empirical evidence in the next sub-chapter, this proposition could hold true for both the election of 2013 and 2017. ANO came as the second largest party in the

Chamber of Deputies in the 2013 election and formed a coalition government with the ČSSD, which fulfills my criteria for an elected anti-establishment political actor. However, I would argue that the election of 2017 and the political events following, is the actual manifest of the proposed outcome. Not only did this election mark the beginning of Babiš first term in office as prime minister of the Czech Republic, indicating a very apparent support for him and his party and thus, an indication of public dissatisfaction with established politics. Also, by determining the outcome by this measure, it almost poetically coincides with the first formal government support that the KSČM had participated in since the creation of the Czech Republic.

5.3. Collecting and evaluating empirical evidence

5.3.1. Cause

The proposition for the cause is as follows: The KSČM expresses a continued affiliation with Marxist ideology.

Observable of proposition for cause, I: No name change.

At their first congress held in the city Olomouc in November of 1990, changing the name of the party was set to a vote by the party chairman, Jiří Svoboda. The name change would become: “Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia: Party of Democratic Socialism”, but it was not approved. Just one year later, another effort was made to change the name of the party, once again it failed (Hanley 2001:101). Two years later, in 1993, Svoboda once again proposed to remove the word ‘communist’ (*komunistická*) from the name of the party, which was once again voted against by an overwhelming majority (Lach et. al. 2010:369).

I interpret this as observable as a high indication that the KSČM very intently kept a name very close to that of its ‘predecessor’, so to speak. This observable signifies that the political trajectory of the KSČM after 1990 was not a matter of inactivity or passivity, but was a string of intentional, conscious decisions to stay true to their political values. This can also be interpreted as an expression of the party, very consciously might I add, to not distance themselves from their communist past, making it clear what they would prefer the Czech Republic regime to be like. Despite the fact that this observable does not come from minutes of the three Congresses or press releases regarding it, a variety of the sources (Pánek & Tůma 2019:685; Czyżniewski 2016:70; Strmiske 2002:223) mention these events as important markers of the non-reform of the KSČM. With this large coverage of this observable in several pieces of scholarly literature, I consider to be an indication of support to the

trustworthiness of this piece. Thus, I argue that this observable has a high degree of confirmation, that the KSČM stayed in the political system as an anti-system party.

Observable of proposition for cause, II: The 1991 party program.

The party program of KSČM of 1991 both rejected Marxism as a closed system and the need for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a way to implement Marxism (Czyżniewski 2016:65). While this may not indicate a strong move away from being a (allegedly) non-democratic party, it does imply that they did not consider revolutionary methods to implement communist necessary or relevant anymore.

This does, in some way, disconfirm that the KSČM is an anti-system party. Or, at least, it suggests that the KSČM does not find it necessary to implement socialism through revolutionary measures, as it is otherwise demanded according to Marxist-Leninist ideology. It does not strongly indicate reform either, but it does illustrate a sense of ideological compromise that is uncharacteristic of this type of party.

Observable of proposition for cause, III: Victory of the neo-communist faction.

According to Hanley (2001), early in 1990 the party had three separate factions within itself: the democratic socialists, the reformist anti-Stalinists and the neo-Stalinists. This division within the party did challenge the ability to reform the party or find a common ground for the political program. However, a fourth faction emerged in 1990. Deriving from the 'reformist anti-Stalinists'-faction came the neo-communists. After the failure to change the name of the party and Jiří Svoboda's rejected to seek re-election, the neo-communist's candidate Miroslav Grebeníček was elected as the next chairman of the party. Hanley considers this as the mark of victory for the neo-communists, which determined the ideological path for the party forwards.

This observable does confirm, that the non-reform of the party was the result of not just one deliberate choice, but series of efforts to reform failing because the will of the party was as such. The internal division also confirms that while some members wished to distance the party from the past, the largest part of the members still believed in their initial vision. The resistance to change the name and to finding a more democratically common position of the party definitely suggests, that the KSČM was comfortable being perceived as the prior tyrannical ruler of the country, and now as the pariah party.

Aggregation for empirical evidence of cause:

The two observables for this proposition confirm that the communist party consciously rejected to reform the party and conform entirely to the new political environment. While the party appeared to adhere to the new parliamentary democratic reality, there is no indication that they had any desire to compromise on their political visions. Thus, I feel confident that the cause for the causal relation is present in the case study and that we can continue to the first proposition.

5.3.2. Proposition 1a

The proposition 1a is: The KSČM is elected to the parliament.

Observable of proposition 1a, I: The election of 1990.

The first free and fair election of the Czechoslovak state in forty-four years happened on 8th and 9th of June 1990, six months after the Velvet Revolution. At least 90 percent of registered voters participated in this election, and even though the party representing the dissident movement, Civic Forum, won by an absolute landslide with almost half of all the votes, the KSČM won as the second largest party in both chamber and the National Council (Pánek & Tůma 2019:657). They received an approximately 13 percent in all three institutions, indicating the continued support for the party, despite the regime change.

Since this evidence was found, I need to consider its empirical uniqueness. The election results seem like clear confirmation that there was a continued support for the KSČM, even after 1989. This observation hardly seems the product of a different mechanism or an anomaly in the causal relation. There is no bias to be found relating to this observable nor does it appear as an error in any way. Thus, I would argue that this observable indeed says that the KSČM continued to be relevant in the Czech political system and has a high degree on confirmation of the causal mechanism. Arguably, there is only a need for this one observable to prove that the proposition was found. The KSČM was indeed elected to the Chamber of Deputies in the first parliamentary election of Czechoslovakia, so there is no reason to aggregate the evidence to continue to the next part of the causal mechanism.

5.3.3. Proposition 1b

Proposition of 1b is as follows: Other political parties or entities declare unwillingness to cooperate with the KSČM.

Observable of proposition 1b, I: Labelling of the KSČM.

Several scholarly papers describe the KSČM as an ‘extremist force’, a non-democratic party if you will. This is the label that other pro-system parties should have given the KSČM as a result of the party’s refusal to reform. This has been pointed out by Pánek & Tůma (2019:676); Strmiska (2002:22); Czyżniewski (2016:70) and Hanley (2001).

This observable addresses the second part of the theorized causal mechanism, which is that the KSČM would be perceived as or consider itself an anti-system party. The statement from Pánek & Tůma definitely indicates that the rest of party system of the Czech Republic did not think of the KSČM as a liberal democratic political party at the same level as themselves. However, one could have wished for translated press releases from the respective parties rather than one line from a historical overview of the first years of democracy in Czechoslovakia. Even if I ignore the possible inherent bias of the nature of a secondary source like this, I still consider this observable to have a good degree of confirmation of the proposition.

Observable of proposition 1b, II: The Bohumín Declaration

The ČSSD adopted a political resolution in 1995 that prohibited the party from cooperating with “extremist political parties” (Czyżniewski 2016:62; Bakke & Sitter 2021:16). By ‘extremist political parties’ it seems heavily implied, yet not explicitly, to refer to the KSČM. This evidence is essential in leading naturally to the second part of the causal mechanism. Because, if the ČSSD, the only other left-leaning established party categorically rejects collaboration with the KSČM, they close themselves off for the closest possibly ally for either forming a majority government or a strong opposition. For these processes, the ČSSD would then depend on either an overwhelming electoral support or the alliance of other parties.

Since this observable seems to very clearly confirm, that there is an expression of unwillingness to cooperate with the KSČM. Therefore, its empirical uniqueness is high. This observable is normative of nature, meaning that while it expresses a prescription of how the ČSSD intends on acting, it does not prove that they have rejected cooperation with the KSČM since 1995. But by assuming that the ČSSD are true to their word, this observable can serve as a sort of focal point for the next proposition, which involves looking into election results and government formations.

Aggregation of empirical evidence for proposition 1b:

The two observables serve as adequate evidence, that the KSČM was perceived as unwelcome in the party system. They were in some way either explicitly or implied to be anti-democratic, and thus not

to be trusted with political powers nor collaboration from other political actors. The finding of ČSSD's political prescription preventing them from cooperating with the communist, supports the next proposition, since it relates to the lack of cooperation between the parties. By assuming that the ČSSD will deny to form government coalitions or collaborate in opposition with the KSČM, because they said they cannot, I can now apply this to the next proposition, by analyzing the parliamentary election results and determine the strength or weakness of government versus opposition formations.

5.3.4. Proposition 2

Proposition 2 is as follows: Unstable center-cabinets and weak oppositions are formed due to the KSČM taking significant number of seats in Parliament.

This paragraph will involve the results of several parliamentary election in the Czech Republic. See Appendix 1 and 2 for an overview of the election results between 1990 and 2021.

Observable of proposition 2, I: The 1996 election and the failure of Václav Klaus.

The election results of 1996 led to an almost identical government formation of ODS, KDU-ČSL ODA coalition, led by ODS' Václav Klaus. However, this was the first election that the ČSSD saw a large number of votes, taking the place as the second largest party in parliament, which had been the KSČM position in the previous two elections. This election marks the beginning of a pattern that continues until 2013 where the ČSSD and ODS are very close in ranking and support. This also, arguably, marks the consolidation of an established moderate left-wing political party in the Czech Republic, six years after their first democratic election. It is interesting to note, that the ČSSD experienced an increase of approximately 19 percentage points from the 1992 election to this one, but the KSČM saw only a 4 percentage points decrease from the previous election, which can suggest that despite being the closest ideological counterpart, the ČSSD did not steal any significant support from the Communist Party (Kopecky & Mudde 1999:415).

The ODS-led coalition government was a minority government with only 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and even without the cooperation from the KSČM, the opposition held 79 seats. So in this case, we do see a center-cabinet but the opposition is arguably not weak nor fragmented, even if one accounts for lack of collaboration from the communists. However, due to a series of scandals both involving Klaus' government and the ČSSD, and also the declining health of the President, Václav Havel, the government had to resign and no ability to restructure itself, resulting in early election in summer of 1998 (ibid.). In 1997 the Czech Republic also experienced a severe devaluation of their

currency due to rapid mass-privatization program led by the government. This resulted in high unemployment and inflation (Europe: Left Turn? 1998).

This piece of empirical evidence may confirm that the ODS-KDU-ČSL-ODA coalition government was a center-cabinet as the proposition predicted, but it does not confirm that the presence of the KSČM had any determining obstructing influence on how the government was formed nor why it failed long before the end of its term. If we take the seats of the opposition into account, excluding the 22 seats for the communists, it still took enough space to challenge the already minimal government. Thus, while we see a center-cabinet as expected, without the combination of a divided opposition, there is clear confirmation that the causal mechanism is functioning in the hypothesized way. However, the failure of the government combined the mass-privatizations leading to economic hardship can contribute to a – possibly already existing – dissatisfaction with politics. While this does not entirely prove any faults of the KSČM, it still provides confirmation that the government coalition was a fragile center-right cabinet.

Observable of proposition 2, II. The 1998 elections and the Opposition Agreement.

If the consequences of the privatization programs led to a concern for people's standard of living, the election results of 1998 definitely suggest that that was the case. The ČSSD finally saw an election victory ranked as the leading party with five percentage points more votes than ODS. The KSČM did not see any significant increase in the percentage of votes, but did win two more seats in the Chamber of Deputies since the previous election. With only 74 seats in the Chamber, the ČSSD led a minority one-party government, but they did so with the explicit alliance from their rivals, ODS. Shortly after the election, Miloš Zeman, the leader of ČSSD and Václav Klaus, of ODS, signed what became known as the "Opposition Agreement". When the opposition agreement was signed on July 9th, 1998, the ČSSD agreed for ODS to enjoy certain privileges without forming government with their rivals. The agreement ensured that the ODS would hold chairmanship of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate and other key bodies for the control of government activities, that both parties would engage in permanent political consultations on all major domestic and foreign policy issues, that neither party would attempt to pass a no-confidence vote or support such a motion if called for by another party, both parties would present proposals for changes to some aspect of the constitution within twelve months (quoted almost verbatim from Unholy Alliance:1998). The opposition agreement resulted in civic initiatives expressing dissatisfaction with Czech politics. There was an appeal and petition by economist called on by the Dřevíč appeal (*Dřevíčká výzva*) with an analysis of the economic crisis

and solutions for is, as well as the release of *Impuls 99* by 200 intellectuals which criticized „[...] the political situation, expressing fear that EU accession might be thwarted, and sketching out five political tasks to remedy the situation“ (Plecitá-Vlachová & Stegmaier 2003:773). There were also demonstrations and a petition by student organizers called Thank you, Now leave (*děkujeme odejděte*) demanding the resignation of Zeman and Václav Klaus.

Note, that by allying themselves with the ODS through the agreement, the ČSSD kept their word and avoided any cooperation or government formation with the KSČM, with whom they could have formed a – still minority – government with 98 seats; just one seat lesser than the previously ODS-led government had possessed. According to an article in *The Economist*, Zeman had actually preferred to ally himself with the KDU-ČSL but this formation would still have dependent on support from the KSČM, and the leader of the KDU-ČSL, Josef Lux, did not appreciate the proposal of collaborating with the communist (Europe: Centre Holds 1998). Furthermore, by assuming the KSČM would not collaborate with the parties of the opposition, the parliament seats were distributed like this: 74 seats for the government (ČSSD), 63 seats for ODS (supporting party yet still opposition), 39 seats for the rest of the opposition (KDU-ČSL and US) and then 24 seats for the KSČM. Arguably, what we see here is a fragmented opposition divided into three factions; the ‘actual’ opposition with less than forty seats, the opposition party that supports the government and then the pariah party (Kopecky & Mudde 1999).

This observable shows a fragile center-cabinet and a very weak and fragmented opposition. We observe the ČSSD preferring to extend privileges to their political rival rather than participate in collaboration with the KSČM, which is a clear indication that the presence of the communist party creates a restraint of the political competition. We can also consider this a confirmation of a previous proposition 1b, because we see that the ČSSD were not only expressing a preference when they declared they wouldn't cooperate with extremist parties, in this case they adhered to their resolution. *The Economist* (Europe: Centre Holds:1998) presented two other alternative government formations, the first one as mentioned above was ČSSD and KDU-ČSL and the second proposal was a right-wing government of ODS-KDU-ČSL-US, but neither had any success. Pay in mind, that the Freedom Union (US), was established by former ODS members, named „as a sort of ‘ODS-Without-Klaus’“ (Kopecky & Mudde 1999:416), so they were unlikely to feel enthusiastic about the prospect of cooperating with Klaus and his party. These observations confirms that the negotiations relating the formation of the government was done with efforts of bypassing any collaboration with the KSČM.

Observable of proposition 2, IV: 2002 elections.

Once again, the election results suggests that frustrations with the previous government led to voters punishing them at the ballots. While the ČSSD still gained the largest number of the total votes, the KSČM rose to 18 percent of the total votes, suggesting that voters turned away from the moderate leftist party and towards the extremist one. Plecitá-Vlachová & Stegmaier (2003) explain that as a consequence of the opposition agreement, voters no longer perceived the ČSSD as a moderate left-wing party, but as a “moderate government party supported by the political right“ (ibid.:776). They also point out that the results from 1998 saw a rise in votes for the anti-system party of KSČM and all pro-system parties saw a decline in their electoral support. The consultations for forming the government happened between ČSSD, ODS and the KDU-ČSL/US-DEU-coalition, the KSČM were never invited to participate, thus indicating that the represented parties and President Havel, did not consider the KSČM as a legitimate political participant. It resulted in a relatively fragile three-party government of ČSSD, and the KDU-ČSL/US-DEU-coalition, consisting of 101 seats in the Chamber. Shortly after, the chairwoman of the US-DEU, Marvanová, resigned due to internal political conflicts resulting from the government formation. Also, bear in mind that a government of ČSSD and the KSČM could have guaranteed 111 seats in the Chamber, securing a much more stable government, but once again – there is no fraternizing with the anti-system party. The opposition, excluding the communists, was just ODS with 58 seats in the Chamber.

Once again, we have a confirmed center-cabinet, a rather unstable one at that, and a weak opposition. The KDU-ČSL/US-DEU-coalition were politically positioned towards the right, meaning that the government was a left-right-center combination, but, as the case was in the Czech Republic, the only other established left-wing party that the ČSSD could have formed government with, was the communist party. Finding evidence of the KSČM were not even invited to participate in negotiations for government formation, has a high degree of confirmation that there was a continuous need in the Parliament to form governments through avoidance of collaboration with the, commonly, third largest party in the Parliament and thus provides support for the proposition.

Observable of proposition 2, V: Support from the KSČM.

The 2002 ČSSD-led government relied on support from the KSČM during their term, even though they had explicitly stated no intentions of cooperation with the communists (Plecitá-Vlachová & Stegmaier 2008). My source for this does not elaborate how or on which motions the KSČM provided the government with support, but this statement does undermine the proposition 1b, that no

cooperation should happen between the communists and the pro-system parties. However, finding this piece does not indicate a change in attitude towards the KSČM, because as we will see below, during the next elections, there is no indication that the ČSSD wishes to collaborate with the KSČM. I would argue that this observable suggests that the „no cooperation with extremist parties“-resolution is not as consistent as expected, and that it can be compromised in certain cases. Unfortunately, my collection of empirical evidence does not find any elaboration on when this resolution is excepted. Unfortunately, due to low access to empirical material, I cannot determine whether or not this observable represents an anomaly in the causal mechanism or not. At this point, there is good support that the mechanism works in the way I expect it to, excluding this observable. However, if I had better access to data on the general negotiations and collaborations between the Czech parties, I could find out if the ČSSD would depend on support from the KSČM regularly or not, if there was a pattern on what kind of policies this would happen and so forth, I would have a better way of understanding the consistency of the ČSSD declaration of no cooperation. What this does confirm though, is that the Bohumín Declaration was indeed of normative nature, and would see exceptions when the situation called for it. This inconsistency does challenge this study but I do not think that it entirely disconfirms this mechanism entirely just yet.

Observable of proposition 2, VI: Election of 2006.

The results for the 2006 election were interesting, because the votes were divided evenly between the left and right parties. The government, ODS-(KDU-ČSL)-SZ, took 100 seats, and the ČSSD and KSČM would have had 100 seats together, but due to the no cooperation-resolution, the ČSSD was an opposition with just 74 seats. The process of forming the government was a long and complicated one, because the first two proposed governments did not win a vote of confidence, and until January 2007, half a year after the election, did the ODS, KDU-ČSL and SZ coalition, led by Mirek Topolánek, win a vote on confidence. A poll conducted at that same time indicated the 70 percent of Czech „[...] believe that the government crisis has harmed the country's economy“ and more than three-quarter „[...] said the crisis has harmed the Czech Republic's reputation abroad“ (ibid.:183). This poses as yet another supportive indication of discontentment to political practices due to the inherent difficulties of forming stable governments in the Czech Republic.

This observable confirms both the perpetual pattern of center-cabinets and weak oppositions, but additionally it also indicates how the Czech system at this point still had great challenges when establishing governments. This observable does not confirm that the KSČM actively had any fault in

these difficulties, as the Topolánek-government is said to only win the establishing vote of confidence due to two deputies from ČSSD being absent at the time of the vote, winning them the majority of those present in the Chamber during the vote. It does confirm that the ČSSD sacrificed the position of being a stronger opposition against the government coalition, by not cooperating with the KSČM.

Observable of proposition 2, VI: Election of 2010.

Several scholars seem to consider the 2010 election a turning point in terms of the quality of the Czech democracy (see Lorenz 2020; Roberts 2017; Guasti 2020; Balík & Hlousek 2020; Kopeček 2016). This particular election was followed by a government coalition that barely endured four votes of no-confidence, only to lose at the fifth vote in March 2009. The election was initially to be held in the fall of 2009, however the Czech Constitutional Court ruled that the early election was unconstitutional, and despite an amendment being passed for the Chamber to be dissolved and allow for an early election, the ČSSD announced they would not support early elections, and it was postponed until the end of the 4-year term, which was Summer of 2010 (Stegmaier & Vlachová 2011: 238).

The result of this election is interesting for several reason. First of all, the two largest parties, ODS and ČSSD, saw a considerate decrease in votes and two entirely new parties gained seats in the government. ODS dropped with 35 percentage points and ČSSD 10 percentage points compared to the previous election. Secondly, since 1996 the KSČM had been the third largest party in the Chamber. There was a regular exchange between the two first places between the ODS and ČSSD, and they had always been followed by the KSČM. This time, the KSČM was only the fourth largest party, having been overtaken by the new party TOP 09, a liberal-conservative party that was established only a year earlier by Miroslav Kalousek, following his leave from the KDU-ČSL. Another party that was entirely new to the parliament was Public Affairs, VV (*Věci veřejné*), whose platform was strongly anti-corruption. Both new parties, TOP 09 and VV, “[...] offered voters who were dissatisfied with the main parties other options to express their discontent” (ibid.:240).

A third reason that this election is interesting, is because despite winning the largest number of total votes, just below 2 percentage point more than the ODS, the ČSSD could not form government. Even if they had pursued the impossible and looked for support from the KSČM, that would only guarantee them 82 seats in the Chamber. Additionally, neither ODS, TOP 09 nor VV desired to cooperate or form government with the ČSSD due to accusation that Jiří Paroubek, the chairman of ČSSD, had an “ambiguous attitude [...] towards the cooperation with Communists” (Linek 2011:965).

This observable has a high degree of confirmation of the proposition, as we see that there was established a center-cabinet and rather weak opposition. While the Communists does not appear to have an active part in obstructing political competition in the case, we do see that three parties rejecting cooperation with the ČSSD now, due to their alleged collaboration with the KSČM. Now, the ČSSD is treated as an undesirable as an extension of having had concerns with the KSČM, almost as if the KSČM was now the bearer of a contagion that infects the democratic institutions. Thus, once again, the KSČM mere presence seems to challenge the political cooperation and competition.

This observable also leads rather smoothly towards the outcome of this causal relation, as we see two new parties elected to the Chamber of Deputies, both offering to fix politics or at least acknowledges the corruption tainting the politics of the Czech Republic.

Aggregation of empirical evidence for proposition 2:

These five observables from election results and following government formations have given proof, that the Czech Republic did indeed see a series of center-cabinets combined with more or less fragmented oppositions. We see how the presence of KSČM leads to an almost clumsy cooperation between the rest of the parties, as they need to constantly bypass a need of support from a party that usually takes up at least ten percent of the seats in the Chamber. This is true for especially the ČSSD, as they usually find themselves without any immediate left-wing parties to ally themselves with, leading to questionably ideological combined government coalitions between the left party and center-right parties.

Additionally, we have also observed that too often have the difficulties relating to government formations led to public expression of dissatisfaction. The opposition agreement led to voters 'punishing' the ČSSD for abandoning their political integrity for support from ODS, by possibly turning towards the KSČM in the next election. The election in 2006 led to a half-year long political crisis before a government coalition won the vote of confidence, a crisis that severely crippled the public's trust in the political elite. And while dissatisfaction with the state of conditions can arguably be a stable when it comes to politics, the two mentioned examples are directly related to challenges of the Czech parliament due to the 'no cooperation with the communist'-norm. I would therefore argue, that the causal mechanism is illustrated to a satisfying degree that it makes sense to look into the proposed observables of the outcome.

Figure 3: Overview of the government and oppositions formation between 1996-2017.

Year	Government	Opposition	Cooperation w/ KSČM	Confirmation of proposition
1996	Center-right cabinet	Weak	No	Yes
1998	Center-left cabinet	Divided Support from ODS by opposition agreement	No	Yes
2002	Left-center-right cabinet	Weak	No	Yes
2006	Center-right cabinet	Weak	No	Yes
2010	Center-right cabinet	Weak*	No	Yes, but (see notes)
2013	Left-center-right cabinet	Weak	No	Yes
2017/ 2018	Center-left cabinet, with populist prime minister	Weak	Yes	Yes
Notes: * Controversies of the ČSSD having had some support from KSČM in previous term, leads to no cooperation with the ČSSD by other parties.				

5.3.5. Outcome

Proposition for the outcome is as follows: Large public dissatisfaction with the political landscape lends its way for populist parties to see electoral success.

Observable of outcome, I: The 2013 elections.

Czech politics are tainted in allegations of corruption and all kinds of scandals. However, the aftermath of the 2010 elections were something else. Despite seeming like a perfectly stable composition of 118 seats of the 200 in the Chamber of Deputies, the ODS- TOP 09-VV coalition was far from ideal. Cooperation was hindered due to turmoil and corruption scandals, both involving VV but also „[...] the highest profile scandal in the Czech post-communist era“ (Stegmaier & Linek 2014:386), which involved Prime Minister Petr Nečas, whose chief-in-staff was arrested for abusing military intelligence to spy on Nečas' wife, who he was having a divorce with. Thus, the fight against

corruption was inevitably a focal point in the 2013 election campaigns. The new party ANO 2011, whose platform was strongly both anti-corruption but also above-politics, rose to be the second largest party in the Chamber with 47 seats. The ČSSD formed a coalition government with ANO, holding just three more seats than ANO. One of the main articulated political areas of focus of the government was the fight against corruption and economic criminality, which is very much in line with the ANO's strong anti-corruption campaign (ibid.).

This observable both seems like the culmination of many years ongoing patterns of corruption and scandals happening in the Czech political landscape resulting in an earthquake changing the shape of the parliament constellations. It seems very natural that following a large-scale series of political scandals, that a party like ANO, who offered to fix these issues from politics, would see a large support, even at their first national election. But one should also note, that this election, the KSČM saw a small increase (3 percentage points) of votes from the previous election. This could suggest that the KSČM was another attractive choice for parliament, as they represented the opposite of the established parties, who evidently were not to be trusted with one's vote. The finding of this observable definitely confirms that there are a presence of populist movements and support for these movements in the Czech Republic. This observable does indicate that this support is motivated by the frustrations with corrupt politicians, and not necessarily of negligent political actors, as my hypothesis suggests. Thus, the empirical uniqueness is not very high, as this observable theoretically could be explained by different factors.

Observable of outcome, I: The 2017 elections.

With 29,64 percent of the total vote, ANO won a clear victory in the elections of 2017. The party took up a vast number of seats in the Chamber, 78 to be exact, and Babiš was confirmed to be the next prime minister of the Czech Republic. ODS, who came in second in the results, only gained 11,32 percent of the total votes – 18,32 percentage points less than ANO. This election also marks a significant change in the parliamentary structures, building on the patterns that started in the previous election, which is that the four established parties were no longer the dominant players of the political system. This time no less than ten parties were elected with mandates for the Chamber, which has led to extreme pluralism, or even polarized pluralism (observation from Balík & Hloušek 2020:104). The elections took place in fall of 2017 and ANO formed a minority government on their own but lost a vote of no confidence only a few months later in January of 2018 (Czech Government Quits 2018). It took another six months before the new government was confirmed: ANO formed a coalition

government with ČSSD, securing them with 93 seats in the Chamber, but with the support from the KSČM, leading to a total of 108 seats (Communist Will Have Government 2018).

Here we see a clear indication of the proposed outcome of the causal relation. An anti-politics party gained the largest number of votes, a rich populist is elected as prime minister and the other anti-system party, the long unwelcomed KSČM, has a determining supporting role for the new government. The combination of the two strongest examples of anti-system parties in the Czech Republic, ANO and the KSČM, working together is to me a strong confirmation of the supposed anti-system legacies present in the country.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Findings

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that politics can be messy and that political parties finding common positions can be far and few in between. Divergent opinions are natural to party systems, but a multitude of diverging opinions leads to difficulties with attaining majority in the political institutions, especially in parliamentary systems. So, while differences in political opinions are common, it is a problem if these divergences pose challenges in forming majority coalition governments. Parties usually depend on the support or forming of coalition to create stable governments. But if the opinions of the elected representatives differ too greatly, are too polarized, these government formations are harder to establish, and thus polarization challenges the stability of the political system (Schmitt & Franzmann 2020:61).

Without looking into the spatial positions of the political parties in the Czech parliament, I would still argue that the Czech party system is experiencing polarization which is challenging the stability of the system. As Schmitt & Franzmann's study shows, center-cabinets do not lead to polarization on their own but combined with oppositions that cannot cooperate or participate sufficiently in parliament, the party system can become polarized. My analysis has shown that the elections between 1996 and 2010 all resulted in center-cabinets, it even saw coalition governments working 'across' the left and right side of the center. But my analysis has also shown a series of fragmented oppositions, all of which have been either directly or indirectly due to the necessity to avoid cooperation with the KSČM. Therefore, simply based on the structure of the party system in this period, I would argue that the Czech party system is polarized. But my main argument is that the KSČM is the root of this polarization.

Now I need to acknowledge that the Czech political system is also very apparent the host of corruption scandals, clientelism, pettiness and a reluctance to compromise for anything, and these aspects should be taken for granted as unimportant. But what I have shown in my analysis is, that the simple presence of an anti-system party associated with the oppression of a totalitarian past, can have deep structural consequences for the political competition and collaboration. While I cannot substantially prove that the Czech parliament would have much stronger decision-making and legislative abilities if it were without the communist party, as acknowledged this system has many flaws, but what I can show for my work is that one single party has had the ability to take up enough space in the Czech parliament,

making it much more difficult for the rest of the parties to form governments or find allies in oppositions.

The opposition agreement and the difficulties of winning a vote of confidence for the new government after the 2006 election, are both cases where we see that the polarization effect of the KSČM has led to both political instability but also public dissatisfaction. While any political decision is commonly met with resistance or public uproar, these two cases were very distinctly the direct consequence of the passive presence of the KSČM. And while I will admit that this is rather vague evidence, I will argue that this connects the KSČM with the public disenchantment with politics and the political elite, that led to the establishment of ANO and their electoral success in 2013.

My argument is that the emergence of populist movements, or specifically the technocratic populist party of ANO, is not simply a reaction to immediate political context and events but is a result of a long-term structural conditions. In extension of Vachudova's theory, I propose the idea of an anti-system legacy, that has been held alive by the KSČM and directly connects the decision to keep the communist party legal to the aggrandizement of power by Andrej Babiš.

6.2. Anti-system legacy in the Czech Republic

I think, that Vachudova was wrong about the Czech Republic being a hybrid case. Or rather, I think that her theory did not grasp the full complexities of the case of the Czech Republic and its democratic trajectory. I believe that the Czech case is not a matter of somewhere in between patterns of political change of liberal and illiberal nature, but rather the case of a very different legacy; an anti-politics legacy. I believe that the KSČM is a key player in the endurance of this legacy, but not its sole creator. It should be noted that the political party of the dissident movement, Civic Forum, was created with the notion of being a party of 'anti-political politics'. Their interpretation of anti-politics was an idealistic way of centering their politics around the 'ethical and moral principles of the individual' and saw themselves as a party without the aspiration for power (Weiss 2020:82). The Civic Forum did not last more than the one term between 1990 and 1992, and their most successful successor, ODS, do not appear to share these notions of anti-politics, and I do not think that the Civic Forum has passed these anti-politics values to the KSČM, but I do believe that it has set a trajectory for the ways politics are critiqued in the Czech Republic. I think the anti-politics values of the Civic Forum combined with the endurance of the KSČM as an anti-system pariah party, has set a legacy in motion, that legitimizes a specific way of perceiving politics. Beyond simply expressing critique, disappointment or disenchantment with politics and the shape of democracy in general, I think this

anti-system legacy nourishes and maybe even legitimizes political parties representing these sentiments.

Since ANO represents a very similar demographic as the KSČM, which are groups of people feeling dissatisfied with the system, I expected to see that ANO had successfully taken over supporters from the KSČM in 2013. That was not the case though. In 2013, the KSČM saw a small increase in support, 3 percentage points. I interpret this as an indication of the attraction of these parties for parts of the electorate, who are feeling disappointed by the political system. Therefore, despite the many differences between the center populist ANO and the extremist left KSČM, both can represent the desire for fundamental changes in the political system.

I think, and I apologize for the metaphorical language, that the presence of the KSČM has nourished and watered the soil for anti-politics parties, such as ANO, indicating that the presumed erosion of democracy in the Czech Republic, is larger than the series of events in the past years, but has roots in the structures of its democratic institutions. That is not to say that the political and social context preceding the emergence of populist movements in the Czech Republic have nothing to do with it, but I think this suggests that it is worth looking at the framework of the democratic institutions themselves for studies of why young democracies see the symptoms of 'sliding backwards'.

The anti-system legacy does not necessarily mean that the Czech Republic nor its citizens are anti-democratic. Since spring of 2018, the civic organization Million Moment for Democracy (*Milion chvilék pro demokracii*) has held protest campaigns and mass protests all over the country. The movement was established succeeding the allegations of corruption and fraud targeting Babiš, as they call for his resignation and accountability for his actions. As the name suggests, the protection of democracy is the heart of this movement. As they state on their English-information webpage, they aim to: „[...] promote civic participation, the accountability of elected representatives, and a democratic discussion, thereby increasing the stability of European democratic institutions“ (Milion Chvilek; Bernhard, Guasti & Buštiková 2019). With this in mind, I will conclude that the Czech democracy is not in a state of crisis – at least yet. But the Czech case do present reserachers with possible studies of young democracies and how they should process their totalitarian past.

6.3. Decommunization

The revolutions leading to the end of communism in CEE was followed by processes of decommunization and lustration processes. The latter describes the measures that was taken as to determine who had worked with the communist state security apparatus and the former was the

processes of purging Communist Party members from public life, but also how to process the communist past. Czechoslovakia implemented in 1991 one of the most radical lustrations laws of the region, that would allow the systematical banned “[...] former high party officials, secret police agents and collaborators, and member of the People’s Militia [...] from holding jobs in the state administration, state media, and state-owned economic units for a period of five year” (Tismăneanu 1998:117). This five year-period was extended some years and eventually led to a life-time ban (Williams, Fowler & Szczerbiak 2005). There were a diversity of reasons for the lustration processes: they were considered necessary to safeguard the newly established state and democracy, they were needed to secure that officials with security-service information could not use it to blackmail; but it was also contributed to a sense of public empowerment and as the natural conclusion to a revolution (ibid.). Decommunization processes were partly necessary for political and democratic reasons, but also a way to seek justice after decades of an oppressive regime. However, dealing with an authoritarian past is not as simple as one may think, and these processes had to take into account of who, or what, should be protected? Who should take the blame? Is the guilt on the collective or on individuals? So, even though Czechoslovakia managed to implement strong lustration laws and processes to find justice and peace with their communist past, why did they allow communists to stay in the political system? When asked this exact question, former president Václav Havel has said: “Who, in fact, wasn’t a communist? [...] But everyone and his uncle was in the party” (Havel 2006:17), and continued to point out that banning any member of the communist party from their respective positions, would lead to a sudden halt of the entire Czechoslovak society; “We wouldn’t have had a single higher-ranking officer in the armed forces, nor a single criminal investigator, a single CEO, a single diplomat, and maybe not even a single air traffic controller” (ibid). To him, the matter of communists in power, was a question of pragmatics, because if we ban one kind of communists, where does it end? Because eventually, you’ll have nobody left who wasn’t part of the party in one way or another.

This analysis begs to consider one key question of the decommunization processes: Should the communist party have been banned from the Czech political system? Obviously, this is a retrospective concern, as the threshold for correcting such a potential mistake has long been passed. By strictly considering the findings of this thesis, I would ask the reader to consider the either-or solutions. Either; the communist party should have been entirely banned from working in Czechoslovakia, and the Czech Republic following, thus creating stronger incentives for other moderate left-wing parties. This would, first of all, have secured that a party such as the ČSSD would have had possible allies on

the left side of the political spectrum, possibly ensuring far more stable governments and stronger oppositions. This solution does not give any guarantees for a successful democratic transition, as we have observed in both Hungary and Poland – both countries were according to Vachudova the prime examples of liberal democracies in bloom, but now both of them are under the scrutiny for undermining rule of law and democratic processes. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the banning of the communist party in the Czech Republic would necessarily have led to a different outcome than it have already. And as the quote above by Václav Havel pointed out, the banning of communists from any government power would most likely lead to a severe shortage in any kind of civil servant.

Or; the communists were declared legal, as it happened, but that the parties should consistently cooperate with them. Or at least stick to a no-support if that was their expressed preference. I believe, that the inconsequent way the ČSSD allowed support from the KSČM at times when it was either convenient or necessary, have undermined their efforts to freeze out the former oppressors but also helped legitimize the communist party in some ways. Additionally, as observed with the election of 2010, the inconsistency of cooperating with the KSČM had consequences for the ČSSD, because the rest of the parties elected in the parliament rejected any cooperation with them because of this inconsistency of their own policy. While it is important to keep in mind, that the decision of not collaborating with the KSČM can definitely be interpreted as a symptom of dealing with the communist past, which was important in the transition period, it appears that this line of thinking has led to polarization within the political structures. I would like to emphasize, that this is not to say that this decision was immoral nor that the ČSSD, or the rest of the Czech parties for that matter, should have exercised stronger collaboration with the communist party.

My point is, that in the Czech case, the political actors have been placed between a rock and a hard place, due to the endurance of an unreformed communist party. The rationalities for letting communists stay in powerful positions were reasonable, just as the avoidance of supporting the communist party in the succeeding years was as well. I think that this thesis can contribute with shedding light on the difficulties with dealing with the totalitarian past of a nation state and making rational decisions for how to build a strong democratic institutions. Because, while I believe that the act of allowing the communist party to stay in positions of power, I assume that no one would have considered that it could results in the arrival of populist politicians amassing power some twenty years later, but I believe my project has illustrated the connection between these two events. I have no empirical material to support if this is true for all post-authoritarian young democracies; what I do

believe is that there is a strong connection between the unreformed communist party and the populist ANO, that can be traced in the structures of negotiations and allies within the Czech parliament for the past almost two decades.

I do not think that the anti-system legacies fully explain the assumed erosion of democracy in the Czech Republic, there are evidently a myriad of possible issues within the political system, corruption and clientelism is to mention some, but I do believe that it sheds light on why a populist party has seen the success that it has. And I do believe that this thesis can contribute to the questions of how young democracies should handle their totalitarian past.

Now I can return to the research question of this thesis: How has the post-communist legacies of the Czech Republic explained its current state of democracy? I think that by looking at the state of democracy in the Czech Republic through the lens of legacies, it has helped illuminating possible underlying structural issues, that go beyond just the immediate relevant political context. It also highlights how important it is for young democracies exiting a totalitarian regime to thoroughly deal with actors of the shared past. I do not find myself qualified to bring an opinion on whether or not the round table discussions following the Velvet Revolution should have concluded with the exclusion of the communist party from any democratic institutions. Decommunization processes are complicated and not removed from the collective and individual traumas that the communist regime was responsible for. But what I will say is that the decision made in 1989 set in motion the anti-system legacies of the nation state. Indicating that the ways in which a totalitarian regime ends a democracy begins matters a great deal.

In the parliamentary election of 2021, SPOLU, a liberal-conservative faction made up of ODS, TOP 09 and KDU-ČSL (SPOLU 2021), won by a very small margin – 27,79 percent against ANO's 27,13 percent. SPOLU formed government with the coalition between the Pirate Party and STAN (a group of mayors and independent candidates) in late December last year (New Czech Government 2021). This election not only marked possible the end of the Andrej Babiš political career, but it also marked the first time the KSČM did not meet the electoral threshold. It is the first parliamentary set-up that is entirely without seats being taken up by communist members. Does this mark the end of the anti-system legacies in the Czech Republic? It certainly appears so. Jiří Pehe, a Czech political analyst of the New York University in Prague, is quoted so say, that the SPOLU and Pirates and STAN groupings were created specifically to resist the democratic erosion of the Czech Republic, that they perceived ANO and Babiš to represent. They resist becoming like Hungary and Poland (Tait 2021).

I think this is good news for the Czech democracy. However, I think the end of the anti-system legacies in the Czech Republic depends on the new governments willingness to approach cooperative efforts with ANO, when the situation calls for it. Because, if this thesis shows anything, it is that allowing a party to block out seats in the parliament and not cooperating with them due to the crimes of their past, it can have consequences for the democratic future.

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Front Page:

Pictured: The National Theater, Prague (*Národní divadlo*), personal photo.

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Appendix

Appendix 1:

Overview of election results for the Chamber of the People, the Chamber of Nations and National Council in Czechoslovakia.

1990						
Chamber of People			Chamber of Nations		National Council	
Party	Percent	Seats	Percent	Seats	Percent	Seats
OF	53,15	68	49,96	50	49,50	127
KSČM	13,48	68	13,80	12	13,24	32
KDU-ČSL	8,69	9	8,75	6	8,42	19
HDS-SMS	7,89	9	9,10	7	10,03	22
Total		101		75		200
<u>Sources used:</u> Olsen, D. M. (1997): 174 + 176.						
1992						
Chamber of People			Chamber of Nations		National Council	
Party	Percent	Seats	Percent	Seats	Percent	Seats
ODS	33,90	48	33,43	37	29,73	76
KSČM/LB*	14,27	19	14,48	15	14,05	35
ČSSD	7,67	10	6,80	6	6,53	16
SPR-RSČ	6,48	8	6,37	6	5,98	14
KDU-ČSL	5,98	7	6,08	6	6,28	15
LSU	5,84	7	6,06	5	6,52	16
ODA					5,93	14
HDS-SMS					5,87	14
Total		99		75		200
<u>Sources used:</u> Olsen, D. M. (1997): 174 + 176.						

Appendix 2:

An overview of the election results for the Chamber of Deputies in the Czech Republic, 1996-2021.

1996			1998			2002		
Government: ODS, KDU-ČSL ODA coalition. <i>Seats:</i> 99 Opposition: ČSSD, SPR-RSC. <i>Seats:</i> 79			Government: ČSSD, with support from ODS <i>Seats:</i> 74 Opposition: (ODS), KDU-ČSL, US. <i>Seats:</i> 39/102 seats, (excluding/including ODS).			Government: ČSSD, KDU-ČSL, US-DEU <i>Seats:</i> 101 Opposition: ODS <i>Seats:</i> 58 seats.		
Party	Percent	Seats	Party	Percent	Seats	Party	Percent	Seats
ODS	29,62	68	ČSSD	32,30	74	ČSSD	30,21	70
ČSSD	26,44	61	ODS	27,70	63	ODS	24,48	58
KSČM	10,33	22	KSČM	11,00	24	KSČM	18,51	41
KDU-ČSL	8,08	18	KDU-ČSL	9,00	20	KDU-ČSL / US-DEU	14,27	31
SPR-RSC	8,01	18	US	8,60	19			
ODA	6,36	13						
Sources used: European Election Database; Czech Statistical Office (2021); International Foundation for Electoral Systems								

2006			2010			2013		
Government: ODS-(KDU-ČSL)-SZ <i>Seats:</i> 100 Opposition: ČSSD <i>Seats:</i> 74			Government: ODS-TOP 09-VV. <i>Seats:</i> 118 Opposition: ČSSD <i>Seats:</i> 56			Government: ČSSD, ANO and KDU-ČSL. <i>Seats:</i> 111 Opposition: ODS, TOP 09, Dawn. <i>Seats:</i> 56		
Party	Percent	Seats	Party	Percent	Seats	Party	Percent	Seats
ODS	35,38	81	ČSSD	22,10%	56	ČSSD	20,45	50
ČSSD	32,32	74	ODS	20,20%	53	ANO 2011	18,65	47
KSČM	12,81	26	TOP 09	16,70%	41	KSČM	14,91	33
KDU-ČSL	7,23	13	KSČM	11,30%	26	TOP 09	11,99	26
SZ	6,3	6	VV	10,90%	24	ODS	7,72	16
						Úsvít	6,88	14
						KDU-ČSL	6,78	14
Sources used: European Election Database; Czech Statistical Office (2021); International Foundation for Electoral Systems								

2017			2021		
<u>Government*</u> : ANO and ČSSD, with support from KSČM. <i>Seats</i> : 93 (108 with KSČM) <u>Opposition</u> : ODS, Pirates, KDU-ČSL/US-DEU and TOP 09. <i>Seats</i> : 92			<u>Government</u> : SPOLU + Pirates and STAN <i>Seats</i> : 108 <u>Opposition</u> : ANO 2011 and SPD <i>Seats</i> : 92		
Party	Percent	Seats	Party	Percent	Seats
ANO 2011	29,64	78	SPOLU	27,79%	71
ODS	11,32	25	ANO 2011	27,13%	72
Pirates	10,79	22	Pirates + STAN	15,61%	37
SPD	10,79	22	SPD	9,56%	20
KSČM	10,64	15			
ČSSD	7,28	15			
KDU-ČSL + US-DEU	7,27	10			
TOP 09	5,31	7			
STAN	5,18	6			
<u>Sources used</u> : European Election Database; Czech Statistical Office (2021); International Foundation for Electoral Systems <u>Notes</u> : * 2017 government is the confirmed government coalition from summer of 2018, not the failed ANO minority cabinet.					

Appendix 3:

Overview of abbreviations of the Czech political parties used or mentioned in this thesis.

Abbreviation	Czech	English
ANO (2011)	<i>Akce nespokojených občanů</i>	Action of dissatisfied citizens
ČSSD	<i>Česká strana sociálně demokratická</i>	Czech Social Democratic party
HDS-SMS	<i>Hnutí za samosprávnou demokracii - Společnost pro Moravu a Slezsko</i>	Movement for Autonomous Democracy–Party for Moravia and Silesia
KDU-ČSL	<i>Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová</i>	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party
KSČ	<i>Komunistická strana Československa</i>	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
KSS	<i>Komunistická strana Slovenska</i>	Communist Party of Slovakia
KSČM	<i>Kommunistická strana Čech a Moravy</i>	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
LSU	<i>Liberálně sociální unie</i>	Liberal-Social Union
ODA	<i>Občanská demokratická aliance</i>	Civic Democratic Alliance
ODS	<i>Občanská demokratická strana</i>	Civic Democratic Party
OF	<i>Občanské fórum</i>	Civic Forum
SPR–RSČ	<i>Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa</i>	Rally for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia
STAN	<i>Starostové a nezávislí</i>	Mayors and Independents
SZ	<i>Strana Zelených</i>	Green Party
TOP 09	<i>TOP 09s</i>	TOP 09
US	<i>Unie Svobody</i>	Freedom Union
VV	<i>Věci veřejné</i>	Public Affairs