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From euphoria to depression: changing attitudes towards market reform and political reform in the Czech Republic in comparative perspective 1992-1998

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Abstract

The paper looks at the attitudes of the Czech mass public towards basic political and economic transformations in the period between 1992 and 1998 on the one hand and how similar or different these attitudinal patterns are from other post-Communist societies in the same longitudinal comparison, on the other hand. The paper considers factors affecting these different attitudes and sets this in the context of the different paths of transition undertaken by the Czech Republic in contrast to other post-Communist countries. The paper is based upon a research programme consisting of representative sample surveys in 10 countries carried out on a regular basis since 1992. Apart from the Czech Republic, the New Democracies Barometer includes the following countries: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Belarus and Ukraine.

Zusammenfassung

Die Studie analysiert die Einstellungsmuster der tschechischen Bevölkerung bezüglich grundlegender politischer und wirtschaftlicher Transformationsprozesse in der Periode zwischen 1992 und 1998 einerseits und die Homogenität beziehungsweise Heterogenität dieser Meinungsmuster im Vergleich zu anderen postkommunistischen Gesellschaften andererseits. Die Studie bestimmt Faktoren, die die unterschiedlichen Einstellungsformen der tschechischen Bevölkerung in Hinblick auf die Transformation hin zu Marktwirtschaft und Demokratie beeinflussen und stellt diese in Bezug auf unterschiedliche Transformationspfade in der tschechischen Republik in Unterscheidung mit anderen zentral- und osteuropäischen Transformationsgesellschaften. Diese Studie beruht hinsichtlich ihrer Datenbasis auf einem Forschungsprogramm von repräsentativen akademisch-vergleichenden Umfragestudien in 10 Ländern, die regelmäßig seit 1992 in Zentral- und Osteuropa durchgeführt wurden. Über die tschechische Republik hinaus werden folgende Länder im Rahmen dieses Forschungsprogrammes mit dem Titel "Neue Demokratien Barometer" regelmäßig auf die Reaktionsmuster der Bevölkerung untersucht: Belarus, Bulgarien, Kroatien, Polen, Rumänien, Slowakei, Slowenien, Ukraine und Ungarn. Die Untersuchung enthält die ersten Forschungsergebnisse der aktuellen Umfrage in der tschechischen Republik vom Februar 1998.

Keywords

Czech Republic, Economic change, Political change, Post-communism

Schlagworte

Tschechische Republik, ökonomischer Wechsel, politischer Wechsel, Postkommunismus

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The Czech Republic is amongst the group of countries which have had a comparatively successful transition from communism. In the last nine years a relatively stable and well-functioning democratic and market system have been established. Large sectors of the economy have been privatised and any dramatic inflation or violent drop in living standards has been avoided so far. Although in the early phase of transformation, the splitting of the country caused some problems, and in the last year problems both in the governing party and in the outcomes of privatisation have emerged, leading to a certain amount of disillusionment, in general the Czech Republic seems well on the road towards becoming a European welfare capitalist society in quite a short time.

In tables 1 and 2 we can consider the performance of the Czech Republic according to aggregated economic indicators in comparison with other post-communist countries in the region. The GDP per capita is some of the highest in the region, both inflation and unemployment remain relatively low and the economic indicators record a steadily improving performance. This rather rosy picture may has been modified in the last year. In 1998 according to newspaper reports, unemployment now stands at 6% and GDP per capita may have also dropped somewhat. However, this still puts the Czech Republic in the top league amongst the post-communist countries.

Table 1 Comparison of economic conditions of the post-Communist countries. Changes in GDP per capita (purchasing power parity measures) 1990-1996

	1990	**1993**	**1994**	**1995**	**1996**
Czech Rep	9.30	8.47	8.88	9.74	10.46
Slovakia	7.26	6.30	6.77	7.30	7.99
Hungary	5.71	5.99	6.36	6.58	6.82
Poland	4.19	4.66	5.04	5.45	5.93
Slovenia	9.16	9.23	10.01	10.53	11.14
Bulgaria	4.45	4.19	4.40	4.37	4.12
Romania	3.96	3.70	3.95	4.30	4.61
Croatia	4.70	3.76	3.89	4.01	4.26
Ukraine	4.46	3.29	2.63	2.36	2.20

Calculations carried out by Wiener Institut für Internationales Wirtschaftvergleich are in US$ equivalents

Table 2 Unemployment rates 1990-1996

	1990	1993	1994	1995	1996
Czech Rep	0.8	3.5	3.2	2.9	3.5
Slovakia	1.6	14.4	14.8	13.1	12.8
Hungary	1.9	13.3	11.4	11.1	10.7
Poland	6.3	16.4	16	14.9	13.6
Slovenia	5.8	15.4	14.2	14.5	14.4
Bulgaria	1.7	16.4	12.8	11.1	12.5
Romania	-	10.4	10.9	9.5	6.3
Croatia	-	14.8	14.5	14.5	15.9
Ukraine	-	0.3	0.3	0.6	1.6

Source: (WIIW, 1997) No. 167 May 1997

Unfortunately the comparative statistics compiled by WIIW do not include Belarus

Although marketisation and democratisation were assumed in the early period of reform to be inevitably bonded, like Siamese twins, closer reflection and inspection of the fate of other post-communist countries shows that this is not necessarily the case. In some countries we can see marketisation without any introduction of democracy. This is the case in China, but other countries of the region, such as Slovakia or Belarus also show change towards a market society and strong support for market principles among the population even when democracy has not functioned well in practice and where the governing elite may even be opposed to further democratisation or market reform. However, it is more difficult to find examples of a democratic system that does not involve some element of market capitalism. We might conclude that market capitalism alone does not ensure democracy, but liberal democracy usually implies some kind of market system. We might also surmise that the opinions of the population do not always reflect those of the political elite and vice versa, which is why it is important to take public opinion into account.

However, there are many versions of the link between market and democratic system, from the Anglo-American neo liberal one with the principle of a minimal role for the state, to the more corporatist social market economy found in Germany and Austria where the state has a far stronger role. Marketisation and democratisation appear not to be inevitably linked like Siamese twins, but they seem to be somehow related. Indeed, marketisation and

democratisation, rather than being complementary, may actually contradict one another in the process of reform (Offe, 1994).

In this paper we are concerned not with the market or democratic system itself, so much as popular support for the changes. The economic indicators which we have used in Tables 1 and 2 are often used as sufficient indicators of the direction of reform. Or otherwise the ideas and policies of the ruling elite are taken as representative of the direction of the country as a whole. Here we want to disentangle some of these connected assumptions and look at how far the attitudes of the Czech people coincide with the economic indicators or with the general perspective of the government. Other analysis of the same data indicate that there can be strong support for the current and future economic systems, even in the absence of a well-functioning democratic system (Rose, Mishler, & Haerpfer, 1998). There can also be a strongly pro-market orientation on the part of significant sections of the population, even when the marketisation process itself has been disastrous (as is the case for example, in Ukraine) (Wallace, 1997).

Some distinctive features of the Czech Republic need to be borne in mind. First, the Czech Republic opted early on and very strongly for liberal reform and extensive privatisation based upon a combination of small privatisation and a voucher system for large scale privatisation (Vecernik, 1997) (Earle, Frydman, Rapaczynski, & Turkowitz, 1994) (Frydman, Rapaczynski, & Earle, 1993). This was reinforced by the election of a group of economists into power who held strong opinions about the way that marketisation should go and how it should lead the reform process. They believed that civil society, democratic institutions and other buttresses of democracy would follow from the economic reform and therefore concentrated their efforts upon that (Potucek, 1998). However, there remains a strong "leftist" tradition reflected in the preference of the population for intervention in the market and the maintenance of a strong safety net, along with coporatist tendencies (Orenstein, 1995) (Vecernik, 1997). This tradition may be now reasserting itself. In the extensive surveys of attitudes to economic change carried out by Jiri Vecernik (1997) it was found that public opinion has crystallised over the reform period and is more easily identified with particular social groups and that there is greater consistency amongst attitudes. Whereas in the first part of the reform period people may have been optimistic, may have been in favour of capitalism and democracy largely as a reaction to the previous system, it was without any real understanding of the market and democratic processes. According to him, there is now a better understanding based upon experience and one in which interests groups have more clearly emerged:

> "Precisely because of the success of the reform, Czechs have moved away from mass-mentality reactions to more individualistic ones" (Vecernik 1997:222)

However, this was until 1996 when the progress of democratic and market reform seemed to progress as a happy partnership in an ever improving situation. Since then, the shocks to the political system, with the collapse of the governing ODA party and the shocks to the economic system, with the devaluation of the Czech Crown, for the first time below the Slovak Crown, and the various scandals about privatisation and "tunnelling" of economic institutions which have erupted, may have changed this situation.

We wish to explore two sets of hypotheses in this context. The first set of hypotheses concern the relationship between popular opinion and the functioning of the system. Thus, we would hypothesise that the apparent functioning of the democratic system (the extent to which a party system is established and elections carried out) will result in greater support for current political system. Similarly, the success of the economic system will result in greater support for economic system. Thus, in the Czech Republic we would expect there to be high support for both systems, simply because of the relative success of both. However, we would predict a decline in support for both after 1996, on account of the changes described above.

The second set of hypotheses concern the relationship between support for the political system and support for economic system. We would hypothesise that supporters of political system would also support the economic system, because it is difficult to imagine a liberal democracy without a market. However, supporters of the economic system would not necessarily support the political system, because it is possible to have market system without a democracy. Furthermore, according to Vecernik, the materialism encouraged by Communist regimes, along with Czech pragmatism may encourage the move towards a market ideology, encouraged by the opportunities for individual improvement provided by the introduction of liberal capitalism. In other words people could see opportunities for improving their economic standard of living and this self-interest may make them pro-economic reform. However, there is no particular reason why this should also make them support political reform. They only need to look over the border at Slovakia to see an example of a rather successful (at least so far) economic system tied to a political system which seems to be becoming less, rather than more, democratic.

Methods of Research

The research is based upon a survey, the New Democracies Barometer (NDB), carried out at the following time points: 1991/2, 1993/4, 1994/5, 1995/6, 1998. Only one survey was carried out each year but field work takes place over the winter period so that some countries are covered in the old year and some in the beginning of the old year. The most recent survey in the Czech Republic was carried out in February 1998 but the rest of the data for NDB are not yet available, so we have included only Czech data for this year. The NDB is based upon a representative sample survey of approximately 1000 respondents in each

country in the following countries: Hungary, Poland Czech and Slovak Republics, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Belarus.

Each year a basic set of core questions about attitudes to the political system and attitudes to the market system are included and also a range of additional questions depending upon the co-sponsors of the survey and upon the interests of the people designing the survey. This enables comparisons between countries and also across time.

For the purpose of this analysis, we have concentrated mainly upon two sets of questions which were asked in each round of the survey. The first set asked people to rate on a scale between minus 100 and plus 100 their estimation of the former communist political regimes, the current political regime and the future political regime (in five years' time). The second set of questions asked people to estimate on a similar scale their rating of the former communist economic system, the current economic system and the system in five years' time. This provides us with a linear scale which can be collapsed in various ways and used for further analysis. In addition there were a range of questions asking more specifically about market values and economic values. Here we concentrate mainly upon the attitudes to the regime as a whole as indicated on these scales[1].

We have compared the Czech Republic to the NDB mean in most cases. Although this distorts the great heterogeneity between the reform countries, it helps for the purpose of this analysis to understand ways in which the Czech Republic differs from other countries. However, the most recent data for 1998 was only available for the Czech Republic at the time of going to press.

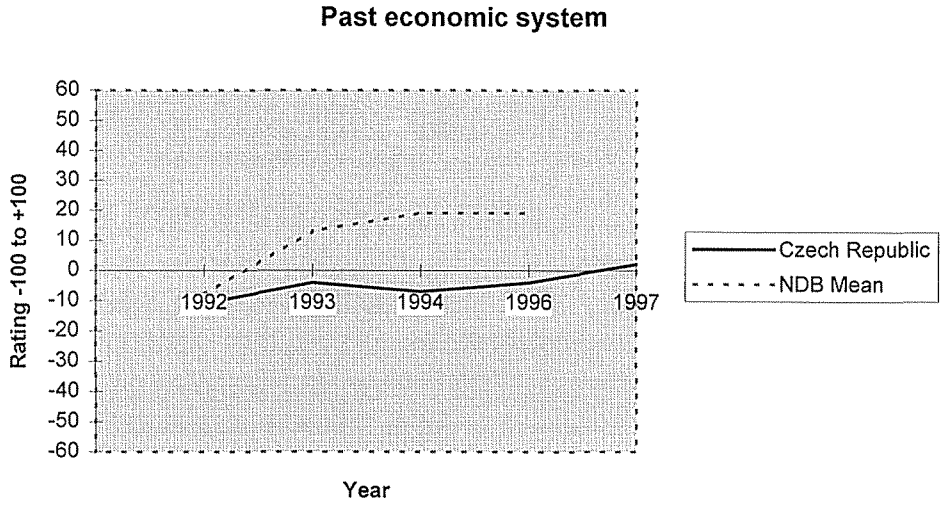
General trends in attitudes: Czech Republic compared with NDB mean

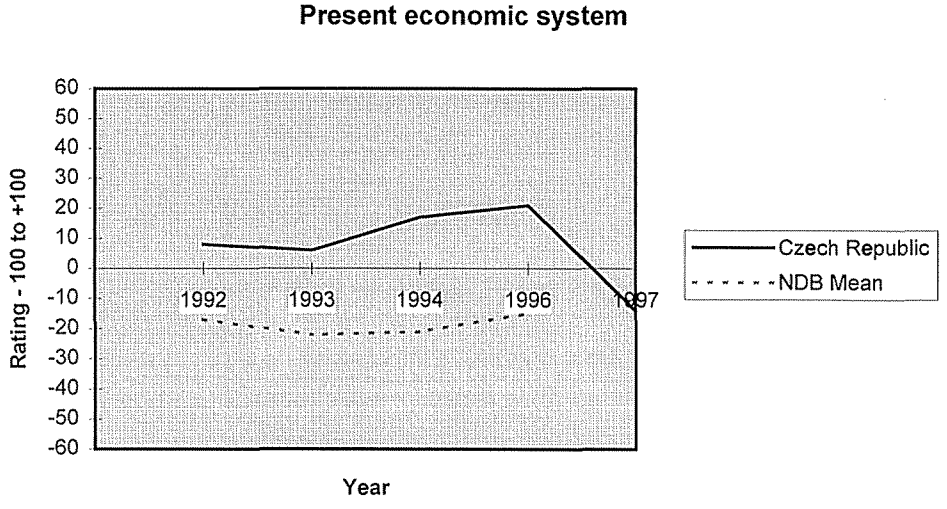
As a general indicator of similarities and differences between the Czech Republic and other countries, we looked at the average ratings for the past, present and future economic systems and the average rating of the past, present and future political system over time. The results are shown in the following charts 1-3.

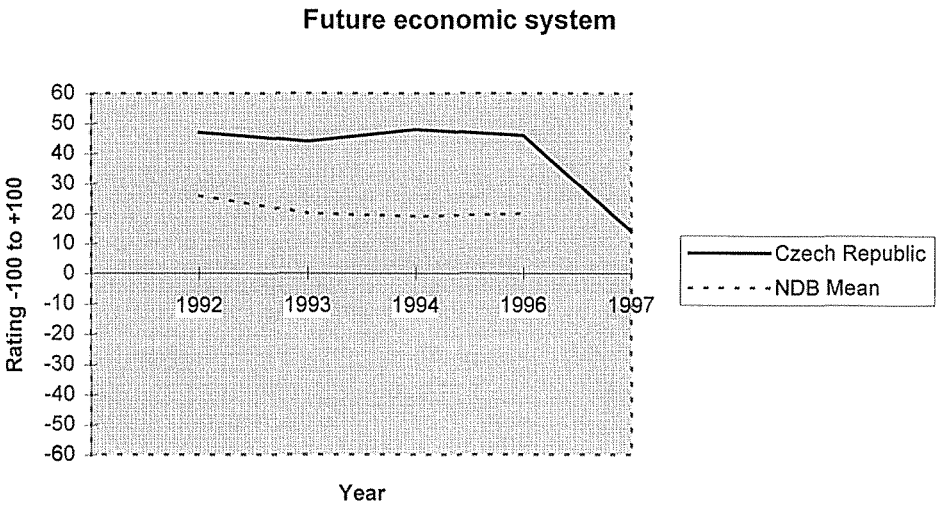
---

[1]The questions were worded as follows "Here is a scale ranking how our system of government works. The top, plus 100 is the best; at the bottom, minus 100 is the worst. Where on this scale would you put the former Communist regime?
Where on this scale would you put our current system of governing with free elections and many parties?
Where on this scale would cou put our system of governing in five years time?"
For the attittudes to the economy it was worded: "Where on this scale wouldyou put the socialist economy before the revolution of 1989?
Where on this scale would you put our current economic system?
Where on this scale would you put our economic system in five years' time?"

Charts 1-3 Attitudes to the past, present and future economic systems: Czech Republic and NDB Mean





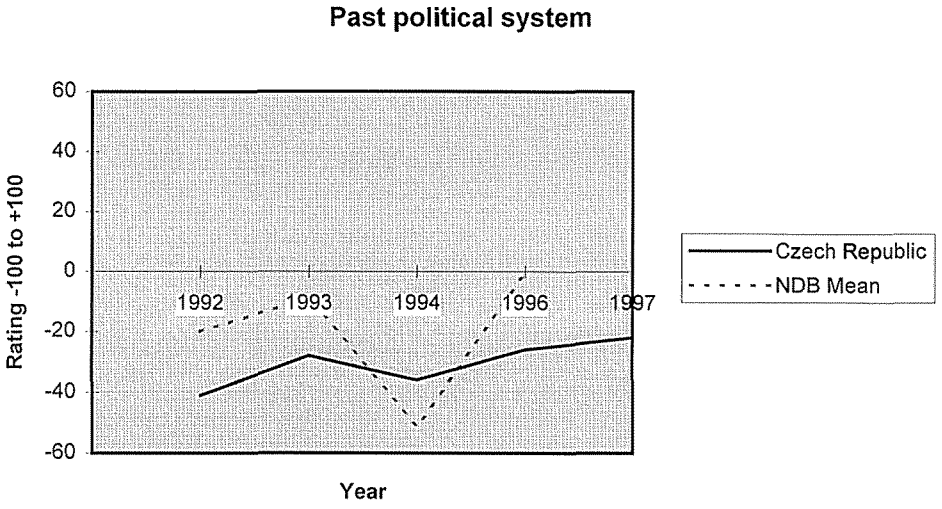


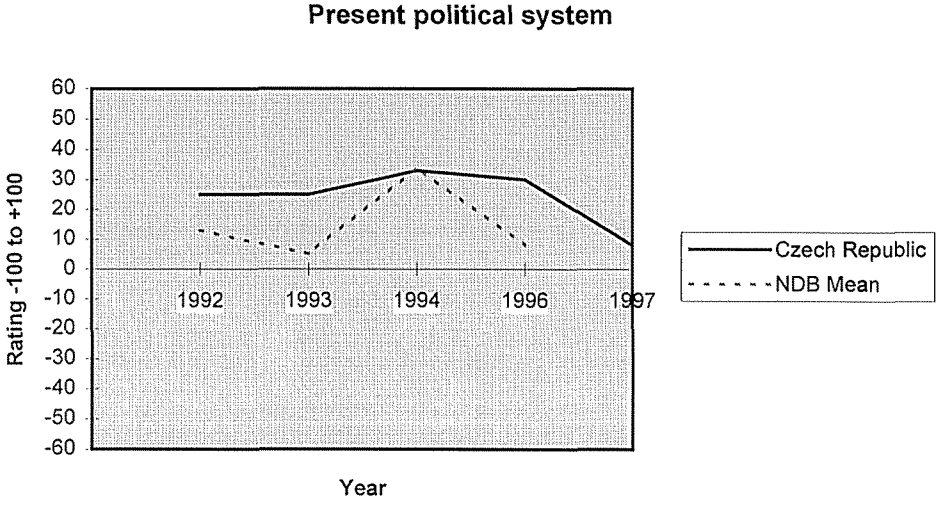
Here we can see that the Czech Republic was much more negative about the past economic regime and much more positive about the present and future economic regimes than other NDB countries up until 1996. In the most recent round of the survey this changed dramatically: The Czech people for the first time crossed the line into a positive evaluation of the past economic regime, which is more in line with the rest of the post-communist countries under consideration. Their faith in the present economic system, worsened considerably and is now negative on average and their faith in the future economic system, whilst not yet negative, is still considerably lower than it was in the past. It seems that the attitudes towards the economy have followed the macro-economic indicators but in a more dramatic form. The attitudes of the population in the Czech Republic seem to be an exaggerated version of the direction of the indicators a whole.

Turning now to the attitudes towards political changes, these follow the same trends but less dramatically. People in the Czech Republic are slightly more favourable to the past political system, but they are still quite negative about it and are generally more negative than other NDB countries. With regard to the present political system, they are more pessimistic too, but not as pessimistic as other NDB countries and their attitudes do not yet fall below the "zero" line. In terms of their attitudes to the future political system whilst they were previously consistently very positive, their expectations have plunged and seem to be heading below that of the NDB mean.

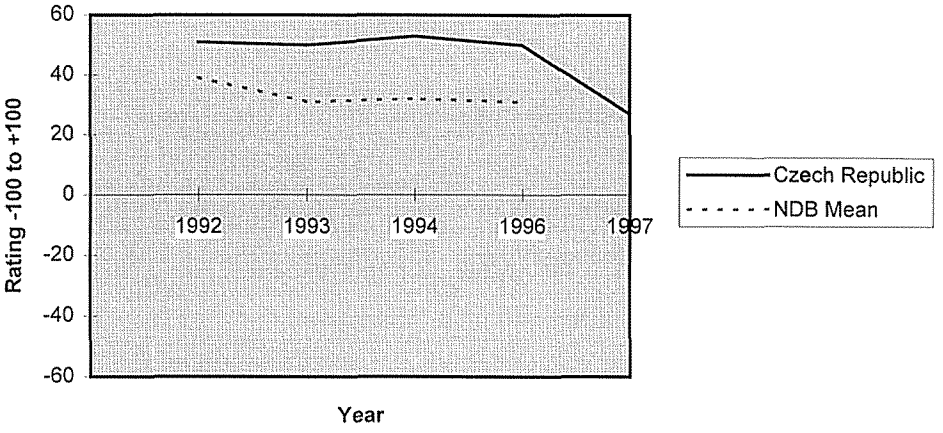
However, the standard deviations in all these means and all these time points are very large, indicating a wide range of opinion within the sample (see table 10). The standard deviations indeed have become wider in the last round of the survey than in previous years, indicating that although in general there may be a "depression" in attitudes towards the market and the political systems, this conceals some important differences of opinion, which we explain more fully later.

Charts 4-6 Attitudes to the past, present and future political system. Czech Republic compared with NDB mean.





Future political system

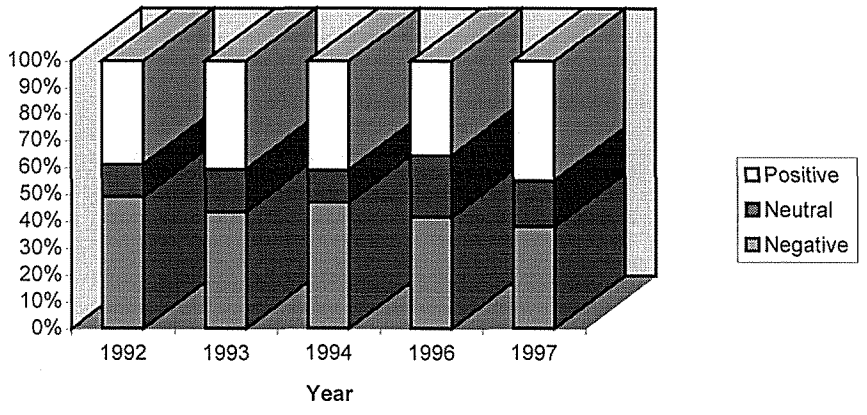


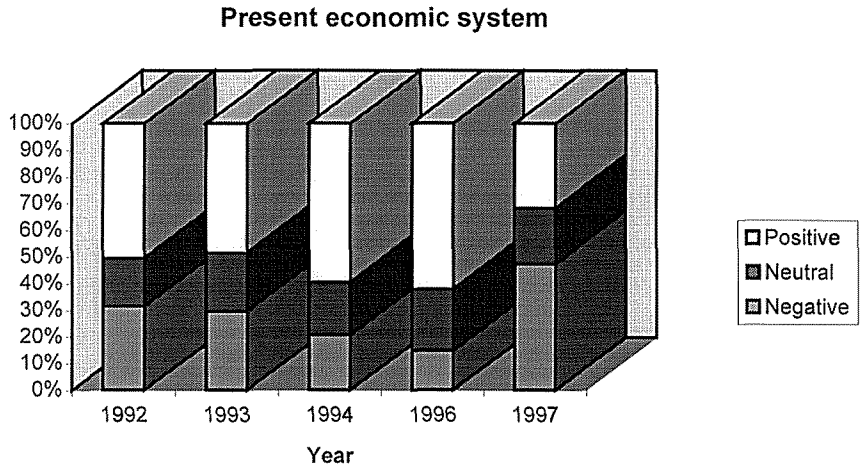
Looking more closely at Charts 1-6, we can see that the pessimism started already in 1996 when for the first time the Czechs were not the most positive country about the political and economic reforms. In 1996 they were for the first time overtaken by Poland (Rose & Haerpfer, 1996).

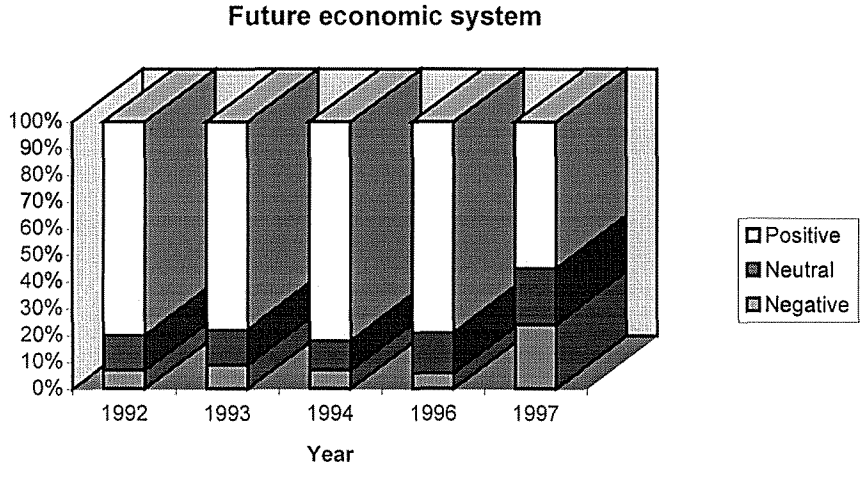
However, the problem with aggregating all data together in a single index is that the difference between sub-groups disappears. Next, we considered different groups - those for and against the past present and future regimes and economic systems, but this time as groups in order to consider their other characteristics. We took all those above +10 as being for the system, all those below -10 as being against it and those between -10 and +10 as being neutral. We first considered the size of these different groups over time. Here we have concentrated only upon the Czech Republic.

Charts 7-9 Positive, Neutral and Negative attitudes towards the economic system

Past economic system





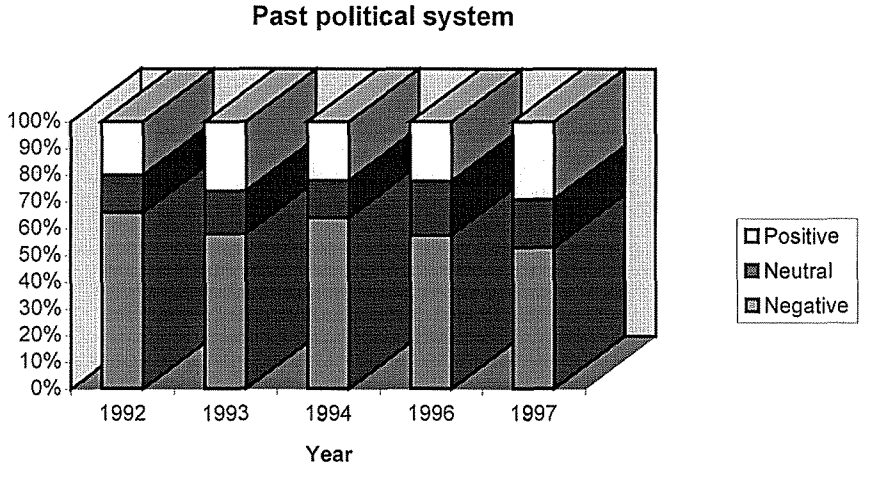


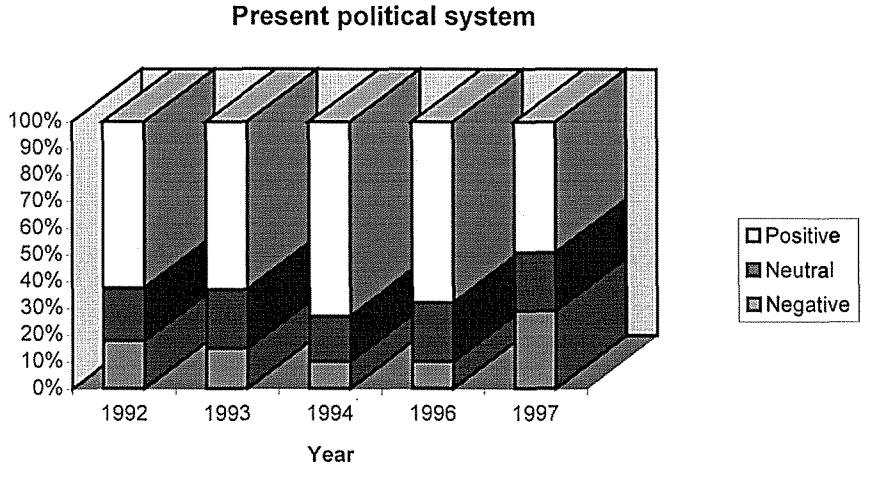
From the first set of charts we can see that the attitudes towards the past economic system are pretty consistently divided. Although on average Czechs appear to be negative, in fact there is a consistent group of around 40 per cent who rate the communist economic system as positive. These seem to fairly hard line supporters of the communist system and they do not disappear either when the macro-economic indicators are good or when they are bad. Attitudes to the present economic system are more volatile, with the numbers of supporters first rising until 1996 and then falling in 1997. However, there seems to be a group of about one third of the population who are still positive about the present economic system. A much larger group are optimistic about the future economic system, although these numbers have fallen in 1997. Nevertheless, still more than half the Czech population are positive about the future.

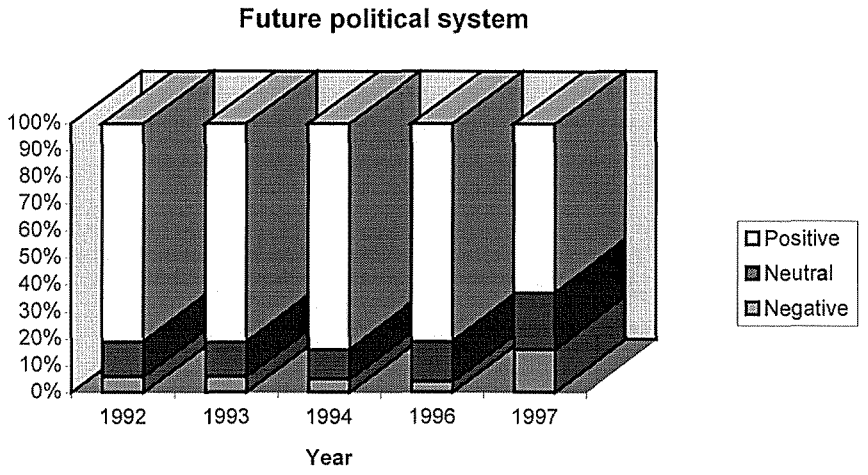
Far fewer people support the past political system than support the past economic system. Their numbers are less than one quarter, even in the depths of the Czech "depression" with political reform. This is in contrast to the one third who seem to always support the communist economic system. Therefore, to this extent one of our hypotheses seems to be borne out - it is possible for people to favour the economic system without supporting democratic reforms.

Although support for the present and future economic systems has fallen, it remains high at more than 50%.

Charts 10-12 Positive, Negative and Neutral Attitudes to the Past, Present and Future Political Systems







This evidence would appear to support our hypothesis that the faith in marketisation is at least partly a reflection of the overall success of the market reform process. The relative success of the Czech economic reform, which until 1996 did seem quite miraculous, is reflected in the strong support of the Czech people for the future and present market systems. There is declining support for the present political system and a small rise in support for the former political system.

Does support for marketisation means support for democracy?

One of our hypotheses was that support for democracy would mean support for the market system and not necessarily vice versa. Therefore we looked at the overlap between these groups. In fact, 90% of those who were in favour of the current market system were also in favour of the current political system and 82% of those in favour of the current political system were also in favour of the market system. Therefore, this hypothesis was not borne out - being in support of one usually means being in support of the other. Indeed, it could possibly be the opposite way round. Those in favour of the market system are more likely to also favour the political reform rather than vice versa.

To make this clearer, we have drawn up a correlation matrix for each year and this is set out below.

Tables 3-7 Correlation Matrix - Political attitudes with economic attitudes

NDB1 1991/2 Czech Republic

Political Attitudes	Economic Attitudes		
	Past economic system	Present economic system	Future economic system
Past regime	.53	-.04	-.06
Present regime	-.04	.47	.41
Future regime	-.14	.28	:52

NDB2 1993/4 Czech Republic

Political Attitudes	Economic Attitudes		
	Past economic system	Present economic system	Future economic system
Past regime	.59	-.17	-.23
Present regime	.13	.49	.42
Future regime	.16	.33	.62

NDB 3 1994/5 Czech Republic

Political Attitudes	Economic Attitudes		
	Past economic system	Present economic system	Future economic system
Past regime	.57	-.22	-.28
Present regime	-.20	.53	.46
Future regime	-.20	.40	.61

NDB 4 1995/6 Czech Republic

Political Attitudes	**Economic Attitudes**		
	Past economic system	**Present economic system**	**Future economic system**
Past regime	.65	-.22	-.18
Present regime	-.14	:46	.42
Future regime	-.09	.37	.60

NDB 5 1998 Czech Republic

Political Attitudes	**Economic Attitudes**		
	Past economic system	**Present economic system**	**Future economic system**
Past regime	.65	-.21	-.211
Present regime	-.25	.59	.54
Future regime	-.23	.52	.68

Here we can see that attitudes to the political system and attitudes to the economic system are strongly related to one another. The strongest correlations are those between attitudes the past and future economic and political systems. Someone who supports the communist economic system is also likely to support the communist political system. Support for the past was also associated with a negative response to the present and future market and political regimes. The correlations have become stronger over time, reflecting perhaps a crystallisation of opinion and a growing criticism of the market system in particular from those in favour of the past. Despite the transition from "euphoric" to "depressive" attitudes amongst Czech people generally, the correlations between economic and political attitudes are strongest in 1998. We would suggest that this seems to confirm the tendency towards a polarisation of attitudes in the Czech Republic. On the one hand we have a group who strongly prefer the old economic system (but not so much the old political system) and on the other hand we have strong pro-reform group who prefer the present political system to the present economic system. The reformers are politically oriented, whilst the "communists" are more economically oriented. Next we turn to look in more detail at the characteristics of these different groups.

What are the characteristics of those who support market and political changes?

In order to measure this, we concentrated only upon those who supported the current market and political system, on the assumption that this is some indication of the progress of democracy and market reform.

Demographic variables explained 5% of the variance when we ran a multiple regression analysis in 1996 using only the Czech data, with support for the present political system as dependent variable and 6% of the variance when support for the present economic system was the dependent variable. However, for these kinds of data it is more appropriate to look at tabular results and more flexible measures of association. In the tables below we have used Cramer`s V as a measure of association and written in the percentages in each category which were positive in their support for the current economic an political systems. Here we can see the results of various demographic characteristics of the sample. In the support for the present economic system, there is not much difference between men and women and this difference is even declining. In 1996 there was no difference between them at all. In terms of education, we see a stronger and stronger association, with those with higher education being more likely to support the current economic system. However, the support for the economic system has fallen quite dramatically amongst the most highly educated. They are the most disillusioned in 1998. Regions are strongly associated with support for the current economic system and people living in large cities or the capital are most in favour. This tendency (for those in the capital to support the reform the most) has strengthened over the course of time. However, again in 1998 we see a sharp change: support for the present economic system has fallen most dramatically in the capital city. In terms of employment status, we find that this association has also increased over time, with the self employed being most likely to favour the current economic system, followed by the employed. The unemployed, by contrast, seem to be more and more disillusioned with the economic system. Higher income earners are more likely to support the present economic system than are low income earners, but support has fallen also dramatically amongst this group. Younger people are more likely to support the present economic system. This reflects the fact that younger people generally are the ones who most support value change in most studies (Inglehart, 1997). However, it may also reflect the fact that older people have been more disadvantaged by the market reforms and could be said to be among the "losers" of the reform process, as are the unemployed (Ferge et al., 1996).

Thus, the results of this analysis confirm those of other surveys: that it is the younger, the higher educated and higher earning people and people living in the capital who are most likely to support the economic reforms, it is also this group which have become very disillusioned with the market system over the last year. Market reforms have lost many of their erstwhile supporters.

Table 8 Support for current economic system (percent)

	1992/3	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6	1997/8
Gender (Cramer's V)	**.06**	**.03**	**.01**	**.003**	**.07**
Men	49	50	59	62	35
Women	53	47	60	62	30
Education	**.05**	**.05**	**.09**	**.11**	**.06**
Elementary	52	45	53	52	27
Second. vocational	53	50	62	60	31
Second. academic	46	49	59	68	34
University	50	50	71	74	41
Region	**.12**	**.13**	**.11**	**.10**	**.13**
Prague	53	58	69	72	39
Central Bohemia	49	51	64	57	35
South Bohemia	45	41	53	64	51
West Bohemia	56	51	63	56	38
Nth Bohemia	60	59	58	55	28
East Bohemia	42	47	61	68	39
South Moravia	48	40	59	66	26
North Moravia	48	46	52	58	22
Labour market situation				**.09**	**.08**
Outside labour force	55	46	57	57	36
Unemployed	63	46	53	42	26
Employed	48	50	61	66	35
Self-employed		57	66	75	
Income in Quintiles	**.07**	**.08**	**.10**	**.09**	**.09**
top 20%	51	52	62	75	40
20-40%	47	49	63	68	38
40-60%	53	48	65	61	30
60-80%	45	51	57	48	27
bottom 20%	56	40	50	57	27
Age	**.10**	**.08**	**.05**	**.10**	**.08**
18-29	58	49	59	70	38
30-49	46	51	61	66	31
50-69	52	48	59	55	27
70+	52	36	60	54	32

Note: the labour market information was not coded in the same way from year to year which is why the results are not reported in the same way

Table 9 Support for current political system (1992-1996)

	1992/3	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6	1997/8
Gender (Cramer's V)	**.05**	**.05**	**.03**	**.03**	**.07**
Men	60	66	73	67	50
Women	65	61	72	69	49
Education	**.06**	**.08**	**.06**	**.09**	**.08**
Elementary	60	57	66	60	42
Second. vocational	66	66	72	65	49
Second. academic	60	64	74	75	52
University	63	67	82	79	63
Region	**.14**	**.13**	**.09**	**.10**	**.11**
Prague	66	73	79	81	54
Central Bohemia	47	58	70	64	52
South Bohemia	69	55	58	56	55
West Bohemia	63	65	77	60	56
Nth Bohemia	62	71	67	68	45
East Bohemia	52	58	79	74	61
South Moravia	66	58	74	70	43
North Moravia	72	66	69	67	43
Labour market situation				**.06**	**.08**
Outside labour force	65	63	72	66	59
Unemployed	84	57	66	55	43
Employed	61	64	73	70	51
Self-employed		75	79	79	
Income in Quintiles	**.11**	**.06**	**.13**	**.12**	**.12**
top 20%	68	64	75	75	58
20-40%	58	63	76	68	52
40-60%	71	65	75	61	58
60-80%	56	65	71	48	43
bottom 20%	62	57	66	57	38
Age	**.59**	**.06**	**.02**	**.10**	**.10**
18-29	66	62	75	70	60
30-49	63	62	72	66	49
50-69	62	67	72	55	44
70+	54	58	70	54	45

Note: labour market information was coded differently in different years so we could not always compare it.

The differences between genders in their support for the political regime is not very consistent. Education, however, shows the same pattern as the support for the economic system, with it going up with higher education and this tendency strengthening over time, but weakening a little in 1998. Region is also strongly associated with support for the current

political regime, with people in Prague being the most numerous in their support, but there is also some loss of support amongst the capital dwellers in the most recent survey. There is also here growing support amongst the self-employed for the current political system, but declining support amongst the unemployed. As in the previous table, the young are most likely to support the current regime, although less so than in 1996. The highly paid are more likely to support the current political system and they do not appear to have suffered quite so much from the disillusionment which we saw in support for the economic system.

We see therefore broadly similar trends in support for marketisation and democratisation: younger, higher earning people living in cities, with higher education are most likely to support the changes. This is also consistent with other surveys. However, more people are disillusioned with the economic system than are disillusioned with the political system with many defectors from those groups who traditionally supported the economic reform. These groups, whilst more pessimistic than before, are less likely to reject the current political system.

Conclusions

At this stage we can return to some of our initial hypotheses to see if they have been fulfilled. The first hypothesis was that the people in favour of the market system and the political system would reflect the relative success of the reforms in that country. The Czech Republic was consistently one of the most optimistic, pro-market and pro-democratic reform countries of all of the NDB ten. This reflects the relative success of the reforms reflected in tables 1 and 2 in the Czech Republic, with low unemployment, rising GDP per capita and so on. It also reflects the confidence in the "Czech model" of market reform, especially privatisation, which was seen as a special success story up until 1996 and was adopted as a model for other post-communist countries. This was the period of "euphoria". However, in 1998 there is a plunge in support for the economic system and also in faith in the future, a plunge with is more exaggerated than for the political system. However, despite worsening economic indicators, the Czech Republic is still in the top league of reforming countries and it seems that the Czech "depression" with the economy is rather exaggerated. The Czechs appear to be suffering from a "manic-depression" syndrome with regard to economic reform: either they are too optimistic or they are too pessimistic. It seems therefore, that our hypothesis is borne out that public opinion follows macro-economic indicators - but in the Czech Republic it does so in an exaggerated way.

The second hypothesis was that support for democratic reforms and market reforms would be associated with each other and that democratisation would lead to greater support for the market but not vice versa. We found indeed that there was a strong correlation between support for both, but that it was rather the market reformers who were more likely to support democratisation than the other way round. This perhaps also reflects the successful Czech economic and political reform which seemed to progress in tandem, even if politicians

favoured the former. However, we can also discern the emergence of a strong "collectivist" opinion supporting a different form of economic and political arrangements.

Here we need to look at the polarisation of public opinions in order to more fully understand these results. There is a consistent group of around 40 per cent who think that the old "communist" economy was a good one and a smaller number who preferred the old political system. These two are associated together - in other words there is a group of about one fifth of the Czech people who are "communist" in their orientation and this is a relatively consistent group and they are oriented more towards the economy than towards the political system. As in Slovakia, they care less about the success of democracy than about the progress of the economy.

On the other hand, there is a consistent group of about one third which are pro-reform. The pro-reformers are more associated with support for democratisation than support for the economy. The pro reform faction - at one third - outnumbers the "pro-communists" even in the depths of Czech despair. However, the support for economic reforms has weakened most amongst those groups who previously supported them: the young, those living in the capital, high income earners and the highly educated. These groups also have less faith in political reform, although they are more strongly associated with political reform than they are with economic reform.

We could say, along with Jiri Vecernik therefore, that public opinion had started to crystallise, was more associated with particular social groups and divergent opinions about the direction of economic and political reform. This is in itself a sign of democratisation.

Table 10 Rating of past, present and future economic and political system by year. Mean and Standard deviation for whole sample (NDB mean is in brackets)

	1992/3	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6	1997/8
Past economic system Mean	-11 (-8)	-4 (13)	-7 (19)	-4 (19)	2
Standard deviation	60 (55)	57 (55)	58 (58)	54 (58)	61
Present economic system mean	8 (-17)	6 (-22)	17 (-21)	21 (-14)	-14
Standard deviation	47 (46)	45 (49)	42 (49)	41 (50)	52
Future economic system mean	47 (26)	44 (20)	48 (19)	46 (20)	14
Standard deviation	43 (46)	41 (49)	39 (50)	39 (49)	51
Past political system mean	-41 (-20)	-28 (-9)	-36 (-51)	-26 (-0.5)	-22
Standard deviation	58 (58)	57 (61)	57 (63)	54 (62)	61
Current political system mean	25 (13)	25 (5)	33 (34)	30 (8)	8
Standard deviation	44 (46)	40 (51)	39 (52)	39 (49)	52
Future political system mean	51 (39)	50 (31)	53 (32)	50 (31)	27
Standard deviation	40 (42)	39 (47)	38 (47)	38 (46)	49

Table 11 The numbers for or against different kinds of regimes by year (NDB mean is shown in brackets)

		1992/3	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6	1997/8
Past economy	-	49	44	47	42	38
	0	12	16	12	23	17
	+	39	41	41	36	45
Current economy	-	32	30	21	15	48
	0	18	22	20	23	21
	+	51	49	60	62	32
Future economy	-	7	9	7	6	24
	0	13	13	11	15	21
	+	80	78	82	79	55
Past political system	-	66	58	64	57	53
	0	14	16	14	20	18
	+	20	26	22	22	29
Current political system	-	18	15	10	10	29
	0	20	22	17	22	22
	+	63	63	73	68	49
Future political system	-	6	6	5	4	16
	0	13	13	11	15	21
	+	81	82	84	81	63

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