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A conservative convergence? The differences and similarities of the conservative right in the Czech Republic and Poland

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This paper compares and contrasts the conservative right in both the Czech Republic and Poland in its historical and contemporary contexts. It argues that the conservative right is strong in both these countries and that they share many similar political features. However, there are also numerous differences between the conservative right in these nations. The reasons for these dissimilarities can be found in the relative historical social-economic development of the Czech Republic compared with Poland. Related to this is the fact that Czech society is a largely secular one, while the Catholic Church retains a strong social position in Poland. However, the paper also argues that it is possible to observe a convergence between the secular and religious forms of conservatism existent in the Czech Republic and Poland and that this is most evident at the level of European Union politics.

Keywords: Czech; Poland; conservatism; post-communism; EU

Introduction

The 2009 European elections saw parties from the conservative right make huge gains throughout the European Union (EU). In the post-socialist states in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) these elections confirmed a general move to the right, which has seen conservative parties entrench their position as the main governing parties in the region.¹ These victories in CEE have aided the revival of the conservative right in Europe as a whole and raise the questions as to what is behind this rise in conservatism in CEE, what is its exact political character and how is it influencing wider political changes within the EU?

This growth of the conservative right has been observable in the Czech Republic and Poland, where it holds both governmental and presidential power. The political repercussions of this were felt when both the Czech Republic and Poland stalled the signing of the Lisbon Treaty at the end of 2009. Also, following the European elections, two right-wing parties from the Czech Republic and Poland helped to form a new conservative group within the European parliament. Therefore, the growing strength of the conservative right has wide political repercussions, not least within the enlarged EU. This paper endeavours to analyse the conservative right in these countries, by considering their theoretical and historical context. This will allow us to draw wider conclusions about the nature of conservatism in the post-socialist states and within Europe as a whole.

Czech and Polish conservatism

Contemporary conservatism takes on a range of political forms and reveals a number of contradictory features. This is particularly observable when we compare the conservative right in both

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the Czech Republic and Poland. These countries have shared many historical experiences, including the short period of independence between the wars, Nazi occupation, Communism, the post-communist political and economic transition and accession into the EU. However, their histories also contain some fundamental differences, which have shaped the form of conservatism dominant in these nations. The two fundamental, and connected, historical differences between the Czech Republic and Poland are the following:

1. The relative historical socio-economic development of the Czech Republic in relation to Poland.
2. The contrasting religiosity and role of the Church in these societies – with the Czech Republic being an extremely secular society and Poland dominated by the influence of the Catholic Church.

It may be expected, therefore, that conservative right-wing ideology would be significantly stronger in Poland than in the Czech Republic. However, it is our contention that, while there is an element of truth in this statement, a convergence between parts of secular and religious conservatism has taken place in the Czech Republic and Poland. Furthermore, this reflects an international political trend which is replicated within the EU. In order to fully understand the conservative right in these countries we should look at its historical roots and at how these have shaped its contemporary form. By doing this we can see how long-term historical facets have replicated themselves in the post-communist world and at how the similarities and differences, between the Czech and Polish conservative right, reach back beyond the (post-) communist era.

'Post-communist' conservatism

Conservatism developed as a distinct ideology competing against the dominance of liberalism and socialism. Following in the wake of the French Revolution, liberalism replicated the dominating *weltanschauung* of progress and modernity, stating that social change is natural and that power is derived from the people. It represented the consciousness of the modern and sought to rid the world of the irrationalities of the past and 'freeing' individuals from long-held traditions. The ideology of socialism (radicalism) concurred with the basic premises of liberalism, but advocated a more far-reaching social and economic transformation (Wallerstein 1995). Reacting against the bourgeois revolutions in Europe, conservatism defended the structures, privileges and beliefs of the *ancien regime*. It stood against many of the ideals of the Enlightenment that advocated scientific rationalism and social progress. Importantly, it opposed the idea that humanity could project and implement social change and held forth its belief in universal and timeless values and rules, such as tradition, authority and hierarchy (Wielomski 2007).

The historical ascendancy of modern conservatism grew out of the crisis of European capitalism during the inter-war years. The fall-out from the Bolshevik revolution and the spread of universal enfranchisement shook Europe's old order, as the search for social equality accompanied the growth of mass democracy. It was this connection between democracy and equality that thinkers from the conservative right contested. While communism stood as the prime target for conservative attacks, these extended into a more general assault on liberalism itself. Conservative writers argued that liberalism had ignored humanity's unequal nature. For example, Schmitt (1995) believed that the world had historically divided into friends and foes and that the attempts by liberals and the left to overcome this reality were utopian. Leo Strauss (1989) searched for a horizon beyond liberalism, arguing that political systems should reflect nature's unequal order. All the conservative thinkers of the age believed in restraining mass democracy and popular sovereignty, abhorring the rise of society's 'inferior mass' (Anderson 2005).

After the Second World War, conservatism had to contend with the creation of communist states in CEE, alongside the emergence of Social Welfare States in Western Europe. Large swathes of conservatism were incorporated into the post-war consensus, with 'evolutionary' conservatism essentially accepting the creation of a social welfare state in Western Europe and attempting to temper this by slowing the reforms and retaining traditional values and structures. The most coherent and far-reaching 'conservative' critique of this approach came from Friedrich Hayek. The themes of his work were the overriding significance of the rule of law, the need for social inequalities, the function of unreflective tradition and the value of a leisured class. Hayek believed that democracy was liable to be lured by the temptations of economic interventionism and social redistribution, which could lead to a transformation of a free society into a totalitarian system. Hayek's main criticism of post-war capitalism was the attempt by governments to make the society conform to a preconceived plan. This was comparable with Burke's condemnation of the French revolution and was also similar to the views of conservatives such as Michael Oakeshott who opposed all attempts by governments to 'steer' society (Anderson 2005).² Therefore, conservatism stood as a distinct political ideology through its rejection of social planning and/or levelling and viewing mass democracy and socialism as leading to a more authoritarian order.

Concepts of ideological and political identity became confused after the fall of Communism. The left was often associated with the label 'conservative' and connected to a political system and ideology that belonged to the past. In its place many of the ideals and politics, that traditionally had been correlated with the right, were now seen to represent progress and advancement. As the socialist left exited the political stage, then liberal and conservative thinking came closer together. This was observable in the writings of Francis Fukuyama, who combined Hegel's dialectic and the idea of historical progression, with the conservatism of Leo Strauss. He merged these ideas in order to argue that there was no alternative path to the chosen course of free-market economics and to deny the possibility of further social and economic change. However, as the transition from communism progressed, the liberal strand of right-wing thought subsided and conservatism grew as the dominant right-wing political strand in CEE (Anderson 2006).

Two conservative political modes of thought have arisen and sometimes overlapped within post-communist Europe. The first school of thought, which is sometimes described as being 'liberal', adheres to the ideals of the free-market. This, often secular, form of conservatism believes that the market should be allowed to work freely, opposes attempts by the government to regulate it and contests the introduction of re-distributive policies. Concurrently, a second form of conservatism has grown, in reaction to the consequences of neo-liberalism and the free-market. This reaches back to the structures and values of the *ancien régime* as a bulwark to free-market capitalism. In particular, it finds support in those structures and institutions that have a pre-capitalist origin and stand as intermediate structures within modern society (e.g. the family and Church). It opposes the globalization of social relations and cosmopolitan culture, counterposing these with fixed ideas of the nation and patriotism and often combines anti-liberalism with anti-communism.

On the surface these political ideologies seem distinct and conflicting political ideologies. Yet we postulate that despite their differences these types of conservative thought retain a number of commonalities. Furthermore, these are drawn towards one-another and a convergence between them is observable in European politics. This is evident when comparing conservative ideology in the Czech Republic and Poland. In order to do this we shall start by considering the historical background of conservatism in both countries and why distinctive varieties of conservatism emerged in both countries.

Early conservatism in the Czech and Polish lands

Czech conservatism was created together with the modern Czech nation during the first half of the nineteenth century. Two groups naturally belonged to the conservative camp in Czech society: the aristocracy and clergy (although these two groups were steadily losing their influence during the nineteenth century) (Matějček and Macháčová 2002, p. 278). In many ways the vast majority of Czech society can be considered as being conservative up until the second half of the nineteenth century, with only some individuals attracted to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French revolution (Mejdřická 1998). As well as sharing the ubiquitous conservative values (such as accepting the dominance of the Church and monarchy, valuing order and tradition and opposing the Enlightenment and social change), Czech conservatism based itself on a patriotism for the historical lands of Bohemia and Moravia and loyalty to the Habsburg royal family. The dominant values of the conservatives were distrust of modernization, accepting the authority of the Church and monarchy, a concern for social order and a dislike of the Enlightenment and revolutions (Štajf 2005, p. 94). Even the representatives of Czech nineteenth century nationalism like F. Palacký or K.H. Borovský, who wanted to strengthen the Czech statehood within the Habsburg monarchy, were in many respects (economy, culture, civil society) conservative and sometimes known as 'progressive conservatives' or 'national liberals' (Hloušek and Kopeček 2004, p. 75).

The 1848 revolution inspired the emergence of the first form of bourgeois political representation in the Czech lands. Their political views were predominantly nationalist, aiming to secure and strengthen the position of the ethnic Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia. Although the 1848 events are placed as part of the European liberal revolutionary wave (spring of nations) they were considered as conservative by the German liberals because they refused to participate in the project of building a liberal, united Germany, believing instead that the Austrian Empire offered better prospects for smaller ethnic groups. Divisions emerged within Czech conservatism over the level of autonomy that the Czechs should aim for. Furthermore, disagreements grew over the question of which social groups should be afforded political rights and the relationship of the Czech nation to the Catholic Church.

Two political camps formed around these questions after 1863. The first majority group – the conservatives – was derived from the wealthy bourgeoisie and landowners and, as they were often associated with the older generation, became known as the *old Czechs* (the Czech speaking nobility and clergy did not play a significant role anymore). On the other hand, the minority group was comprised of younger intellectuals and journalists who were supported by the Czech petty bourgeoisie. These *young Czechs* opposed the conservative position of giving unconditional support to the Austrian Monarchy in exchange for some small privileges for Czechs. The victory of the *young Czechs* by the 1890s corresponded to the growing power of the petty-bourgeoisie and intelligentsia in Czech society. However, liberalism and the *young-Czechs* were marginalized, after the introduction of an equal and direct electoral law in 1907, and were outflanked by the more radical options of social democracy and social nationalism. Conservatism therefore grew as a reaction to socialism and liberalism as a young growing bourgeoisie emerged in the Czech lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which incorporated some of the most advanced industrial areas of the Empire (Urban 1982, 2003). The comparatively late industrialization of the Czech lands meant that it retained a rather agrarian social structure within which conservatism remained strong. The introduction of the more equal and direct electoral laws also helped the conservative forces after the 1890s, with the Czech Agrarian movement representing the middle and small landowners and the Christian-social (later Peoples') party representing Moravia's predominantly rural population.

Early Polish conservatism was associated with the *ultramontanists*, who believed in Poland's unique mission among nations, which connected the Church with belief in the spirit of the nation and the rights of the aristocracy. The long period of Poland's partition meant that Polish society came to see itself as being a political, economic and cultural self-organizing society, existing alongside or in opposition to the state (Kurczewska 1995). Visions of a single united Poland transcended the living reality of a divided nation and collectivist ideas of independence and patriotism (embodied in romanticist philosophy and literature) combined to create a vision of an ideal future life after independence was regained. Concurrently, due to external domination and economic underdevelopment, alternative institutions to the state, such as the Church and the family, gained a leading position in society. Both these provided a social space where national identity could be preserved and social networks formed that provided support to communities and individuals. Therefore, the ideas of the nation and society became more dominant in Polish consciousness than those such as the individual and the state.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, conservatism became marginalized by the dominant ideas of *Romanticism* and *Positivism*. Romanticism, which was the dominant form of political thought during the partitions, particularly in the Russian areas, concentrated on the recreation of an independent state. In contrast Positivism, which grew with the first period of industrialization from the 1860s, focused upon the economic and cultural advancement of Poles. In such circumstances some conservatives were drawn towards the ideas of the Romantics, such as the concept of the community-nation existing as a connection between the past and the future. The ideas of the nation, patriotism and reliance on intermediate structures such as the Church and family were all compatible with conservative thinking (Szlachta 2005). On the other hand, the revolutionary zeal of the romanticists ensured that another section of conservative thinkers (particularly in the Austrian lands of Galicia) began to develop a strand of conservative thought that was close to the Positivists and was generally loyal to the partitioning powers. They were keen to temper revolutionary change and proclaimed the gradual and organic development of society. However, Polish positivism was dominated by liberal thought, promoting ideals such as universal enfranchisement and the assimilation of Poland's Jewish minority. Furthermore, positivism was marginalized due to the weak development, in contrast to the situation in the Czech lands, of a native bourgeoisie.

Inter-war conservatism

The end of the World War 1 heralded the collapse of the empires in CEE and the creation of independent nation states. However, the conditions in which these states were being formed differed greatly. Czechoslovakia had a level of economic development and a social structure comparable to many countries in Western Europe although there was an imbalance between the industrialized Czech lands and the rural-based economy of Slovakia. In contrast, Poland had a predominantly feudal social structure with a small underdeveloped industrial sector.

The comparative economic advancement of Czechoslovakia meant that it managed to build a relatively stable and liberal political system after 1918, which included the granting of a number of social welfare rights. This social liberal atmosphere meant that the conservative camp remained isolated and without much influence within the newly created Czechoslovakian state (Kárník 2003, pp. 36–60). The major conservative political party in inter-war Czechoslovakia was the Agrarian party, which after 1925 became the country's strongest political party and regularly appointed the Prime Minister. However, the Agrarian party was mainly interested in supporting the strong peasantry and made no real attempts to influence the country's cultural or social politics and maintained a relatively neutral attitude towards Catholicism. The same can be said about the Christian Peoples' Party, which came under a heavy public attack after the

collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, because the Catholic Church was seen as a main supporter of the monarchy. Its main political ambitions were to secure the position of Czech practising Catholics, who were already in a minority of Czech society, with its politics mainly culturally oriented. The third conservative camp was comprised of the former young/old Czechs, now called the *National democrats*. They held strongly anti-German and anti-communist positions and they were the only openly 'pro-capitalist' party in Czechoslovakia at that time. Their economic policy was rather liberal and culturally they were nationalist-conservative, although they also held a neutral attitude towards the Church. They were backed by the wealthier strata of Czech society, with its supporters mainly concentrated in the big cities. During the 1930s the party shifted towards a pro-fascist orientation. Compared with Poland, the Czech conservative camp did not have an influential intellectual figure such as Roman Dmowski, with Czech intellectuals being mainly left-wing oriented.³

A different situation arose for the Czech conservatives after the Munich agreement in 1938, which forced the Czechoslovakian state to hand-over the German, Hungarian and Polish speaking territories to the corresponding states. The failure of liberal, social and democratic Czechoslovakia activated right-wing powers: fundamental Catholics, Czech fascists, some parts of the aristocracy and the clergy (Gergorovič 1995, Rataj 1997). Their programs were very different, with some wanting to establish a Catholic state, some corporate fascism, while others supported retaining elements of the democratic system. Although this system was short-lived we can see how it was evolving in a corporate direction with the Catholic Church playing a central role, the Communist Party outlawed and anti-Semitic laws ratified. This attempt to establish a semi-authoritarian/conservative state was ended in May 1939 when the Germans occupied the remaining Czech lands and independence of the Slovakian state was declared.

Europe's social and economic crisis was acutely felt in the newly created Polish Republic and as such a clear right-wing political and ideological movement emerged. The main representative of this was Roman Dmowski; the Bonapartist rival to the country's leading inter-war figure Józef Piłsudski. Dmowski, whose social origins were in the emerging bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, helped to form the Polish National Democratic movement *Endecja*. Dmowski believed that the nation was a natural phenomenon, identifying ethnic and cultural variety as the source of social conflict. His social-Darwinian thinking brought him close to inter-war fascist ideology and he openly praised Italian fascism in the mid-1920s. Dmowski argued that the rising popularity of communism was the result of the economic, political and moral crisis sweeping Europe. He asserted that communism harnessed the ideals of society's mass, such as common ownership and work, secularism and a free sex life, thereby projecting a road out of Europe's malaise. The other main object for Dmowski's vilification was Judaism. He believed that communism shared common roots with Judaism, through its hatred of traditions, loyalty to foreign societies and disconnection with the common European Christian traditions. Similarly, Dmowski (2005) contended that liberalism was connected to Judaism, through its ideals of cosmopolitanism and individualism.⁴ These ideas found resonance in conservative Catholic academic and intellectual circles. They contested that the fusion of the concepts of freedom and democracy with equality destroys all that had previously been held in high esteem and works against traditions and the community (Szlachta 2005).

Although the *Endecja* political current in Poland never held direct political power in Poland, they gained increasing influence throughout the Polish Second Republic's short history. After the death of Józef Piłsudski in 1935, the Polish government moved in a more radical nationalist direction, with the *Sanacja* regime forming a closer relationship with the supporters of Dmowski and *Endecja* in the years leading up to the Second World War.

Survival of the right during communism

The conservative right, as a clear and independent political ideology and movement, did not survive the communist period in CEE. Although the majority of Czech conservatives did not collaborate with the Nazis, they were condemned, and many jailed, for their actions between 1938 and 1939. Many conservative and right-wing leaders remained in exile in Britain after the war, after some had participated in the exile resistance movement. After the War the main conservative right-wing parties (Agrarian Party, National Democrats) could not be re-established, with only the Christian Peoples' party permitted to exist, because its leaders had actively cooperated with the social liberals around President Edvard Beneš's exiled government in London. A few remaining conservatives, who did not end up in jail or remained in emigration, were pushed out of political life. The Peoples' Party was forced to change its leaders and, having no real influence on political affairs, became part of the alliance of political parties formed under the name National Front.⁵

During the 1960s and especially after the events in Prague in 1968, the word 'conservative' became an invective employed against the representatives of the Stalinist and pro-Soviet wing of the ruling party, which was relatively strong in Czechoslovakia. Right-wing conservatism was generally an isolated current within the country's opposition movement and the first attempt to reintroduce conservative thinking was made during the 1980s. The most influential opposition movement against the communist state, *Charta 1977*, was dominated by former communists who had been expelled from the party after 1969, with liberals and Catholics (who generally held conservative attitudes) remaining in a minority. Prominent individuals from this Catholic conservative camp included the philosopher Václav Benda and psychiatrist Václav Příhoda. However, another strand of conservative thought emerged within *Charta 1977* in the 1980s, which has proved to be the most dominant conservative trend in contemporary Czech politics. These *Chartists* came under the influence of, what became termed, neo-conservative thinking in the West (e.g. Roger Scruton), creating a form of secular conservatism, which has continued to exert a strong influence in Czech politics. These include the pre-1968 Communist Party member and jurist Petr Pithart, physicist Pavel Bratinka and philosopher Daniel Kroupa (Hanák 2007, p. 286). The dissidents of this group were translating and discussing the important works of western neo-conservative and neo-liberal authors, including R. Scruton, M. Nowak, F.A. Hayek, L. van Mises and M. Friedman.⁶ The ideas of neo-liberalism were also discussed among the economists working at the Czechoslovak academy of sciences (Václav Klaus, Tomáš Ježek, Karel Dyba).

As in Czechoslovakia, right-wing conservatism disappeared in Poland as a distinct political ideology, with its own political organization, during communism. However, unlike Czechoslovakia, the communist authorities had to accept the existence of at least a partially autonomous Catholic Church. Also, with no strong pro-Soviet communist movement having existed in Poland before the War, the system was not as ideologically united or orthodox in its policies and ideology. Within the ruling Polish United Workers' Party, the orthodox 'conservative' communist current was weak. The party often sought a compromise with the Catholic Church and at various times looked to harness the patriotic support of the Polish nation. Such a policy was most crudely shown in 1968 when the party leadership appealed to and encouraged society's nationalist sentiments, by instigating a purge against sections of the intelligentsia under a thin anti-Semitic guise. Some elements of the old *Endecja* current were informally incorporated into the regime, as shown when Maciej Giertych supported the introduction of Marshall Law in 1981.⁷

In a strongly Catholic country the Church at times exerted a direct influence on the country's political and social affairs, especially after the appointment of Pope John Paul II in 1978.

Although the Church remained a focal point for social dissatisfaction and dissidence throughout communism, the country's (and indeed region's) main opposition movement, Solidarity, adopted a left-liberal political platform from its conception. Nevertheless, within the Solidarity movement, a minority conservative right-wing current existed, and was often organized within the opposition intelligentsia. Prominent conservatives, who have played a dominant role in Poland's post-communist politics, included figures such as Antoni Macierewicz, Jan Olszewski, Marek Jurek and Jacek and Lech Kaczyński. This conservative wing took an ideologically anti-communist position, saw the Polish Peoples' Republic as being a Soviet satellite and held Catholic conservative social and cultural policies. Although it played an important role in the opposition movement, such Catholic conservatism remained a minority current grouped in organizations such as the Polish Youth Movement. An alternative right-wing current emerged during this time, known as the 'Gdańsk liberals'. They included individuals such as Donald Tusk, Janusz Lewandowski and Jan Bielecki. This current criticized the leadership of the Solidarity movement for concentrating on issues such as democracy and equality and for maintaining economic policies that had a socialist character. It looked to promote individual freedom through economic activity and advanced a programme of mass privatization. The Gdańsk 'liberals' were grouped around the *Political Review* journal (*Przegląd Polityczny*) and used the term liberal in a purely economic sense. They published the work of *classical liberals* such as Hayek, Popper, Friedman and Aron.⁸ They developed a dogmatic support for the free market, even claiming that they would prefer a free-market economy without democracy to socialism with free elections (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, 14 October 2005). Despite having some regional influence, the Gdańsk 'liberals' were a relatively marginalized group and had no representatives at the Round Table talks in 1989.

Therefore we can observe how a minority, although relatively influential, 'classical liberal' current emerged within both the Czech and Polish opposition movements during communism. Within the communist systems their ideals of individual and economic freedom could be presented as being liberal and progressive. However, it is our contention that in the post-communist era of global capitalism these ideas take on an increasingly conservative form, as they come to represent both the status quo and the interests of the privileged elite. Furthermore, within Poland an alternative conservative current grew, rooted in Polish Catholicism. Both these currents held strong anti-communist ideology. We will now consider how these conservative currents have re-emerged and evolved after the fall of communism.

Return of the right

Following the collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia, the majority of Czechoslovakian society expected that some form of social democratic system would be created.⁹ However, the main opposition party, the Civic Forum (OF), established in 1989, refused to define itself ideologically, developing a loosely social liberal programme for the first elections in 1990 (Orenstein 2001, pp. 64–67). In the second half of that year a group of politicians, around Václav Klaus, declared itself as a right-wing grouping, promoting a neo-liberal programme of privatization. They also declared the aim to rehabilitate the word 'conservative'. Such a move was opposed by the social liberal majority of OF, which led to the movement splitting and the subsequent creation of two new parties: *Civil Democratic Party*¹⁰ led by Václav Klaus, which defined itself as 'right-wing' and 'liberal-conservative' and *civil movement* which placed itself in the centre and called itself 'liberal'. The third party to come out of OF was the *Civic Democratic Alliance* (ODA), which was a self-defined conservative-liberal party (with the stress on the word conservative). This party, which grew out of the conservative dissidents, was one of the most ideological on the political scene at that time, winning wide

support among academics. However, by the late 1990s it had lost its parliamentary representation, after participating in an unsuccessful right-wing government, with many of its activists now active in conservative think-tanks in the Czech Republic.

The term 'conservative' carried negative connotations within Czech society and after 1989 was still often connected with the hard-line communists. The 'conservatism' of the communists after 1989 did not just concern its defence of the former system but also arose from the fact that some features of this system possessed, in the western meaning of the word, conservative features (e.g. death penalty, laws against homosexuals, support for the 'traditional' family, cultural conservatism, strong power of the state and police). The successor party's organization retained some of these features and failed to adopt much of the discourse of the new left. One political scientist made an exaggerated, but to some extent true statement, that there are only two conservative parties in Czech politics: the communists and Christian democrats (Saxonberg 1998, pp. 11–14).

In the first years after 1989 the Christian Democratic Party did not define itself as conservative, but rather adopted a classic 'Christian Democratic' programme supporting, for example, a 'social market economy' and positioning itself in the centre of party politics. This was due to internal fights between the traditional left and 'modernizing' wings within the party, the heritage of the communist past and the personal attitudes of its leader Josef Lux who gained the respect of other parties. The Christian Democrats have participated in both right- and left-wing governments since 1989.¹¹ From the beginning of the twenty-first century, a conservative wing was formed in the party, although it remains a minority faction. It holds positions such as opposing Lesbian and Gay rights, fighting against drugs, defending the 'traditional' family and campaigning against abortion. The party's electoral results are still poor (between 6% and 8%), but it has a safe position in the Czech parliament and it mainly wins support from the older voters in rural areas in southern Moravia (the south-eastern part of the Czech Republic). Cultural difference between the Czech Republic and Poland is visible in the fact that the only Christian Party in the Czech Republic did not include a policy for prohibiting abortion in its 2009 election manifesto, but rather opposed the further liberalization of the existing law (Volební 2009, p. 8).

From the mid-1990s the ODS, which previously had been defined mainly by its neo-liberal economic stance, began to move in a more conservative political direction. This process was supported by the inclusion of a small Christian democratic party into the ODS in 1995 and the decline of ODA in parliamentary politics. After the failed party coup d'état against Václav Klaus in 1998, the liberal, pro-European wing of the party split to establish the Freedom Union (US). The global shift towards the war on terrorism after 2001 was strongly supported by the pro-American 'hawks' inside the ODS. The ODS conservatives combined this with patriotism, which was fuelled by the demands of Sudeten-Germans. Klaus has become the leading representative of neo-conservative thought inside CEE (Saxonberg 2003, pp. 71–129). He argues that the 'free market' is the best guarantor for securing freedom and liberty in society. He claims that 'freedom' is most threatened by the political ideologies that seek to control and regulate this market. He refers back to the experiences of communism and social welfare capitalism as examples of constructivist ideologies that promoted equality and non-discrimination (which he says is derived from French Jacobinism), but led instead towards totalitarianism. In the modern world Klaus identifies environmentalism, communitarianism, collectivism, NGOs and 'humanrightism' as being contemporary threats to personal liberty and freedom (Myrant 2003, pp. 33–37). Accordingly, Klaus (2009) is a strong opponent of the European political integration, believing that the EU should be restricted to an economic union free from political interference.

We get an idea of conservative attitudes within the parliamentary parties when we observe how the political parties in the Czech parliament voted on the bill concerning the legal

registration of Lesbian and Gay partnerships (the first such law to be accepted in any post-communist country) in 2006. This was supported by only three of the 58 ODS MPs and 26 voted against this bill. On the other hand, the ODS generally does not support the positions of the 'pure' Catholic conservatives in the Czech Republic (such as religious lessons in school, anti-abortion, etc.) This is due to the secular nature of Czech society¹² (Mansfeldová 2006, pp. 113–114) and therefore the ODS represents a secular, eurosceptic and economically neo-liberal type of conservative party, with Klaus openly referring back to the intellectual influence of Hayek.¹³ The conservatism of the Czech left is also revealed when we look at the parliamentary vote on Lesbian and Gay partnerships. Although only two of the 80 Czech social democratic party MPs did not vote for the bill, from 41 Communist MPs nine voted against, 26 for and six abstained (Parlament 2006). In the Czech Communist party's daily newspaper, *Halo Noviny*, culturally conservative articles (e.g. against soft-drugs and in favour of increasing penalties and making jail conditions harsher) are regularly published (although this generally takes the form of readers letters) (e.g. Hudler 2007, Králíček 2008, Pražák 2008). This is connected with the fact that the Czech voters who hold the most conservative life attitudes (distrust to other people, distrust to new ideas, support for a harsher legal system, family orientation, etc.) are more likely to vote for the left parties. It is not an accident that the social democratic party received the most votes from those who described themselves as 'Christians' in the year 2006, ahead of the ODS who won the elections. Elderly people in the Czech Republic, who are more likely to have conservative life attitudes and attend Church, often associate themselves with the left. The supporters of both left parties are more expected to hold nationalist and anti-German opinions, with the majority of the Communist Party voters opposing the country's membership of the EU.

Poland currently faces the exceptional position whereby two parties from the right dominate its political scene: Citizens' Platform (PO) and the Law and Justice Party (PiS). The leadership of PO, around the current Prime Minister Donald Tusk, originates in the 'liberal' opposition faction existent in Gdańsk during socialism. Despite being a relatively marginalized group in the opposition movement, one of its main representatives, Jan Bielecki, was appointed as the Prime Minister by Lech Wałęsa in 1991 and the Congress of Liberal Democrats party (KLD) continued its tradition in the Polish post-communist political scene. By the mid-1990s, Tusk had advanced a general critique of the Polish transition and promoted politics of anti-elitism and against the 'liberal establishment', drawing upon the historical tradition of Józef Piłsudski and his campaign to cleanse the state (*Sanacja*). The creation of PO signalled a break from attempting to create a classic liberal party in Poland, incorporating liberals, conservatives, republicans and Christian democrats in its ranks. Concurrently, Tusk moved away from his previous empirical secularism and adopted social policies that were closer to Catholic conservatism. He developed close links with the Church hierarchy and became a registered Catholic. In an interview during the election campaign he stated that both freedom and the market are inventions of God and that he is seeking to create a synthesis of traditional Christian values and economic freedom (*Newsweek Polska*, 14 October 2007). Nowadays, he holds conservative policies that include opposition to abortion, against euthanasia and opposing gay marriages. Since becoming Prime Minister he has, under pressure from the Catholic Church, refused to sign the European declaration of human rights and backed down from supporting state funding for *in vitro* fertilization treatment and backed a law that would allow the chemical castration of paedophiles.

The leadership of PiS, around Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński, has close historical connections to the Gdańsk 'liberal' current. During the 1980s they cooperated on the Gdańsk 'liberals' *Political Review* journal (*Przegląd Polityczny*) and the KLD was a participant in the creation of Kaczyński's first party: the Centre Alliance (PC). However, they came into conflict after the appointment of Bielecki as the Prime Minister, as PC sought to stand at the head of the opposition movement that grew due to the social effects of the shock-therapy reforms. PC supported

the government of Jan Olszewski, created at the end of 1991, which questioned the fundamentals of the reform process and in particular the alliance between liberals and communists formed at the Round Table negotiations. The government began a process of lustration (vetting whether someone had worked for the secret services) and de-communization and questioned the manner in which the property was being privatized. Despite this, Olszewski essentially continued the country's economic course, after appointing the staunch neo-liberal, Andrzej Olechowski, as the Finance Minister. President Wałęsa, who was accused by the government as having cooperated with the secret police, managed to help defeat the government and form a new administration dominated by liberals. The Kaczyńskis returned as a significant political force after the creation of PiS in 2001. With the left weakened and disorientated, the main alternative to the liberal consensus emerged from the right. PiS assumed a strong anti-communist stance, blaming the problems in Poland on the continued dominance of ex-communists in political and economic life. Furthermore, they claimed that ex-communists maintained this position through allying with a section of the *Solidarność* leadership, around a liberal ideological framework. The leaders of PiS have regularly referred to Piłsudski as their historical inspiration and they also assert that they are attempting to emulate his *Sanacja* policy of 'cleansing' the state and public life. This is also combined with an alliance with political forces who lay claim to the *Endecja* tradition of Roman Dmowski and they have formed a close connection with the most conservative elements of the Catholic Church.¹⁴ Before the 2005 presidential and parliamentary elections, it seemed that PO would emerge as the largest party and would form a governing coalition with PiS. Both parties were promoting the creation of a Fourth Republic to replace the 'corrupt' Third Republic. However, PiS ran a campaign in these elections that opposed PO's neo-liberal economic programme and sought to gain support from those who were frustrated with the transition. PiS claimed that it stood for a social and united Poland (*solidarny*), while PO's liberal program (*liberalny*) only represented a small, privileged elite. They combined their 'pro-social' stance with a strong law and order policy, anti-communism, social conservatism and a foreign policy that was sceptical of the EU and hostile to Russia. The parliamentary and presidential elections, with record low turnouts (40.6% and 49.7%, respectively), resulted in PiS becoming the largest party in parliament and its candidate, Lech Kaczyński, winning the presidency. PO's vote was restricted primarily to a wealthy, urban electorate; PiS, on the other hand, won the votes of a broad section of society, including gaining a strong vote in the countryside. Instead of forming a government with PO, it created a governing coalition with the populist countryside party Self-Defence and the far right nationalist League of Polish Families (Kupka *et al.* 2009, pp. 78–81).

PiS had managed to capitalize on the dismal support given to the liberal and left parties that had introduced the neo-liberal reforms. They proposed both a sustained anti-corruption campaign, that would clean up the country's political and economic life, and a renewed anti-communist drive that would root out those who had previously worked with the secret services and cut any remaining links to the past. These policies threatened to open up a McCarthyite campaign against the left and a more authoritarian style of government. However, this government faced immense hostility from parts of the ruling elite (including the media) and came into conflict with large sections of the urban population. The government failed to live up to its social welfare promises, essentially continuing the neo-liberal course of transition, with the governing coalition wrought with political divisions and scandals. The 2007 parliamentary elections became a plebiscite on whether the country wanted to continue along the course set out by PiS, and the answer given was a definitive no. The more palatable version of Polish conservatism, represented by PO, was chosen by the Polish electorate. Nevertheless, support for PiS stabilized at over 30% and it became only the second governing party in modern Polish history to increase its vote in a parliamentary election, gaining nearly two million more votes

that it had done in 2005. The smaller populist and far-right nationalist parties failed to enter parliament, with PiS gaining much of their electorate and consolidating itself as the dominant political party of the Catholic conservative right.

The two main political representatives of the right in post-communist Poland are therefore both competing and converging with each other. During the last parliamentary elections PO, whose leadership originates in the 'classical liberal' opposition, both attempted to win the support of the Catholic right and increased its social rhetoric, promising, for example, increases in public sector wages. On the other hand, although PiS has tried to present itself as an alternative to the neo-liberal PO, while in government it offered no substitute socio-economic programme. Both parties represent alternative wings of the conservative right in Poland and their domination of Polish politics has ensured that a right-wing conservative hegemony has been constructed and maintained.

Convergence and divergence

We have observed how two forms of conservatism compete and converge in both the Czech Republic and Poland. On the one hand, secular, free-market (neo) conservatism is found to be the principal political ideology of the right in the Czech Republic, personified by the views and policies of its President Václav Klaus. Meanwhile in Poland, which is an infinitely more religious society with a different socio-economic history, one can observe that while the more traditional variant of conservatism has been dominant this still competes, and also to some extent merges, with the secular branch of conservatism.

These two different forms of conservative right-wing thought have strong historical roots in Czech and Polish society, which exerts itself in the opinions of their citizens. A plausible help in considering the position of conservative opinions within the Czech and Polish societies can be the international value survey, which is shown in Table 1. Although taking into consideration the methodological limits of this kind of sociological research, the data from the survey are supportive of our thesis that both the Czech and Polish societies are rather conservative compared with Western Europe, but that conservatism exists in the Czech society in its secular form and in Polish society in its more religious form. In Table 1, we can see that the Polish society holds more conservative views than Czech society. This is most pronounced when we consider those questions that are directly influenced by religious opinion. Therefore issues concerning the importance of religion and religious faith show large differences and also on matters such as abortion and euthanasia Poles hold considerably more conservative views than Czechs. It is also interesting to note how Polish society is more 'patriotic' and concerned about the nation than Czech society, perhaps due to the historical experiences of partition, weakness of a native bourgeoisie, etc.

However, on questions that do not have much in common with religion, the Church or the nation, then we can see in Table 1 that there is not much difference between Czech and Polish social opinions. For example, on matters such as women staying at home, sexual freedom, the importance of marriage and the family, Polish society shows a slightly stronger conservative attitude than Czech society. Czech society is almost as strongly conservative on matters concerning the family, marriage, children and women, holding generally more conservative opinions than societies in Western Europe. Only on one question ('Ideas that have stood the test of time are generally better') is the Czech society slightly more conservative than the Polish society.

These social attitudes are partly shaped by, and help create, the political cleavages that exist in the Czech and Polish society. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) distinguished the four main cleavages in societies following the industrial revolution: owner-worker, church-state, urban-rural and

Table 1. Conservative social attitudes in the Czech Republic and Poland.

	1990	1995	2000
How proud are you to be (NATIONALITY)?, very proud (%)			
Czech Republic	28	35	26
Poland	67	70	72
Do you think euthanasia can never be justified? (never %)			
Czech Republic	34	13	18
Poland	68	46	50
Do you personally think it is important to hold a religious service for a birth?			
Czech Republic	45		42
Poland	96		96
There are absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil (agree %)			
Czech Republic	17	23	23
Poland	47	37	51
Ideas that have stood the test of time are generally better (agree %)			
Czech Republic	39	47	
Poland	34	38	
A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children (agree strongly/agree %)			
Czech Republic	87		72
Poland	88		74
Individuals should have the chance to enjoy complete sexual freedom without being restricted (agree %)			
Czech Republic	15	14	
Poland	27	20	
Marriage is an outdated institution (agree %)			
Czech Republic	8	13	11
Poland	6	11	9
A woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled (agree %)			
Czech Republic	74	78	44
Poland	75	70	70
Would you like to have homosexuals as neighbours? (no %)			
Czech Republic	51	24	20
Poland	70	66	55
Do you approve of abortion where the woman is not married? (approve %)			
Czech Republic	51		66
Poland	14		30
Do you consider religious faith to be especially important quality that children can be encouraged to learn at home?			
Czech Republic	9	9	7
Poland	63		43
How important is the religion in your life?			
Czech Republic	9	9	7
Poland	52	47	45
How important is the family in your life?			
Czech Republic	86	91	85
Poland	91	90	92

Source: *Cultural values and beliefs in 85 countries. Trends from the values surveys from 1981 to 2004* (Leiden and Boston: Brill 2008).

centre-periphery. The conservative camp is generally situated along these axes on the side of owners, church, rural space and periphery. However, the social changes that occurred during socialism were so extensive that they have added their own cleavage to the political scene, with the historical divide (i.e. attitude towards Communism) crystallizing as a lasting political divide in CEE. Also, in the post-communist period, the labels and divisions around left and right have been confused with attitudes towards cultural and moral values taking on a greater importance (Grabowska 2004).

The Church–State cleavage does not play any significant role in Czech politics. The religious population is a small minority which cannot win wide support for its views in society. The urban–rural line seems of medium importance: the rural areas tend to vote for left parties and KDU–ČSL, while the urban areas tend to vote for right-wing parties and the Greens. These cleavages are of less importance than the divides: workers–owners and core–periphery. The cleavage workers–owners is expressed in the cleavages poor–rich, education and position in employment. We can see that such cleavages divide Czech society clearly into left and right camps. The cleavage centre–periphery also plays an important role, if we consider the capital Prague as the centre and the rest of the country as a periphery (Lebeda 2007, p. 8). We can observe one further cleavage both in the Czech Republic and throughout the whole post-communist world: young versus elder voters. Young voters tend to vote for the right-wing liberal parties and the elderly for the left forces (Kostecký 2002, pp. 114–117). However, the cleavages town–country and age in the post-communist countries differ from those in the West in one crucial point: the political left in the post-communist world finds support in the older generations in the countryside, while the right is supported generally by the urban young, which is quite contrary to Western Europe (Holubec 2009, pp. 119–120).

In Poland a classic left–right divide around the owner–worker cleavage has not materialized (Kubát 2005, pp. 130–134). This is partly because there is no historical communist or social–democratic tradition in the country around which the left could unify. Also, the votes of the elderly, rural and poor electorate have tended to be distributed between the post-communist left and the religious conservative right. Instead, the main cleavage in Poland, up until its entry into the EU, was the historical divide. The left was grouped around the SLD and the right aligned in various ‘Post-Solidarity’ guises. These tended to be ‘catch-all’ coalitions whose electorate was divided not around socio-economic issues but according to their attitude towards Communism; the role of the Church in society and cultural and moral issues (e.g. abortion) (Szczurbiak 1998). Therefore, in the case of Poland, the state–church cleavage has played a much more important role than in the Czech Republic (Kostecký 2002, pp. 96–103).

The collapse in the vote of the post-communist left at the 2004 elections, and its subsequent marginalization, resulted in the political dominance of both PO and PiS. The electorate of these parties is divided along both core–periphery and town–rural lines. For example, at the 2007 parliamentary elections, when PO defeated PiS, turnout in the large cities exceeded 60%, while in the villages it was just over 40%. The election results were split along regional lines, with the poorer rural eastern areas won by PiS (although the turnout here was significantly lower) and the more wealthy urban areas in the West gained by PO (Rae 2008). Yet once in government PiS largely abandoned its pro-social economic programme, which had appealed to a large section of its electorate. Also, while PO undoubtedly encompasses a more secular, social–liberal wing, it also has a strong conservative current. Therefore, while the issue of secularism and the role of the Church are of great importance in Polish politics, the hegemony of the conservative right has meant that the two main political parties are in general agreement over this issue. Also, on the historical divide both PO and PiS hold similar views and policies, with any disagreement being matters of degree and emphasis.

It would seem that Polish and Czech conservatism differ on a number of important issues that reflect the social divisions existent in their respective countries. Due to Poland’s historical development the conservative–liberal cleavage is much stronger than in the Czech Republic. This is partly due to the strength of the continuing socio-economic division between the countryside and towns alongside the strong religiosity (particularly in the countryside) of the Polish population. This division has been allowed to consolidate due to the absence of a strong third political force, that is, a social democratic left. The marginalization of the left since 2005 has enabled the conservative right (in its more extreme and moderate versions) to almost totally dominate the

Polish political scene. Czech society is fundamentally divided into two main groups. On the one hand is a group encompassing those who are low-paid, less-educated or retired and prefer a stronger welfare state. On the other side are employers, managers, well-paid employees in the private sector and those with a higher education who favour less regulation and taxation. The second important cleavage is based around generation. The young generally support liberal and individualistic politics, while the elderly are drawn towards conservative social politics (Vogt 2005, pp. 192–209). The result is that part of the Czech left is connected with somewhat conservative cultural attitudes and sections of the Czech right with more liberal tendencies. Simultaneously, the right is divided along conservative–liberal lines (particularly around social issues), with authentic religious conservatism existing a rather small and regional phenomenon in the Czech Republic.

Despite this variation we can identify how parts of Czech and Polish conservatism are converging and cooperating, which has wider repercussions for European politics. The coming together of the secular and religious forms of conservatism is not unique to the Polish political scene. For example, the Bush administration fused them in the USA, where the neo-conservative principles of secularism and the Enlightenment allied with the apocalyptic religion of the American Christian fundamentalist right (Gray 2007). In the post-communist world the conservative and/or neo-liberal right supported the interests of groups profiting from the transformation and could extend beyond this base through employing a discourse of individualism, meritocracy (in both countries), nationalism (in Poland and partly in the Czech Republic) and religion (Poland). Conservatism and neo-liberalism have often been able to find a common identity as they both view society as being structured according to a strict hierarchy, where an elite is needed to guide an imperfect society. Concurrently, conservative parties were often best placed to deploy the social rhetoric, traditionally used by the left, to win the support of some of those disaffected by the course of the transition. In both Poland and the Czech Republic this has helped parties from the conservative right to repeatedly win elections, especially because a significant section of society does not participate in the electoral process.

The influence of Czech and Polish conservatism in the newly enlarged EU was highlighted when both President Kaczyński and President Klaus stalled the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Both have become close political allies in the EU, holding near identical conservative standpoints on issues such as restricting political integration inside the EU and opposing their countries' entry into the eurozone. This political convergence was further underlined when PiS and ODS both helped to form a new European parliamentary group with, among others, the British Conservative Party. CEE conservatives have therefore found a common platform that combines an anti-communism with a strong scepticism of further European integration.¹⁵ Support for membership of the EU remains very strong inside both countries and political forces that are against it have been marginalized. However, the conservative right has now focused its attention on restricting the influence of Brussels inside their countries. In the Czech Republic, Klaus and the ODS have focused their criticism on the EU for interfering with the workings of the free-market, believing instead that it should be restricted to an economic union free from political interference. In contrast, in Poland the Kaczyńskis and PiS have tended to concentrate on cultural and moral issues, believing that the EU is imposing a form of secularism in the country. Furthermore, there is a clear divide between PiS and PO on these matters, with the latter taking a more pro-EU position on issues such as the Lisbon Treaty and the euro. Therefore, it is the more religious and secular parts of Czech and Polish conservatism that are converging at a European level, with both hostile to attempts to create a EU constitution, opposed to the euro and wishing to restrict the scope and power of the EU. It is possible to foresee a further convergence of these conservative forces around the ideas of sovereignty and against the interventions of Brussels.

Conclusion

The collapse of communism in CEE was greeted with a wave of optimism concerning the growth of justice, openness, fairness and freedom within the former communist states and beyond. This was accompanied by the rise of liberalism as the dominating ideology of the age. Yet, two decades into the post-communist transition this idealistic phase has receded and conservatism, in the general absence of a clear left social democratic alternative, has grown in influence. Although conservatism in the CEE states share many similarities (such as a strong anti-communism), it also reveals some divergencies. This has been shown by our analysis of the conservative right in the Czech Republic and Poland; where we can find a clear dichotomy between secular and religious conservatism. We have also identified how these are rooted in the historical and socio-economic differences of these countries, which help to shape social and political ideology. Yet, it is also observable how parts of Czech and Polish conservatism are converging, which is part of a broader trend in international politics. This is most evident at the level of EU politics, where the Polish religious and Czech secular right have made a political and organisational alliance. However, 5 years after eastern enlargement, social support for the EU in both the Czech Republic and Poland remains strong. For this reason any attempt to build internal political support around a programme of euroscepticism is likely to be limited. As the EU struggles to deal with the problems created by the global economic crisis then a major factor influencing the future of conservatism in CEE will be the extent to which European integration and cohesion can be advanced.

Notes

1. Parties from the centre-right gained 267 seats compared with the centre-left's 159 in the European elections 2009. The far right parties also made significant gains in several countries. In CEE the right-wing neo-liberal or (neo) conservative parties (with one exception – Slovakia) won the most votes: PO in Poland – 44, 4%; Civic Democratic Party in the Czech republic – 31%; FIDESZ, Hungarian Civic Union – 45%; Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – 36%. Right-wing parties also won the elections in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. In Rumania the left- and right-wing forces gained similar results.
2. Hayek in fact rejected that he was a conservative, arguing that the problem with conservatism was that it offered no alternative direction to the post-war social democratic consensus (Hayek 1960).
3. The Czech intellectual environment was heavily influenced by the state's president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who was personally the proponent of the secular and social liberalism.
4. Dmowski 2002[1933] would have rejected the term conservative as he attempted to create an ideology of progress based upon the concept of ethnocentric nationalism.
5. The umbrella organization in Czechoslovakia 1945–1990 unites all public organizations and political parties.
6. Among other discussions in the opposition movement, conservatives held different opinions towards the Sudeten German question. Most accepted the transfer of 3.5 million Germans from Czechoslovakia after 1945; however, among the conservatives a negative attitude towards this event prevailed. In the writings of Otahal, Prihoda and Pithart published under the pseudonym Podiven (2003), we can even find the ideas that the Czech national revival in the nineteenth century was a mistake and that the Czech nation should try to cooperate with Germany as much as possible. According to such thinking, the lack of cooperation with Germans from the nineteenth century caused the rise of an egalitarian mentality within the Czech nation and allowed the communists to take power.
7. Maciej Giertych's father, Jędrzej, was one of the Endecja leaders and a close collaborator with Dmowski before the war. Maciej Giertych continued this political tradition through and after communism. His son, Roman, helped form, and led, the far-right League of Polish Families from 2001.
8. Raymond Aron was regarded by the Gdańsk 'liberals' as one of their main inspirations. Aron criticized what he termed the ideologically utopian demands for perfection. He wrote about the myth of the new and the belief that all is possible. He wrote that belief in historical inevitability and the view that all institutions and traditions could be changed led to totalitarian tyranny. Aron in particular criticized communism, which he believed had degraded the western message and the aims of the enlightenment.

9. In December 1989, a survey asked the Czech the question 'Which direction should Czechoslovakian society go?' and 41% answered socialist, 3% capitalist and 50% something between socialism and capitalism (Měchýř 1999, p. 17).
10. Vaclav Klaus said 10 years later that he personally supported naming the party the 'Conservative party', but that this was rejected (Klusáková and Klaus 1997, p. 31).
11. The Czechoslovak People's Party was an active supporter of the Communists during the state socialist system and generally had one or two government ministers. After 1989, they participated in every government until 1998 and from 2002 to 2008.
12. Only 7% of the Czech population regularly attended religious events in 1999 (Lužný and Navrátilová 2001, p. 122).
13. Referring to the work of Hayek and the classical liberals Klaus wrote that 'Today's conservatism is characterized by the connection of classical liberalism enforcing individualism, freedom and market with certain traditionalism calling for the restoration of the moral values of the past' (Klaus 1992, p. 15). He concludes that 'Conservatism is a broader world view than liberalism and has a richer program. Liberalism is included in conservatism, it is its part. Therefore I am a conservative' (ibid., p. 17).
14. This was particularly evident when PiS made a *de facto* alliance with the ultra Conservative radio station *Radio Marja* led by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk.
15. The EU parliamentary group *The European Conservatives and Reformists* was founded in June 2009 by the British Conservative Party, Czech Civic Democratic Party, Polish Law and Order Party, Hungarian Democratic Forum, Latvian For Fatherland and Freedom, representatives of the Polish minority in Lithuania and other two small parties from Belgium and The Netherlands. With the exception of the UK, Polish and Czech parties other member parties do not play a significant role in their countries. The British Conservative party has particularly been criticized for entering this alliance. Attention has been focused on the political biography of PiS MEP Michał Kamiński, leader of the parliamentary group and former adviser to President Kaczyński. Critics have argued that he has a history of anti-semitism, membership of far-right parties and homophobia. Likewise, the Latvian Fatherland and Freedom party has been vilified for supporting and attending parades organized by Waffen-SS veterans in Latvia. Right-wing conservatism in CEE is closely tied to historical events reaching back to or before World War 2. Their reopening and reinterpretation by the conservative right often conflicts with the accepted political consensus in WE. Another such example was President Klaus's delay in signing the Lisbon treaty in October 2010, arguing for an opt-out clause for the Czech Republic regarding the issue of Germans expelled from the Czech Republic after the Second World War.

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