

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
IN SLOVAKIA 1993–2019**



University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN SLOVAKIA 1993–2019

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List of abbreviations

DÚ	Demokratická únia / The Democratic Union
EP	Európsky parlament / The European Parliament
ESWS	Maďarské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie / The Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement
HZD	Hnutie za demokraciu / The Movement for Democracy
HZDS	Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko / The Movement for Democratic Slovakia
KDH	Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie / The Christian Democratic Movement
KDS	Kresťanskí demokrati Slovenska / The Christian Democrats of Slovakia
KSS	Komunistická strana Slovenska / The Communist Party of Slovakia
ĽÚ	Ľudová únia / The People's Union
MK	Maďarská koalícia / The Hungarian Coalition
MKDH	Maďarské kresťanskodemokratické hnutie / The Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement
NATO	Organizácia severoatlantickej zmluvy / The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC SR	Národná rada Slovenskej republiky / The National Council of the Slovak Republic
OKS	Občianska konzervatívna strana / The Civic Democratic Party
OLaNO	Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti / The Ordinary People and Independent Personalities

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SDK	Slovenská demokratická koalícia / The Slovak Democratic Coalition
SDKÚ	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia / The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union
SDKÚ-DS	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana / The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party
SDL'	Strana demokratickej ľavice / The Democratic Left Party
Smer-SD	Smer – sociálna demokracia / The Direction – Social Democracy
SMK	Strana maďarskej koalície (od roku 2012 Strana maďarskej komunity) / the Hungarian Coalition Party (since 2012 Hungarian Community Party)
SNJ	Slovenská národná jednota / The Slovak National Unity
SNR	Slovenská národná rada / The Slovak National Council
SNS	Slovenská národná strana / The Slovak National Party
STV	Slovenská televízia / The Slovak Television
ZRS	Združenie robotníkov Slovenska / The Association of Slovak Workers

Introduction

Since 1993, a total of seven elections of the President of the Slovak Republic have taken place in Slovakia. The elections in 1993 and 1998 were held in the National Council of the Slovak Republic and the voters were the then legislators. Also because the President of the Slovak Republic was not elected indirectly in 1998, the method of election was changed to direct. By 2019, there were five direct elections. Slovakia thus has experience with both methods of electing the highest official. Nevertheless, in the domestic and foreign professional environment, a comprehensive work was not created in which the reader would find the basic realities of the presidential elections and also the basic outline of their course. Previous publications on the presidential elections in Slovakia were devoted to the 2009 elections in a book by the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO) Slovakia Votes 2009, which contains information on the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic and also on the elections to the European Parliament (EP). A separate publication was also published by the authors Marek Rybář, Petr Spáč and Petr Voda. The absence of a comprehensive work on all elections of the President of the Slovak Republic was at the beginning of the creation of this „presidential monograph“.

Information about the election of Slovak presidents in the modern era of Slovakia has been „scattered“ in several print and digital sources. In addition to the election results prepared and published by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, these were minutes from the Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary

Library, printed editions of *Sme*, *Pravda*, *Národná obroda* and *Slovenská republika* newspapers, especially from the 1990s (kindly provided by Michal Rešetka Regional Library in Trenčín), as well as newer Internet articles, mainly from the newspapers *Sme* and *Pravda* with a focus on the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic since 2004. In addition, a further source of information about the aesthetic dimension of the elections was the *Volebný infoservis* portal, from which the election billboards of candidates have been coming since 2009. Due to the fact that especially after 2009 the electoral mobilization and mediation of the social atmosphere was made possible by social networks, the monograph also contains sources of information from Facebook – more precisely from the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic in 2019.

The reader does not necessarily have to identify with the story of individual elections presented by the authors. The authors are critical of several candidates for the highest office from different parts of the political spectrum. In case of some candidates, he questions the sincerity of their very motivation to run. Naturally, readers may or may not accept interpretation of the authors. In general, however, the publication can be useful for all readers who, for professional or private reasons, want to know or verify the realities of any presidential election in Slovakia. For this practical purpose, there is a special section at the end of the book, called the Statistical Data on the Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic. The section contains an ordered list of candidates, the nominating political parties and movements, the number of votes and election dates together with turnout. The final graph is also focused on the turnout. Since part of the general information concerning direct elections is also the so-called electoral geography, readers will also find maps with the electoral gains of candidates for the President of the Slovak

Republic, in which the color of the legend shows the percentage of the candidate's relative electoral gain in each municipality. The maps were prepared by Michal Ondruška from the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague according to the data of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, and these are the most detailed maps consisting of election results in individual municipalities. However, in this case, the electronic book rather than the print version of the book will allow a greater reading experience due to the higher resolution.

In the future it will be possible to pose newer and newer questions about the presidential elections, and the time factor will make historians particularly concerned. This book follows a simple ambition to concentrate all the most important data on the previous elections of the President of the Slovak Republic into one publication. Besides that the book in some moments concerns with perhaps provocative controversy, which according to the authors some important candidates brought into the elections. And finally aims to evaluate what impact did the change from indirect to direct election of the President of the Slovak Republic have and how did it influence the functioning of political parties, as the change in the election of the President of the Slovak Republic also aimed to eliminate the influence of political parties on the presidency, which according to idealistic ideas should be an impartial and independent policy institution. Readers will find the answers to the above questions only at the end of the book in the conclusion.

In Trenčín, 23th June, 2020 *authors*

Chapter 1

1993 Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic in the National Council of the Slovak Republic

Constitution of the Slovak Republic no. 460/1992 Coll. adopted on September 1, 1992 by 114 members of the Slovak National Council (SNC) envisioned the so-called indirect election of the President of the Slovak Republic by the parliament for a term of five years. The election mechanism assumed that a three-fifths majority of 150 deputies would be required to elect the President of the Slovak Republic – at least 90 votes. Resolution no. 114 of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of 22 December 1992 on the draft election rules for the election of the President of the Slovak Republic provided, inter alia, that candidates for the President of the Slovak Republic could be nominated only by members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NC SR). The election of the President was held at a parliamentary session with the speeches of the candidates without a subsequent parliamentary debate. The voting by the legislators was the immediate next step. According to this resolution, any one Member of Parliament could nominate a candidate for the highest office. According to a later legislative change, the nomination of candidates for the presidential election had to be supported by at least 15 members of the legislature. If the President of the Slovak Republic was

not elected according to the constitutional condition of gaining a 3/5 majority, the election of the President should have been repeated within 14 days. The two most successful candidates from the first round advanced to the second round.

If the President of the Slovak Republic was not elected by repeated elections, a new election of the President should have taken place at one of the next meetings of the National Council. At the same time, the constitutional condition that candidates from previous elections may not be elected in each new election of the President, applied. “The adopted constitutional and legal conditions in the original text of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic required the achievement of a high degree of political consensus for the election of the President in the National Council of the Slovak Republic, which had to be obtained in the form of a constitutional majority.”¹

Historically, the first election of democratic President of the Slovak Republic took place at the 13th and 15th sessions of the National Council of the Slovak Republic in February and March 1993. All parliamentary parties were represented on the election commission. Milan Sečanský, who represented the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), became its chairman. The Democratic Left Party (SDL) was represented by Robert Fico, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) by Ladislav Pittner, the Slovak National Party (SNS) by Peter Sokol, Spolužitie – Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (ESWS) by Ernő Rózsa and the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement by Ján Fótty.

The first election took place on 26th January 1993, with four candidates nominated by the political parties. Coincidentally,

¹https://karolinum.cz/data/clanek/815/lurid_4_2011_09_horvath.pdf (citeded 23th June 2020)

the candidates were all members of parliament, indicating that the political parties had chosen the simplest strategy for the presidential election. HZDS nominated Roman Kováč, who would later be one of the first to leave HZDS and in 2000–2002 hold the position of Minister of Health of the Slovak Republic. The HZDS, as the first political party in post-November history, even organized intra-party primaries for this nomination. Although questions arose over their course and result, it was a priori the right way to select a candidate for the highest constitutional post in terms of democratic principles. Vladimír Jancura captured their organization in the *Pravda* newspaper after 20 years: „In mid-January 1993, the movement deployed another Kováč to the first (elections, author’s note) – a doctor 10 years younger, Roman, then the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for the HZDS. This decision was preceded by an election campaign and a kind of primary within the HZDS. The political body of the movement already decided on December 21, 1992, that both men named Kováč – Roman and Michal – should individually ask for the trust of the regional officials of the HZDS, and their “ranking at the candidate list” will be determined accordingly. Pavol Pollák, who was then the assistant of Michal Kováč and later became the chronicler of the three Slovak presidents, still considers this to be a campaign unparalleled in European parliamentary democratic parties. In the first days of January 1993, both candidates travelled around Slovakia at their own expense and organized meetings in regional capitals, in which district representatives of the HZDS also took part. At the same time, the personal emissaries of the movement’s leader reportedly visited – behind the backs of the candidates – the district party chairmen with instructions on who they should agitate for. Michal Kováč is convinced that it was directed against him. In the end, the order of the blacksmiths (meaning of the name Kováč, author’s note) of the young state’s fortune – as someone called them at the

time – was decided by the wider HZDS leadership anyway. It happened in Jahodná near Košice on January 16, 1993 with the result of 27: 24 votes in favour of Roman Kováč.”² In the primary elections organized in this way, signs of future problems of young Slovak democracy and the functioning of political parties can be seen. However, it should be noted here that even the intra-party elections of the more experienced Western democracies do not work without an effort to manipulate the results.

The SDĽ party nominated Milan Ftáčnik, who would later become the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic and prepare one of the first major educational reforms in Slovakia in the first government of Mikuláš Dzurinda. Anton Neuwirth was nominated by the KDH, but the following year he would become the ambassador of the Slovak Republic at the Holy See. The SNS nominated its then party chairman, Jozef Prokeš. As the first round of elections involved purely party candidates, three of whom currently held the office of deputy and one was deputy prime minister, parliamentary votes were fragmented between them and it could have been assumed that none of them would obtain the required constitutional majority of votes.

The candidates in the historically first democratic election of the President of the Slovak Republic seemed slightly unprepared when it came to their speeches. In retrospect, it is possible to detect empty phrases, excessive generality and at the same time only vague ideas about the performance of the function of the president in the words of the candidates. The candidates' speeches were so brief that they are listed verbatim below to better inform the reader.

² <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/259024-prvy-prezident-mohol-byt-lenkovac/> (cited 23th June 2020)

Speech by Milan Ftáčnik (SDL')

“Esteemed Mr Speaker of the National Council, esteemed Government of the Slovak Republic, esteemed Members of Parliament,

I address you as citizens of the Slovak Republic and through you all of whom we represent here. Since the beginning of this year, Slovakia has been an independent republic, which we also express today by the election of our own president. Slovakia is an old cultural country, but its young presence is focused on the future. We face the challenges of the 1990s, but also several unfulfilled trends of the 1980s. So let's ask ourselves the question together: What are you going to be like, Slovakia, and what are your choices? The answers, of course, depend on all of us, and especially on those to whom we have entrusted responsibility. Naturally, that's why we expect a lot from them. Today, the answers from yesterday will no longer be enough. The well-known words also apply to us: 'The dogmas of a peaceful past are no longer suitable for the tumultuous present.' We face difficulties, gathering in front of us, but we must grow precisely by overcoming them. Because we face new problems, we must think and act in new ways. We must get rid of settled ideas. It would perhaps be tedious to talk about what problems Slovakia will have to solve unconditionally. In short, I consider this to be the most important thing. I see the field of economics as key. We are increasingly aware that creating a market economy is not a short-term task. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the main and decisive goal is not the market for the market, but such an economic performance that will create sufficient resources to improve people's lives. This procedure is conditional on the creation of an economic strategy that goes beyond the horizon of one government. It seems that the time has come for an alternative type of economic policy, which will not just improve its current parameters.

Another key area is the social sphere. We need to create a social system linked to the new economic conditions, while avoiding unnecessary sacrifices. At the same time, the state must not get rid of its responsibility for those social groups that are at their worst. Let us measure our success in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1930s: 'The test of our progress is not whether we have added more to the surplus of those who have much, but whether we have provided enough for those who have too little.'

An important dimension of our tasks is the space for culture, the development of education and ensuring the health of the population. Moreover, education and culture are precisely the manifestations of our lives through which we can first reach the world.

Last but not least, our priority is foreign policy. Through it, we can also advocate the universal human interests and the development of friendly relations with all countries, especially with the Czech Republic, and look for guarantees of our security, as well as advantageous economic ties. Our strategy must be to acquire world-class technology so that we can enter European integration structures as equal partners.

So what will Slovakia be like? It will be such as we will create it together while maintaining democracy. And what can its president do here? As head of state, he should be a guarantee of Slovak statehood and democracy above all. The president should contribute to such an international position of Slovakia, which will be based on internal stability, cooperation of all political forces and prosperity. A good president is the president of all citizens. As a constitutional figure, the president balances the individual branches of state power and influences them to act only for the benefit of citizens. And now let me address all the citizens, albeit in modified statement of President Kennedy: 'Dear fellow citizens, ask not only

what your country will do for you, but especially what you will do for your country.'

Dear citizens, I am concerned that apathy is spreading in our country. I am also concerned that there are fears among us and that many of us are again afraid to express our opinions. Therefore, let us uphold the principles of democracy together, let us keep the law and respect morality. Let us find enough space in ourselves for human belonging and solidarity. Our country needs capable people in crucial positions, it needs all our abilities, a talented scientist and a skilled worker. Let us have the courage to set the highest goals and be ready to fulfil them. Our strength lies in ourselves and in how we can act together.

Dear citizens, ladies and gentlemen, I was born in this country and I love it from the bottom of my heart. I sincerely wish Slovakia a wise president and a happy future.”³

Speech by Roman Kováč (HZDS)

“Esteemed Mr Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, esteemed Government, esteemed Members of Parliament,

a short sentence is written in the Book of Books: ‘Blessed are they who uphold the law, who do righteousness at all times.’ This short sentence summarizes what the president must do. The President of the Slovak Republic must uphold the law, he must uphold above all the right to democratic development in this country. He must uphold the right to safeguard all civil rights, freedoms, including the rights of national minorities. He must uphold the right to the

³<https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=75649>

development of humanism, to the development of humanity, to the development of humaneness. But he must also protect the law given to him by the constitution. He must respect the constitution, he must respect the laws. And not only that. He must ensure that the government, parliament, courts, every citizen of this state respects the laws and the constitution in the same way. And he must uphold the third law as well. He must uphold the right of this nation to a place on the map of Europe, on the map of the world. He must uphold the right to self-determination, to our own statehood, to the development of our homeland.

He has to do justice at all times. Justice means being the president of all citizens. He must experience their daily destiny. He must be fair to all political parties and movements, fair to the churches, to the social partners, to pensioners, to every citizen of this state. He must create the conditions preventing hostility and confrontation. He has to search for a space for mutual discussion, to look for a space to solve problems before they escalate.

We know that we have a difficult time ahead of us. A time of economic downturn awaits us. This can also bring social problems. Here I see one of the most important tasks of the president to act as a preventive factor, as a factor that unites the efforts of all the forces of society to prevent this.

Justice also means justice for oneself. He must be extremely critical of his work. He must constantly check whether he is performing the tasks entrusted to him by society. But the president is also a symbol. He is a symbol of the country, a symbol of the nation. Through the president, all citizens pay tribute to their homeland, and through the president, foreign world also pays its respects to Slovakia. Please, Honorable Members, ladies and gentlemen, when you elect the president, think of the respect that will belong to this person.

It is not respect for him, it is respect for your constituents, it is respect for our nations. If you choose me, I want to declare that I will uphold the law and do justice at all times. I will not save strength or health at work for the benefit of our beautiful homeland.”⁴

Speech by Anton Neuwirth (KDH)

“Esteemed Mr Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Dear Government, Dear Members of Parliament,

I am moved as I am standing by this podium at the moment when the president of free Slovakia, the president of the restored Slovak state, is to be elected. Because to vote means to choose according to certain qualities, I feel a lack that I am not well-known enough, not in terms of popularity, but in terms of my personality profile. It would be immoral to ask someone to comment on the stranger. Therefore, let me say what I consider the most important thing in my life, that is my worldview and attitude to moral values, so that you can then vote accordingly in accordance with your conscience.

I must admit that my worldview is based on a personalistic concept. The central position in it is occupied by man as a whole indivisible human person. Man’s existence is primarily conditioned by the existence of the material body and its life processes. Their function depends on vital needs, which man obtains directly or indirectly from nature through his own labour effort, and in proportion to this effort, he is also entitled to a reward and a share in the values created. But if one is unable, through no fault of his own, or has no way to acquire these values, others are to provide them according to the principles of justice, solidarity and love.

⁴<https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=75649>

It is clear that the primary fundamental value for the existence of man is his biological life, and therefore his provision is the primary duty of society. That is why I see one of the basic responsibilities of the President to ensure such conditions in society that livelihoods are accessible to everyone, their health is protected, and they live in an environment that benefits them. I see all these requirements best met in the system of ecologically oriented social market economy. This is the concept I identify with.

The indivisible human essence includes, in addition to the material, also the spiritual principle, which is the bearer of the two basic qualities of a person, namely reason and free will. It is these qualities that condition the two unique phenomena of the human being, and that is the awareness of ignorance and the awareness of guilt. By realizing that one does not know, one strives to know intentionally and purposefully. It is to this desire for perfect and complete truth that we owe all our scientific progress. The basis and condition of true knowledge is free access to reality, which then allows for deliberate, considered action and decision-making. That is why I see one of the key responsibilities of the president to ensure the veracity of information, because without the truth it is not possible to act correctly.

Another principle – the awareness of guilt, in turn, motivates a person to never feel the guilt in him. It is this human quality, which directs man to perfect good, and to which human owes its moral development. Therefore, I want to do everything so that people know well and never have to act in such a way that they are then aware of guilt.

There are other values that encourage a person. It is the desire for perfect beauty and the desire for perfect love. In general, the whole polarity of human life is directed towards achieving complete

happiness by merging with an absolutely perfect being. The polarity between the biological needs of life and the goal of life is the fundamental moment that drives our lives forward, because every man wants to be completely happy. This desire of his is independent of his religious beliefs. As a believer, I absolutely see a personal God in this. However, this will not prevent me from contributing to everyone who is a citizen of this state to achieve the possibility of complete self-realization and complete bliss.

Furthermore, man is not simply alone. He is rooted in nature, in his environment. Therefore, it goes without saying that the president must also have his “green agenda”. Finally, the individual does not exist. There is only a person within society, and that is why we must make sure that this society is fairly organized.

What would be the basic moments that I would like to highlight when influencing the society? When I accepted this candidacy, I said that the time had come for us to stop coming to terms with each other and start realizing peace. It is seemingly a paradox, but only those who fight against each other, between which there is tension and misunderstanding, can come to terms. I do not consider transitional arrangements, whether political, social or otherwise, to be a concept of a lasting solution to the stratification of society, because the fight is not a constructive principle. On the contrary, coming to terms with each other is only to be the brief moment when the realization of peace begins, the essence of which lies in the fact that, everyone together, in mutual assistance, bring justice to all levels and areas. Justice then implies the well-being of all to be served by the nation to be served by the state to be served by the president and by every citizen. And I would be very grateful and happy if I could be that general servant if you gave me your trust.”⁵

⁵<https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=75649>

Speech by Jozef Prokeš (SNS)

“Honoured ladies and gentlemen, esteemed fellow citizens,

my principle is to listen more, work more and talk less. Therefore, please forgive me that my speech to you will also be very brief. I listened very carefully to my fellow presidential candidates. If you decide to honour me with your choice, I will fulfil all the inspiring thoughts that have been voiced here.

As for my work commitment, you had the opportunity to get to know it right here, while working in parliament. If you decide to really honour me with your choice, I guarantee you that I will listen to all political parties equally and, so as not to break away from the everyday reality of life in Slovakia, I will surround myself with such collaborators that would mirror the whole political spectrum represented here, in parliament. And, as I said, I will not hesitate to reach out to former members of the Federal Assembly who have extensive experience in obtaining information and transmitting it.

As far as foreign policy is concerned, I am convinced that Slovakia must base its policy on its geographical position in the middle of Europe and create a link between Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Of course, the post of President of the Slovak Republic does not allow the President to form a separate concept, but I will always work on this in accordance with the parliament and the government. I will strive for internal policy to be in harmony with foreign policy and to create an atmosphere of factual problem-solving without bringing emotions in. I will strive for the roots of fragile democracy to be strengthened, for the opposition to be seen as a partner, to always find a hearing, for all problems to be resolved by considering arguments and not by my own ideas about some people.

And one more thing. I will never seek to increase the powers of the president.

Thank you.”⁶

Speeches by Milan Ftáčnik and Anton Neuwirth were prepared more precisely for the parliamentary electors. They tried to reflect on the time, connected the past with the future, and also tried to present private philosophical beliefs, making them more dignified contributions to the historically first democratic election of the President of the Slovak Republic. Roman Kováč’s speech was more reminiscent of improvisation and it used the word “uphold” way too frequently. The word was found 9 times in a speech with 373 words. Finally, Jozef Prokeš’s speech was the shortest in scope and the least prepared, which was in stark contrast to the passion with which nationalists in previous years demanded an independent state – naturally headed by its own president. After all, he apologized for the brevity at the very beginning. The speeches of the candidates for the President of the Slovak Republic did not contain anything that would indicate that they honestly aimed at more than just a “compulsory ride” in the parliamentary vote of average importance, or one of the many “battles” of political parties.

Given the parliamentary mathematics at the time and the fact that none of the major parliamentary political parties wanted to fail in the presidential race, it is surprising that the political parties did not try any mutual political agreements at the beginning of the election and there was no indication that the Slovak presidential candidates were trying to win favour of electors among members of smaller political parties. In the speeches, it would

⁶<https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=75649>

be difficult for us to find any signs of empathy for the social or national ideas of deputies for the MKDH or the ESWS. The socio-political atmosphere of the early 1990s was definitely among the reasons for this. The nationalism and uncritical socio-economic expectations were on the rise in Central and Eastern Europe, which, after forty years, wanted to gain national self-confidence at the beginning of post-communist transformation processes.

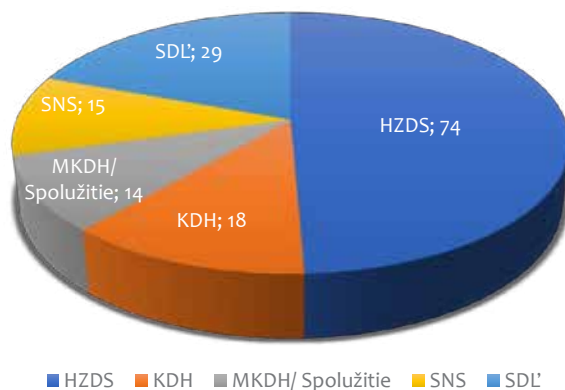
Despite the fact that the candidates did not campaign before the indirect election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1993 (and subsequently in 1998), the election covered the first pages of the quality newspaper. Roman Kováč as a candidate of the HZDS was indirectly questioned by the SME daily on January 20, 1993, when it published a polemical article about his possible membership in the KSS: “We received an anonymous message in the editorial office saying: *‘The employees of Bionika in Bratislava notify that that their former director, MUDr. Roman Kováč was accepted into the KSS in 1989. Due to the advent of the November Revolution, the KSS District Committee did not manage to issue him a party ID in time.’* At the Institute of Preventive and Clinical Medicine in Bratislava, where many doctors from the Research Institute of Medical Bionics work today, we spoke with a direct participant in the party meeting, who told us that MUDr. Roman Kováč was allegedly accepted as a member of the KSS after the expiration of the candidacy period. This information was indirectly confirmed to us by two other witnesses, but we promised them they will remain anonymous. At the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, yesterday we asked Deputy Prime Minister R. Kováč for an opinion: *‘I have never been a member of the KSS, I was a candidate for a short time, so I do not consider this information to be true.’* P.S. In our opinion, it is not so important whether Roman Kováč was or was not a member of the Communist Party. What is striking, however, is that no one has yet clearly asked

the presidential candidate for this information and it is not even clarified in his CVs.”⁷ If we disregard the contemporary and situational context, it is possible to consider the ethics of information but also the point of the article. Standard journalistic work should not be based on the publication of anonymous witnesses whose identities the SME newspaper refused to publish. At the time of the public fight against conspiracies, similar information would probably be evaluated as a hoax. At the same time, the daily SME did not even want to deal with the candidacy or membership of Roman Kováč in the Communist Party, but it paused over the fact that no one is asking this information about the candidate for President of the Slovak Republic – what was the aim of the article in that case?

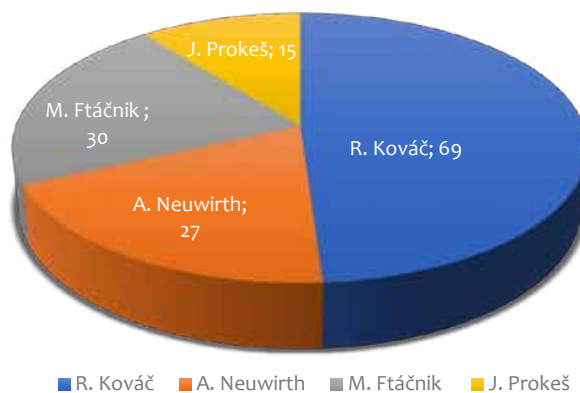
A total of 147 deputies took part in the secret ballot, while 143 ballot papers were recognized as valid by the electoral commission. Two ballots were invalid and two deputies abstained. The party composition of the parliament was reflected in the resulting support of the candidates for the first election. The candidate of the strongest political party, the HZDS, Roman Kováč, which had a total of 74 deputies in the legislature, won the votes of 69 deputies. Anton Neuwirth, as a Christian Democratic candidate, was most likely supported by the Christian Democratic candidates KDH (18 deputies) and MKDH (14 deputies). The future honorary chairman of KDH won 27 votes in this election. The only left-wing candidate Milan Ftáčnik won one more vote than his parliamentary group had (30 votes). Finally, the national candidate Jozef Prokeš won 17 votes, while his party parliamentary group had 15 members. Two candidates with the highest number of votes advanced to the second round – Roman Kováč (69 votes) and Milan Ftáčnik (30 votes).

⁷ Denník SME, 20 .1. 1993, číslo 5, ročník 1. str. 1

Political parties and number of deputies 1992–1994



Number of votes of the first round of the first election



Graph 1. Parliamentary clubs of political parties and the first round of the first election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1993

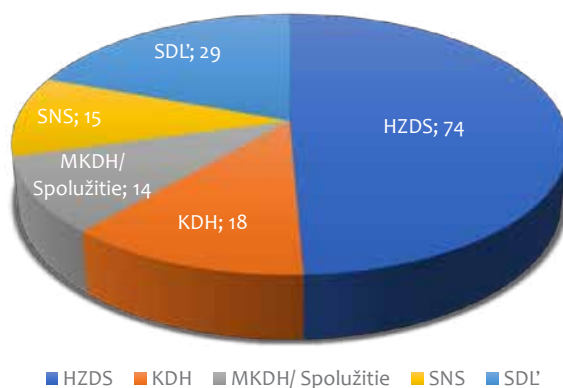
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The second round of the first vote took place the following day January 27, 1993. In order for the government HZDS candidate Roman Kováč to win, he would have to gain the support of all 15 SNS deputies and at least one opposition deputy, in addition to his own party's votes. However, this did not happen, as Roman Kováč won only 78 votes and Milan Ftáčnik 31 votes. In retrospect, it may seem that this was a process in which political parties did not come up with any interesting solution to the political situation. The result was an unsuccessful election of the President of the Slovak Republic. The apathetic approach to the creation of the electoral strategy is partly supplemented by the information published by the SME daily on the day of the second round of the first election: "So today, as we have already mentioned, the electoral contest between two candidates is to take place again. If any of them does not give up. The SDL' chairman Peter Weiss told us that he would field his candidate. According to him, the SDL' parliamentary club was not in such a mood that Milan Ftáčnik should withdraw his candidacy. And what about the candidate himself? Yesterday, immediately after the announcement of the results, he told us that 'tomorrow is awfully far'." ⁸ So according to Milan Ftáčnik, there was a possibility that the SDL' could change its approach to the election – more precisely, that there was a possibility of a political agreement with the HZDS. This was finally confirmed only in the next election, in which Michal Kováč was elected President of the Slovak Republic. Peter Weiss explained the support of this SDL' candidate in the following words: "The SDL' chairman Peter Weiss told us that their relationship with Michal Kováč in the election has nothing to do with the SDL's position on the HZDS and government policy. Those who chose to elect him did so in order to prevent an internal political crisis as a result of long quarrels during the election of the president."⁹

⁸ Daily SME, 27th 1993, Number 11, Year 1. p. 1.

⁹ Daily SME, 16th February 1993, Number 28, Year 1. p. 1.

Political parties and number of deputies 1992–1994



Number of votes in the second round of the first election



Graph 2. Parliamentary clubs of political parties and the second round of the first election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1993

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The result of the second round of the first election was paradoxical in the context of the coalition-opposition division of parliament. The government majority was practically made up of HZDS and SNS. We can agree with Petr Just¹⁰ who notes that the second government of Vladimír Mečiar was not formally based on any coalition agreement, although among the members of the cabinet were representatives of the SNS. The support of Roman Kováč by only 78 deputies of the National Council indicated that the HZDS candidate was not supported by government deputies from the SNS, of whom there were fifteen in the 1992–1994 election period. The election therefore had to be repeated.

In retrospect, political tactics of the HZDS during the election of the president can be seen as an underestimation of the situation in which it seemingly relied mainly on the automatic support of nationalist deputies. However, even with the full support of the HZDS and SNS parliamentary groups, the HZDS candidate would not be able to succeed mathematically in the second round (74 HZDS deputies and 15 SNS deputies). Therefore, it can be assumed that for the HZDS it was a „combat survey“, which was not only about the election of a formal head of state, but also the promotion of interests of individual governing parties. In the election of the President of the Slovak Republic, the SNS exercised its blackmail potential and forced the HZDS to make power concessions.

The second election of the President of the Slovak Republic took place only at the 15th session of the parliament. The HZDS, being the strongest political movement, learned from the previous election and agreed with the SNS and the SDL' on their support

¹⁰ JUST, P. Koaliční vládnutí na Slovensku 1990–2002. In: ŘÍCHOVÁ, B. Vládní modely v parlamentních systémech. 2006. p. 134.

for Michal Kováč. The HZDS did not rely only on a political agreement with the left and nationalists in the repeated election, but Michal Kováč supported his candidacy with a statesmanlike speech, addressing more than just government deputies. The speech introduced Michal Kováč as a man who espouses specific ideals, which, as a politician, he cleverly adapted for the needs of the time. Based on the abstraction of the presidential ideal, he touched the subjects of rule of law, national and socio-economic problems and the nature of foreign policy. The speech was also enriched by the complexity of references to cultural and civilizational contexts. The conclusion very rightly appealed to the unity of the country, which was to be inclusive. The general impression of Michal Kováč, already indicated in his words to his parliamentary electors, is interesting in contrast to his views on the first Slovak Republic and its president Jozef Tiso, whom he considered to be the first real Slovak president instead of himself. The political ideals of the first democratic president of the Slovak Republic could also be confronted with his former membership in the Communist Party of Slovakia, which for more than four decades represented the government of totalitarianism with all its consequences for human lives and economic prosperity. Despite this personal equipment and experience, in the 1990s he contributed to the transformation of Slovakia into a democratic country and partly to its integration into political structures of the West. Political thought, ideals and the program corresponded with the spirit of international integration into these structures, but in the position of President of the Slovak Republic he was limited by the foreign policy of the governing coalition and his former party colleague Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar.

Speech by Michal Kováč (HZDS)

“Esteemed Mr Speaker, esteemed Members of Parliament, esteemed Government,

I assume that many of you know me as Minister of Finance in Mr Čič’s government and then also in Mr Mečiar’s government, and almost all of you know me, not directly, but indirectly as the last President of the Federal Assembly.

Today, I want to introduce myself to this esteemed parliament as a candidate for the President of the Slovak Republic. I want to reveal my inner self to you, to present to you my thinking, but also the intentions that I would try to realize as the future president.

I am a convinced democrat who follows Christian principles in life and in politics. I realize that our society needs a democratic consensus, as is clear from our old Central European culture. The philosophy of our statehood must be based on freedom, democracy, plurality, tolerance and solidarity.

If I am elected, I want to be the president of all the citizens of our republic with a sincere relationship of one person to another, citizen to citizen, which should also express my relations to every nationality, to every political party, to every denomination, and to those who are without a denomination. It will be important to me that we build a state with a rule of law based on legitimacy and filled with the spirit of democracy. A healthy state that will be able to combine freedom and order, which will enable the full development of human individuality in a prosperous society. A state that will be a loving home, a good homeland for all citizens, regardless of nationality, political or religious affiliation. A state in which we will all have the same opportunities for a meaningful, peaceful and

happy life. A state that will provide more opportunities for all and will demand more responsibility from all, not only towards oneself, our families, but also towards society, towards our country. This is how we want to continue to apply the ideas we subscribed to in the autumn of 1989.

I am a politician who emphasizes the need for social peace and social justice. I am aware that many citizens have run into existential difficulties, especially in some regions. We must improve this situation, we must work together to revive our economy.

We have adopted the concept of a socially oriented market economy, on which we must build our economic reform. This economic system is an adequate form of a free society. It must be geared to the common good and supported by discipline, increased performance and competitive output. This is a path that will help us regain prosperity, multiply private property, but also education and knowledge, in order to fulfil the possibility of freedom, personal development and independence of the individual in our new social and economic system.

We need to prevent more vigorously the impoverishment of broad sections of society, we need to increase their social status, as well as their personal, cultural and national and civic self-confidence. I am convinced that we are able to gradually revive the economy and raise the living standards of our population, that we can inspire people's new thinking and that we will use the social function of businesses to prosper through hard, honest and responsible work without exploitation and stealing from the consumers and the state and without further deterioration of the environment.

In this sense, together with you, ladies and gentlemen, we need to get closer to our people everywhere – in factories and in the fields,

but also in transport, in all service sectors, as well as in science, culture, schools and everywhere else. Together with all political parties, we must work to calm our political situation. The exchange of money has shown that our citizens are prudent and responsible. I believe that they cannot be provoked by panic or malicious propaganda. We all know that we can only fulfil our potential and develop through mutual cooperation, harmony and trust. This also applies to trade unions, political parties, the government and parliament, but also to the intelligentsia, the churches and, last but not least, the media.

We do not want to and must not silence criticism. We need constructive criticism, focused on concrete issues and not on personal, political or mutual quarrels. This is not the way to stabilize our state and our young democracy. That is why we need to move towards unity in diversity, mutual respect and esteem. We realize that there is no democracy without opposition. Fulfilling Slovak statehood will be demanding and complex, especially in the economic and social area. This requires the support of the new private entrepreneurs, who are needed to help revive our economy and restore the desirable employment. I also see the irreplaceable role of intelligence, which has a task strengthen the feeling of self-confidence and security in our society.

Our youth deserve special attention because we are laying the foundations for their future. They too have the responsibility to contribute to achieving the European standard of our lives by the quality of their education. This is important not only for our domestic situation, but also for our efforts to integrate into the European and world economic area. In this work, we need peace, determination, perseverance, but also help and support from outside. We must strive for this as an internationally reliable partner.

I want to emphasize that we are all responsible for our common state. The protection of the state interests of the Slovak Republic is a matter of honour for every citizen and a duty of all political entities. I want us to overcome national barriers and contribute to the new Central European and European solidarity in building our new state.

As soon as possible we will have to implement the idea that the state should not do what municipalities, interest groups or individuals can do better. In this spirit, we need to create a new territorial division and regional self-governing bodies. We also need to build good relations with all Slovak regions so that no region feels circumvented here. We have only one Slovakia, which is our common homeland, and in it we all belong together. This integration goal will be an important guideline for my political orientation.

I feel the increasingly urgent need for a well-functioning mechanism for political party cooperation. I am determined to become an integrative force of this cooperation. It is in Slovakia's interest that all political entities have the opportunity to participate in solving the vital problems of our republic. We need each other and we need to care about each other.

The point now is to unite in the further advance in the difficult period we face, especially in the economic field. Therefore, I will also turn to our creative intelligence, which represents our largest national capital, to get involved with all its powers in building a prosperous Slovakia. We rightly expect it to help us win the struggle for the new thinking and acting of the people in a democracy and market economy.

Finally, I want to emphasize that our society needs moral principles with faith in God and faith in ourselves, which have kept us

throughout history. That is why I consider the principles of Christian social doctrine and the European Social Charter to be an important platform for our humane society filled with a spirit of solidarity and mutual understanding.

As President of the Slovak Republic, if you put your trust in me, I will serve truth, humanity and justice. I want to be the president of all our fellow citizens, an independent president, without party affiliation, which follows from the already constitutionally enshrined office of president. We cannot afford to prolong the current situation. The united will and determination is expected from us not only abroad, but above all by our fellow citizens. I ask you to do this when I am asking for your trust. It is now your job and our political test. Let's prove to ourselves and to the world that we have matured in every way.”¹¹

A total of 148 deputies took part in the vote on February 15, with Michal Kováč receiving unequivocal support in the form of 106 votes. However, with the sum of the votes of the HZDS, SNS and SDL, it can simply be found that Michal Kováč was not supported in the secret election by all deputies of the affected political parties, which numbered 118. In a short reaction to the election Michal Kováč said „I look forward to working with you. To cooperate with all representatives of our public life. I expect the help and support of all the citizens of our Slovakia and you, ladies and gentlemen, honourable Members from all political parties and movements. We are going to serious and hard work. We need mutual trust here. Willingness to serve the cause and cultural mutual communication. Together we will handle the tasks that stand above us. May God help us with that.“¹²

¹¹ <https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=75649>

¹² Daily Národná obroda, 12th February 1993, Number 38, Year 4, p. 1.

Representatives of political parties also commented on the result of the election in a similar spirit, as was expressed by Michal Kováč: „View of the DS: ‚During the election activity Mr M. Kováč convinced several deputies that he could be a non-party president. However, it is now up to him to prove that he represents all the directions and views that a pluralistic civil society represents.‘ M. Ftáčnik, chairman of the SDL’ club in the NC SR: ‚The election of the president created a space for us to get to the solution of serious problems.‘ J. Čarnogurský, chairman of KDH: ‚At the meeting with M. Kováč before the election, the members of KDH promised him all-round support, provided that he performs his function in truly non-partisan way and for the benefit of all Slovak citizens.‘“¹³ Also Marián Leško did not omit a reminder of the non-partisanship of the President of the Slovak Republic for the daily Pravda: „The candidate for the highest state position until the last minute depends on the number of votes obtained, but the moment he receives them, he becomes an extremely independent person. If he wants to, of course.“¹⁴ The general call for non-partisanship would soon be heard out. Michal Kováč would not return to the HZDS even after the end of his presidency – on the contrary, within a year he would become one of the leading critics of the political style of the chairman of the HZDS and the Slovak government Vladimír Mečiar, which would have its political but also very personal consequences.

On March 2, 1993, Michal Kováč took the oath mandated by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in the historic building of the Bratislava Reduta, thus taking office. An important moment of the inauguration was the presence of the presidents of neighboring states: the President of the Czech Republic Václav Havel, the President of the Republic of Austria Thomas Klestil,

¹³ Daily Národná obroda, 12th February 1993, Number 38, Year 4, p. 2.

¹⁴ Daily Pravda, 16th February 1993, Number 38, Year 3, p. 1.

the President of the Republic of Hungary Árpád Göncz and the President of the Republic of Poland Lech Wałęsa, which symbolically confirmed the international sovereignty and recognition of the Slovak Republic. The subsequent presidential inaugurations were only in the presence of ambassadors.

This was followed by five years filled with significant political conflicts with colleagues from his former HZDS party, which he originally left mainly to fulfil the political condition by which the SNS and SDL' conditioned their support for him in the second presidential election – namely that he gives up on membership in the HZDS and thus formally becomes non-party president.

Chapter 2

Attempt to indirectly elect the President of the Slovak Republic in 1998

After the expiration of Michal Kováč's five-year term, the National Council of the Slovak Republic was to elect a new president, as Michal Kováč did not exercise his constitutional right and did not run for a second term in an indirect election. However, he would change his decision after the change in the method of electing the president a year later. The work of Michal Kováč in the position of the President of the Slovak Republic represented one of the „battlefields“ of the so-called struggle over the character of the state. The period of the 1990s represented a challenging period of fundamental transformation processes for Slovakia, especially in the political, economic and foreign policy fields. Different views on the method of transformation, the style and goals of foreign policy as well as the overall style of politics became the subject of dispute between the HZDS led by Vladimír Mečiar and its political opponents (the KDH, the DS and Hungarian political parties) and also his former colleagues and political partners. (the DÚ and the SDL). The Slovak political scene was hit by widely publicized events such as the abduction of the son of the President of the Slovak Republic, Michal Kováč Jr.; the Gamatex case, the unclear connection between organized crime and the politicians of various political parties, the murder of the SIS member Róbert Remiáš, numerous privatization cases, the Gaulieder

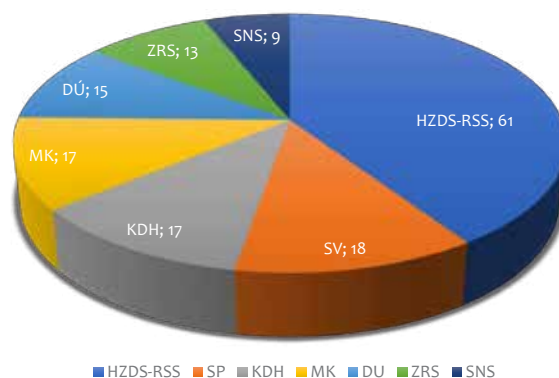
case, the management of public service media and other serious topics that raised questions about the character of the political regime in Slovakia. Several journalists, commentators and political theorists developed reflections on clientelistic, patronal or authoritarian regime, „mečiarism“ (Marián Leško’s journalism), defective or controlled democracy, or the type of national-social populism during and after the 1990s. Vladimír Mečiar explained the relationship with journalists in the TV show called *What Comes Next, Prime Minister?* in the following context: „If I had reservations about some of the journalists, it was because they stopped providing information and started making politics. Some of them took an active part in the political struggle in 1993 and 1994, and this trauma is with them, not with me. These journalists have lost and I see them as losers. Others fulfil their professional duties as they should.“¹⁵

The above-mentioned events and cases have become long-term dividing topics in Slovak society. These events are emotionally tense and in many of them formal justice will not be properly achieved. The importance of the 1990s manifested itself in the collective memory of Slovak society after more than two decades, when the NC SR abolished the so-called Mečiar’s amnesty. Also several graduate as well as professional film and television documentaries were created, which tried to reconstruct mečiarism – the documentary *Mečiar*, the film *Kidnapping*, the documentary *Never Happened*, but also the interviews in the so-called alternative media such as the *Slobodný vysielateľ* or *Zem a vek*. The interest in the creation of film and television production reconstructing the 1990s in Slovakia, as well as their final products, have their specific momentum including the struggle of good with evil as well as the search for a generational attitude

¹⁵ MEČIAR, V.: Slovensko, dôveruj si. R-pres. 1998. p 94.

to historical events of their country from the position of authors who were children at the time.

Since the so-called struggle over the character of the state was intense at the beginning of 1998, the election of the President of the Slovak Republic became part of it. It was clear in advance that the NC SR would not be able to elect any of the candidates as President of the Republic due to the distribution of parliamentary mandates between the governing coalition and opposition, as a successful candidate would have to obtain a constitutional majority of at least 90 votes. The governing coalition could rely only on the votes of deputies of the HZDS, the ZRS and the SNS, the sum of which was 83 votes. This time the governing coalition could also not rely on the possible support by deputies of the left. The left was represented by the SDL' during the previous presidential election and by the coalition named Common Choice (SV) after the 1994 elections to the NC SR (the SDL' was part of this electoral coalition).



Graph 3. Parliamentary Clubs of the National Council of the Slovak Republic 1994–1998

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The Parliament tried to elect the President of the Slovak Republic in a total of nine attempts, but since the sixth election no one has nominated any candidates, although the elections have been formally declared. The first, second and fourth votes were held without a candidate of the governing coalition. The election of the President of the Slovak Republic was mostly obstructive in its character, as the opposition could not hope to elect its own candidate due to its number of deputies and tried to postpone the election to after the parliamentary elections in autumn 1998. But this was also the goal of the governing coalition since part of the competencies of the President of the Slovak Republic were in this situation executed by the Prime Minister and another part by the parliamentary Speaker (both of them being the HZDS members). Member of Parliament for the ZRS Miroslav Kočnár proactively „revived“ the presidential election with his nomination of four different candidates, none of whom received more than 14 votes. From a procedural point of view, the NC SR deputies held elections in an altered manner compared to the previous election of the President of the Slovak Republic. In 1993, Act no. 44/1989 Coll. on the Rules of Procedure of the SNC applied, which did not know the method of voting by abstention. In 1998, Act no. 350/1996 Coll. on the Rules of Procedure of the NC SR applied, which distinguished between „for“, „against“ and „abstentions“.

Three candidates were nominated for the position of the President of the SR for the first round of the first election – Štefan Markuš, who was nominated by the newly formed coalition of political parties KDH, DS, DÚ, SZ and SDSS joining into the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK); the SDL' nominated Juraj Hraško and the first nominated candidate of the ZRS deputy Miroslav Kočnár (ZRS) was Augustín Kurek, who was not a public figure until the moment of the presidential election (as well

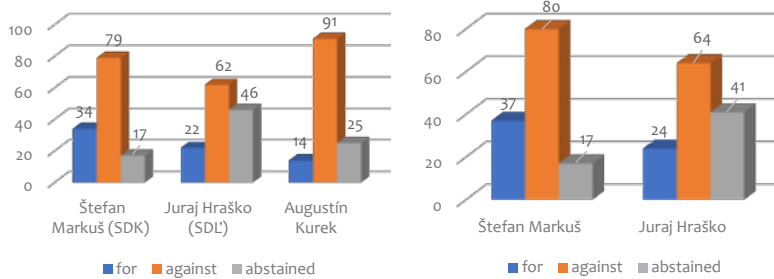
as after it). The party candidates Juraj Hraško (SDL) and Štefan Markuš (SDK) made it to the second round of the first election. The first election was unsuccessful, as expected. In particular, the representatives of the Christian and Civic Democrats were unable to agree on a common candidate with the Socialists of the SDL. The uninvolved approach of the parliamentary club of the Hungarian Coalition (MC) as a whole was also evident. Some of its deputies probably supported Štefan Markuš. In the second round, in addition to the votes of the SDL, Juraj Hrašek probably obtained votes from deputies of the ideologically close Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS). The leaders of the political parties commented on the blocked situation after the second round of the first election as follows: „The individual parties have not yet provided a clear answer as to how they will proceed. When asked by Pravda whether the governing coalition would nominate its candidate for the new election or does not nominate anyone again, the HZDS vice-chairman Augustín Húska replied that they would think things over. However, he added that ‚going with our own kamikaze is pointless‘. He sees the solution in the negotiations. Yesterday Húska called opposition politicians adventurers. According to him, the opposition chose the ‚form of guerrilla practice‘, when it proposed its own candidates without prior negotiations with other parties. The SDL chairman Jozef Migaš, stated that his party did not yet have an agreed on strategy. There are several options. For example, to field a common candidate of the entire opposition or to nominate their own. He also admitted the alternative of not proposing anyone. The SDK spokesman Mikuláš Dzurinda expressed a similar opinion when he said that they would choose a specific strategy next week. As soon as on Wednesday, the SDK should talk about specific names at the coalition council, while Dzurinda also described the negotiations parties on a common candidate as

possible.¹⁶ According to other members of the NC SR, some parliamentary groups were not even internally agreed to support a specific candidate, and the deputies had the so-called free hand. The political situation and the low probability of a potential agreement for the next indirect elections were also confirmed by other participants: „Roman Kováč, the DÚ parliamentary club chairman: What had to be achieved, i.e. that Mr Markuš and Mr Hraško advance to the second round, was achieved. The number of votes against clearly showed that there is no will in the governing coalition to elect a president. It is clear to us that even the repeated election on February 6 will not be successful. At the moment, it is difficult to react to the speculation that not all DÚ deputies cast their votes for Mr Markuš. We could also ask if he was supported by all the Hungarians and the Christian Democrats.“¹⁷ The pro-government daily *Slovenská republika* criticized the opposition candidates for the highest office and also did not omit to criticise the opposition itself: „J. Hraško pointed out the importance of constructive communication between politicians, which should be ensured by the president. In his speech, he subscribed to the legacy of the Slovak National Uprising, which was an expression of opposition to fascism. Mr. Hraško rightly condemned the totalitarianism of fascism, somehow forgetting, which is proof of his affiliation to the SDL' (former KSS), to reject the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the ensuing debate, subsequently spoke seven deputies. Especially opposition lawmakers. M. Dzurinda (KDH) and M. Benčík (SDL'), realized that the meeting was broadcast live by STV and they spoke politically in the plenary. P. Brňák (HZDS) compared their speeches to speeches at political meetings. A. Kolesárová (HZDS) harshly criticized the old attitude of Š. Markuša towards Slovak statehood and added: „No one who

¹⁶ Daily Pravda, 7th February 1998, Number 24, Year 8, p. 1.

¹⁷ Daily Pravda, 30th January 1998, Number 23, Year 8, p. 3.

opposed Slovak statehood can expect a single vote from the HZDS deputies.¹⁸ The SNS had similar attitude to the election of the President of the Slovak Republic: „Melánia Kolláriková: Unless the representatives of the individual parties come together and agree, because the president must be a personality, he will not be elected until then. It is necessary to define what characteristics the future head of state must have and then the individual candidates can become the matter of debate. In any case, the situation that the opposition wanted to push us into by selecting and nominating their candidates and waiting to see who we will approve cannot be repeated.¹⁹



Graph 4. The first and second round of the first election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1998

Source: Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library

In March 1998, therefore, the parliament tried to elect the President of the Slovak Republic in a second election. Milan Fogaš was nominated by deputy Kočnár. The second vote was slightly curious, as two disproportionate candidates met. Ladislav Ballek, a candidate of the SDL, received one third of the votes of all

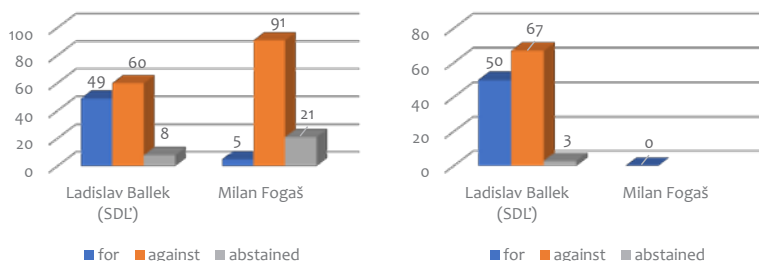
¹⁸ Daily Slovenská republika, 30th January 1998, Number 24, Year 6, p. 1.

¹⁹ Daily Slovenská republika, 9th February 1998, Number 26, Year 6, p. 2.

deputies. According to the results of the vote, his candidacy as a well-known Slovak writer must have been supported by members of several parliamentary groups. The curiosity of the election lay in the eccentric presentation of his opponent Milan Fogaš: „Beard, hair in a braid, hidden under a cowboy hat, a long leather coat and a borrowed suit underneath. This is how a man who ran for president of the Slovak Republic in March 1998 came to parliament. At that time, the 36-year-old railroad driver Milan Fogaš almost wasn't nervous. (...) 'He made an impression' already with the first statements to the media – his original intention was to turn the Presidential Palace into a casino and rent the presidential special. He wanted to finance his office with the money he would raise this way. He was also able to imagine his wife as the first lady of the Slovak Republic, although he admitted: „She is more befitting a carriage than a chariot.“²⁰ However, as his nominator, Miroslav Kočnár, was not satisfied with the conduct of the election, he withdrew Milan Fogaš from the second round of the second election of the President of the Slovak Republic. The government majority assessed the course of the election of the President of the Slovak Republic in a different light: „Parliamentary Deputy Speaker Marián Anđel saw yesterday's situation differently. According to him, Miroslav Kočnár understood that the presidential candidate should meet certain criteria. And probably for that reason, he also withdrew Mr. Fogaš'. Among the criteria he included, first and foremost, moral and will traits and, very importantly, the person should have natural authority at home but also abroad. ‚He also asked in righteous anger: ‚For God's sake, do they know Mr. Fogaš in Slovakia or abroad? Not even everyone in the village knows him'.“²¹

²⁰ <https://korzar.sme.sk/c/4693416/byvaly-prezidentsky-kandidat-zalozil-stranu-praitelov-vina-je-v-nej-hlavnym-osvetlovacom.html>

²¹ Daily SME, 20th March 1998, Number 66, Year 6. p. 1.



Graph 5. The first and second rounds of the second election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1998

Source: Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library

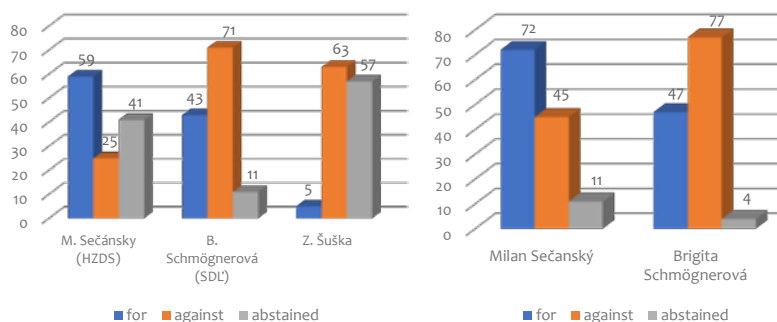
Until the April election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1998, three candidates were nominated in the National Council of the Slovak Republic, while for the first time in Slovak political history, a woman was nominated to the position of head of state. Brigita Schmögnerová was nominated by the SDL and received 43 votes in the first round, which moved her to the second round of elections against the candidate of the HZDS Milan Sečanský. Although the result of the second round of voting did not indicate this, Brigita Schmögnerová presented to the deputies of the NC SR the most comprehensive and cultivated speech of a woman – politician, which was delivered to the parliamentary auditorium until then: „(...) I am honored to appear before you as a representative of Slovak women. Thank you to all the women who understood that my candidacy is a bit their own candidacy. Thank you for your encouraging letters, postcards or loud support. I would like to thank the women of Slovenia in Žilina for keeping their fingers crossed for me. I had the great honour of being the first woman in our history to hold the position of Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic. Although it was a very short period, I used all my strength and abilities to do as

much as I can for this state on this post. I am proud of the results of the then government. I hope I have contributed to these good results. I would like to follow up on that at the presidential post. I would also like to capitalize on the new political and professional experience I gained as a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 1994–1998.

Women are at the centre of our society once or twice a year – on International Women’s Day or Mother’s Day. However, a society that does not create a level playing field for men and women cannot say that it is a democratic society, that it is modern, that it is social. The Party of the Democratic Left nominated me as a candidate to the post of president also because it decided to start correcting this deformation in Slovak society. My candidacy is an opportunity to draw attention to that part of society whose social conditions have deteriorated as a result of the transformation. I think that the woman in transformation suffered the most. Women have a higher unemployment rate than men. They earn almost a quarter less than men. As before – education is becoming more difficult for them to access. If the family cannot afford to send all the children to school, it will prefer the boys.²²

In his conventional and short speech, Milan Sečanský did not indicate a major idea or intellectual observation, nevertheless (not the first or last time in history) due to „parliamentary numbers“ he recorded a larger increase in votes in the second round compared to the first round than Brigita Schmögnerová. The vote resulted in the repeated election of none of the candidates for the presidency.

²² <https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=65924>



Graph 6. The first and second rounds of the third election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1998

Source: Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library

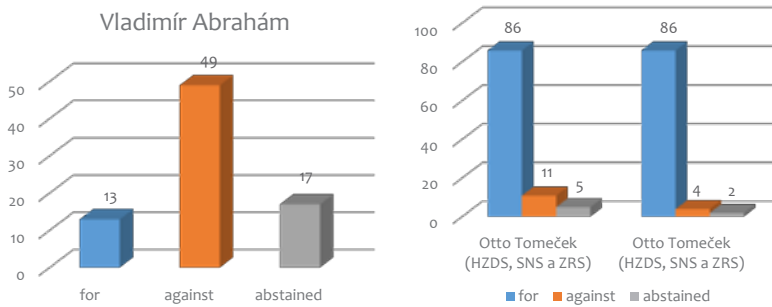
The May round of the election of the President of the Slovak Republic was the most unsuccessful attempt in the parliamentary effort to elect the head of state. NC SR deputy Miroslav Kočnár offered yet another candidate – Vladimír Abrahám. It was again a not well-known personality who, in his candidacy, tried, among other things, to attract his constituents, e.g. with the statement: „Unfortunately, the mass media are largely responsible for this unfavourable situation, which still seem unable get enough of democracy. And are beating everyone senseless. Even the innocent. They forget that sometimes even little is enough to eliminate a decent person, for whom later denials by the media are meaningless and already sound like a mockery. At other times, they will create a monster by uncritically glorifying someone’s strengths, while at the same time deliberately ignoring his shortcomings.“²³ In the end, 13 deputies of the National Council of the Slovak Republic expressed their confidence in this candidate, but the second round of election did not take place, as his nominator Miroslav Kočnár withdrew the candidate.

²³ <https://www.nrsr.sk/dl/Browser/Document?documentId=65929>

Only one candidate was nominated for the fifth election of the President of the Slovak Republic – the then rector of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Otto Tomeček, for the coalition of the governing parties the HZDS, SNS and ZRS. In both rounds, he managed to get the votes of the entire coalition, but even that was not enough for his election as President of the Slovak Republic, as he won only 86 votes. As a candidate for the governing coalition, he became a natural target for the opposition media: „After my name was published, I could no longer back down, , he said. The only and at the same time non-partisan (his membership in the HZDS was suspended) candidate of the fifth round of the election did not say anything less, than that in the case of his (purely hypothetical) election he will not be able to back away from wishes of the HZDS even in much more serious moments. In addition, he confirmed his inability to resist propaganda or other games of the ‚state-movement‘ and will be its obedient executor. However, autonomy in decision-making, among other qualities, would suit the president of any state extraordinary well. In his role, he will not only decide on himself, but on matters concerning the whole state. However, if Tomeček agreed at the meetings with the idea that the state is the HZDS, then his actions are logical. However, it is illogical that the university rector probably does not know that the president must be someone, and not that someone must be president.”²⁴

By the end of 1998, four other unsuccessful attempts to indirectly elect the President of the Slovak Republic were formally held in the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Two of them took place in August and at the beginning of September 1998, i.e. shortly before the parliamentary elections and two after the parliamentary elections, when the first government of Mikuláš

²⁴ <https://komentare.sme.sk/c/2158227/kandidat-na-prezidenta-musi-byt-niekto-a-nie-naopak.html>



Graph 7. The first round of the fourth election, the first and second rounds of the third election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1998

Source: Joint Czech-Slovak Digital Parliamentary Library

Dzurinda was already active and decided to change the method of electing the President of the Slovak Republic.

Chapter 3

The first direct election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1999

The government coalition, which emerged from the 1998 elections to the NC SR, publicly undertook to change the method of electing the head of state from indirect (by parliament) to direct (by public vote). This was preceded by petitions organized by the Hungarian Coalition (MK) and the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) for the direct election of the President. Finally, in the Program Statement of the 1998 – 2002 Government of the Slovak Republic, the direct election of the President was one of clearly stated goals together with other reforms of the political system: “We will prepare legal norms on direct election of the President, elections to the National Council of the SR and the municipal elections.”²⁵

The direct election of the President of the SR was adopted by Constitutional Act no. 9/1999 Coll. of January 14, 1999, almost a year after the first unsuccessful election of the second Slovak democratic president. The adoption of the direct election of the president was also a consequence of global democratization trends²⁶ in accordance with which elements of direct democracy

²⁵ https://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/981_programove-vyhlasenie-vlady-slovenskej-republiky-od-30-10-1998-do-15-10-2002.pdf

²⁶ The 1990s can be seen as a period of general liberalization or democratization. The

were accepted into political systems. And at the same time, from a domestic point of view, it was the fulfilment of one of the promises of political opposition from the 1994–1998 parliamentary term to change the presidential election, which was supposed to show its commitment to political plurality and the democratic ethos of the state. „It is worth mentioning that the demand for a three-fifths constitutional majority led the smallest coalition party, SOP, to push for the nomination of its chairman, Rudolf Schuster, as a joint coalition candidate in the upcoming presidential elections. According to witnesses participating in the coalition negotiations, Schuster won this candidacy by the threat that if he was not a joint candidate, the SOP would not be part of the coalition. Schuster defended himself by claiming the proposal for his candidacy came from SDL (Leško, 1999). If SOP had withdrawn, the coalition would have had only a simple majority and not the needed three-fifths constitutional majority.”²⁷

However, the introduction of direct election of the president by a new governing coalition was made possible by less noble intentions than an abstract belief in a democratic ideal. The coalition consisted of four political parties, two of which actually represented coalitions of political parties. Six months before the elections to the NC SR in 1998, a new political entity, the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), was established with the immodest

theoretical framework of global promotion of democracy as a system with active application of human rights and freedoms in their works was explained by e.g. Francis Fukuyama (*The End of History and the Last Man*) and partly Samuel P. Huntington (*The Third Wave, Democracy at the End of the 20th Century*). The book *The Third Wave* was written at the turn of 1989–1990, but if it were created later, the falling of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and their transformation in the next decade could have served the author as part of the so-called third wave of democratization.

²⁷ JUST, P. Slovakia's Oversized Cabinet after the 2020 Parliamentary Elections: Barrier against Extremism Vol. II, or Protection of its Own Stability? *CZECH JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE / POLITOLOGICKÝ ČASOPIS* 3/2020, p. 344.

media support of the most popular domestic television, Markíza. “Its origin, operation and internal character were closely connected with the activities and political ambitions of the Mayor of Košice, R. Schuster. The first information about its possible entry into the so-called ‘big politics’ appeared in the summer of 1997. Although practically since January 1998 R. Schuster denied thoughts of his greater involvement in political life, his meetings with several opposition politicians at the end of 1997 – at the beginning of 1998 and repeated statements on considering the possibility of one’s own candidacy for the post of President of the Slovak Republic in direct elections were the signal that the mayor of Košice is really preparing for political activity beyond the scope of regional politics.”²⁸

The division of power between the new governing political parties in the autumn of 1998 already took into account not only the introduction of direct election of the president by citizens, but also an agreement to support the presidential candidate proposed by the SOP, who was none other than its first chairman Rudolf Schuster. He left the party after being successful in the second round of direct elections of the President of the Slovak Republic. The subtle paradox of the operation of the SOP and the Rudolf Schuster’s performance of the function of the President of the Slovak Republic was the termination of the SOP at the end of his term in spring 2004. The SOP finally became part of the party environment of the Smer – Social Democracy party and Rudolf Schuster served only one presidential term.

Historically, the first direct election of the President of the SR took place in May 1999. The first round of elections was scheduled for May 15, 1999, and some politically important candidates

²⁸ IVANTYŠYN, M. – MESEŽNIKOV, G.: Slovensko 1998–1999. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. IVO. p. 64.

met there. In accordance to coalition agreements, the chairman of the SOP, Rudolf Schuster, became a candidate for the highest office, and the former three-time Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and the leader of the strongest political party, the HZDS, Vladimír Mečiar, opposed him. At the same time, the SNS intervened in the election with the candidacy of its chairman Ján Slota, and the well-known Slovak actress Magdaléna Vášáryová announced her candidacy as an independent candidate. Due to the changed form of the election, the former President of the Slovak Republic, Michal Kováč, also applied for the support of voters. Less relevant candidates were Ivan Mjartan (a diplomat who had previously been involved in the HZDS environment) and Juraj Švec (a physician and the rector of the Comenius University). Boris Zala (later long-term deputy for the SMER-SD in the NC SR and the EP), Juraj Lazarčík and Ján Demikát also ran in the elections.

The motives of the individual candidates for participating in the presidential election were diverse – Rudolf Schuster, according to Weber’s terminology, was a man living from politics. He was long involved in the Communist Party of Slovakia, then after a short presence in the parliament he worked in communal politics as the mayor of the second most important Slovak city of Košice and later as the Czechoslovak ambassador to Canada. His motivation to create the SOP, if it was not “presidential” form the start, quickly gained this quality. In the case of Vladimír Mečiar, the motive for his candidacy was re-confirmation of the reputation of the dominant actor of the Slovak political arena and to again be part of the executive. In case of the only female candidate in the direct election of the President of the SR in 1999, it can be argued that her ambition to run was the result of her transition from acting to politics. After 1989, she gained political experience as the Czechoslovak ambassador to Austria.

However, she was not the type of woman who would be willing to get involved in any of the political parties. If successful, the candidacy for the President of the SR would provide her the content of her further professional life. If unsuccessful, she would gain “political capital” expressed by public recognisability and by the number of votes obtained in elections that could be used in further possible political projects. Later she became a deputy in the NC SR and an unsuccessful candidate for mayor of the capital city of Bratislava in 2010.

In the case of Ján Slota’s candidacy, the motivation was similar to that of Vladimír Mečiar. After two election periods, the SNS failed to become part of the government. Moreover, in the same period the nationalists experienced growing conflict between him and the vice-chairman of the SNS Anna Malíková, which would later in the same election period escalate and lead to a split in nationalist ranks by 2002.

The social atmosphere, the nature of the election campaign and the media environment before the historically first election of the President of the SR were essentially a reprise of the 1998 parliamentary elections. Both coalition and opposition leaders were present in the presidential campaign, the topics of both elections did not differ and the media remained as polarized as in 1998. The MEMO 98 NGO carried out its own monitoring of selected print media, which showed that: “Party candidates gained more significant space compared to civic candidates in contributions that were not thematically focused on presidential elections, in which they acted as representatives of their parties, mayors, members of parliament, etc. This was especially evident in the presentation of V. Mečiar and J. Slota, who gained a lot of space at a time when they did not announce their interest in running. (...) These dailies also devoted many reports to the

presentation of V. Mečiar in connection with the purchase of a house in Trenčianske Teplice, but V. Mečiar was also negatively presented as the Prime Minister and the chairman of the HZDS. The image of both opposition politicians was significantly negative. The third most presented politician was another party candidate for president, R. Schuster. In addition to the mentioned party candidates, M. Kováč and M. Vášáryová also gained some of the more significant space. Unlike the party candidates, the two were presented in a neutral and positive way. (...) The most significant difference in the presentation of candidates in the *Práca* newspaper in comparison with other dailies was in the relatively large space devoted to the presentation of I. Mjartan, who received 33.9 % of the space. I. Mjartan's image in the *Práca* was mostly neutral.”²⁹

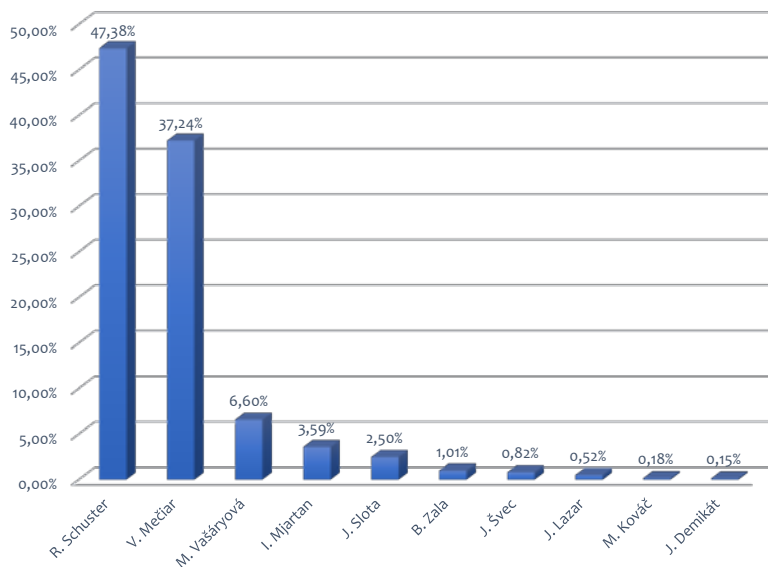
J. Slota had the greatest coverage in the print media. He gained this space especially in connection with his controversial performance in Kysucké Nové Mesto, which resonated in the Slovak media for about a week.

An important moment of the election campaign was the presentation of the most important candidates in the TV talk show *Sito* at the *Markíza*³⁰ – Rudolf Schuster, Vladimír Mečiar and Magdaléna Vášáryová. Until her live broadcast, the chances of the three candidates seemed tied, but given Magdaléna Vášáryová's very unsuccessful performance in the most exposed phase of the campaign, it was no surprise that she ended up in the third place by a large margin.

²⁹ <http://memog8.sk/article/prezentacia-kandidatov-na-post-prezidenta-sr-vo-vybranych-tlacnych-mediach> (cit. 11. 5. 2020).

³⁰ Talkshow *Sito*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pObFBoWAOTg> (cit. 7. 5. 2020).

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Graph 8. The first round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1999

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The turnout in the first round reached 73,89 %, which was more than 10 % less than in the previous parliamentary elections in 1998. The table below shows the support of presidential candidates according to the administrative regions created in 1996, which would also later become the borders of the self-governing regions from 2001 onwards.

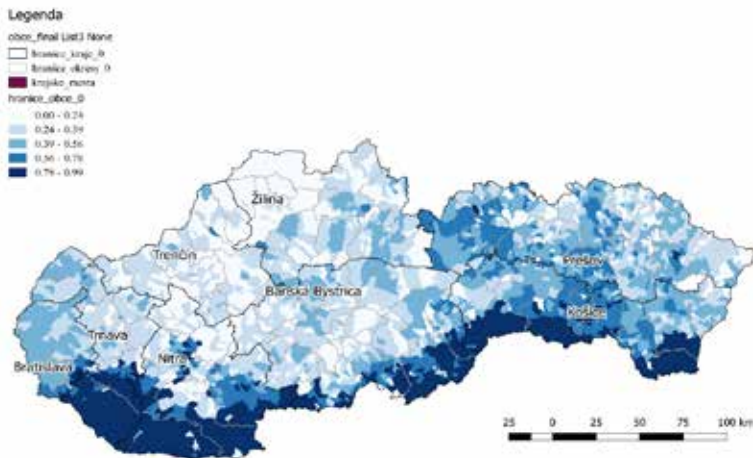
	J. Demikát	J. Lazarčík	V. Mečiar	I. Mjartan	R. Schuster	J. Slota	J. Švec	M. Vášáryová	B. Zala
Bratislava region	0,07	0,37	28,46	3,66	49,07	1,53	1,14	13,96	1,57
Trnava region	0,18	0,58	33,6	3,8	48,43	1,72	0,97	9,63	0,76
Trenčín region	0,11	0,64	56,04	4,8	27,02	2,81	1,08	6,17	1,16
Nitra region	0,17	0,42	35,11	3,1	52,16	1,97	0,63	5,23	0,89
Žilina region	0,12	0,55	52,84	4,91	28,36	3,96	1,56	6,18	1,37
Ban. Byst. region	0,18	0,78	41,46	4,35	41,76	3,52	0,71	5,87	1,12
Prešov region	0,2	0,84	41,28	3,08	46,86	2,94	0,62	3,26	0,71
Košice region	0,16	0,4	24,45	2,01	66,71	1,88	0,33	3,34	0,53

Table 1. Support for candidates in the first round of the 1999 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

According to the regional distribution of candidate support, it can be stated that the winner of the first round, Rudolf Schuster, had above-average voter support in the regions with the two great cities – in the Bratislava and Košice regions, which was also Rudolf Schuster's home environment. The support of the government candidate reflected the distribution of regional support of political parties in the 1998 elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. In it, the political parties participating in the government since the 1998 have been gaining support especially in the larger cities of Bratislava and Košice. At the same time, Rudolf Schuster gained support in the Trnava and Nitra regions with a high concentration of the Hungarian national minority.

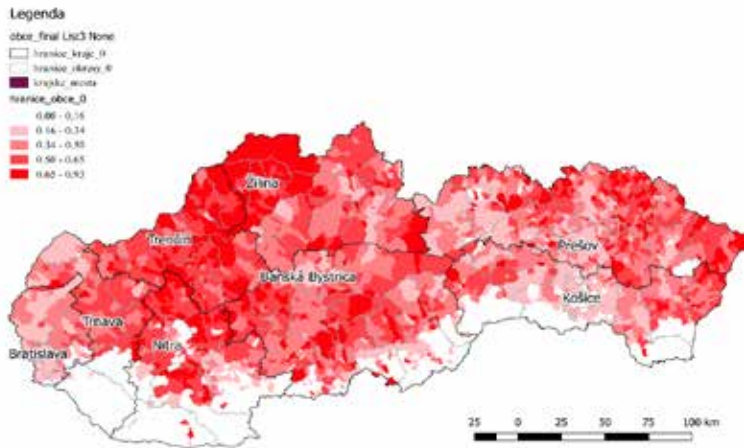
Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 1. Electoral support for Rudolf Schuster in the first round of the 1999 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

His most important opponent, Vladimír Mečiar, was mainly supported by the Trenčín and Žilina regions. More than two-fifths of voters cast their votes for him in the Banská Bystrica and Prešov regions. Two candidates advancing to the second round were supported by different parts of Slovakia – ethnically heterogeneous regions with higher socio-economic status supported Rudolf Schuster (southwest) and industrially oriented regions with higher unemployment supported Vladimír Mečiar.



Picture 2. Voter support for Vladimír Mečiar in the first round of the 1999 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Magdaléna Vášáryová's electoral support surpassed the 10 % level only in the Bratislava region and came slightly closer to it in the Trnava region. In other regions of Slovakia it reached a level between 5 and 6 % and in the east only slightly over 3 %. The chairman of the Slovak National Party, Ján Slota, experienced a political debacle in the presidential election, gaining less than 3 % and gaining less than 4 % even in the Žilina Region, where he worked as a local politician.

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019

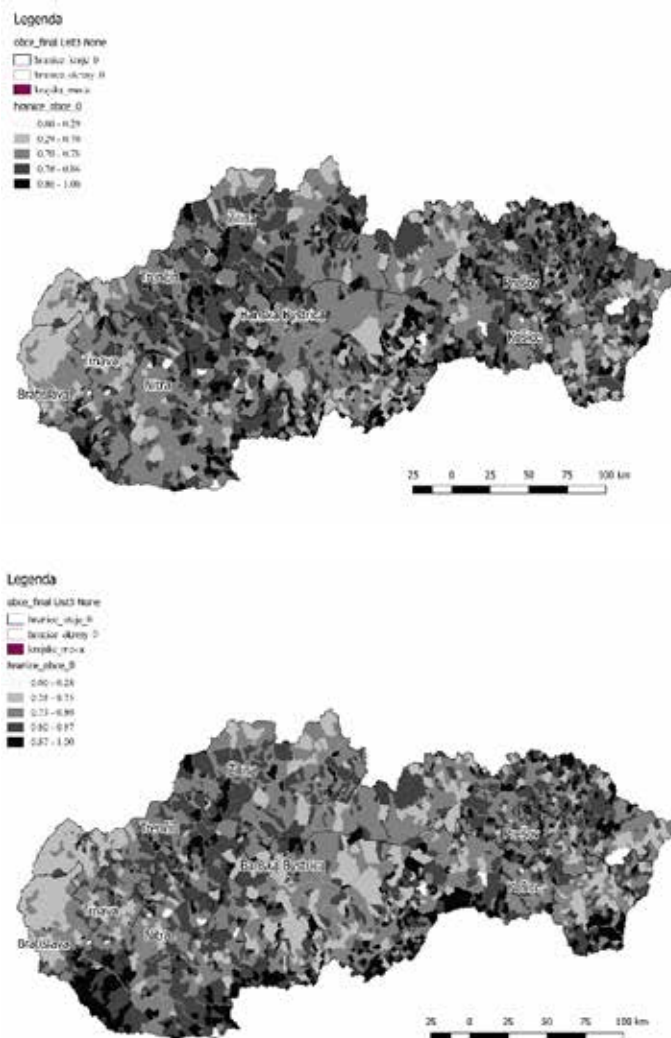
	HZDS	SMK	SOP	SDK	SNS	SDL'
Bratislava region	20,3	3,95	6,9	42,9	7,83	15,4
Trnava region	24,8	16,57	4,57	28,97	7,26	12,34
Trenčín region	40,66	0,088	5,42	20,02	12,62	14,79
Nitra region	25,18	24,23	4,7	20,84	8,05	12,41
Žilina region	37,66	0,07	5,5	21,5	15,9	12,65
Ban. Byst. region	28,69	8,08	6,66	19,44	10,58	18,26
Prešov region	30,89	0,09	10,86	26,15	6,19	15,93
Košice region	20	8,6	19,02	27,41	5,17	14,41

Table 2. Support of political parties and movements:
by region, in the 1998 elections to the National Council
of the Slovak Republic

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

According to the data in the table above, it can be assumed that Rudolf Schuster's support in the Bratislava region came mainly from the voters of the SDK, in Trnava and Nitra regions naturally also from the SMK voters and in the Košice region it came mainly from the voters of his own party the SOP.

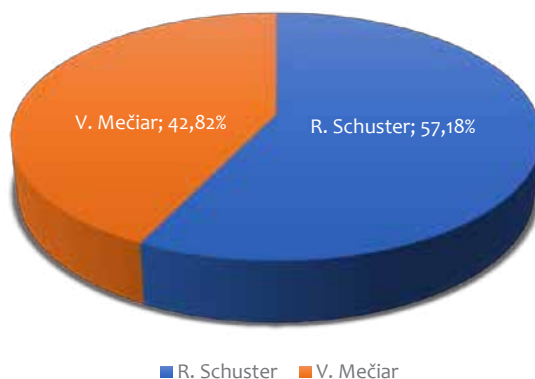
In the second round of elections, the share of voters reached 75,45 % – less than two percent more than in the first round. A more detailed look at voter turnout by municipality reveals minor changes in turnout in the first and second rounds of the presidential election. Municipalities have maintained relatively equal turnout, but there is an increased voter turnout in municipalities in the south-west as well as the south-east Slovakia.



Picture 3. Voter turnout in the 1999 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

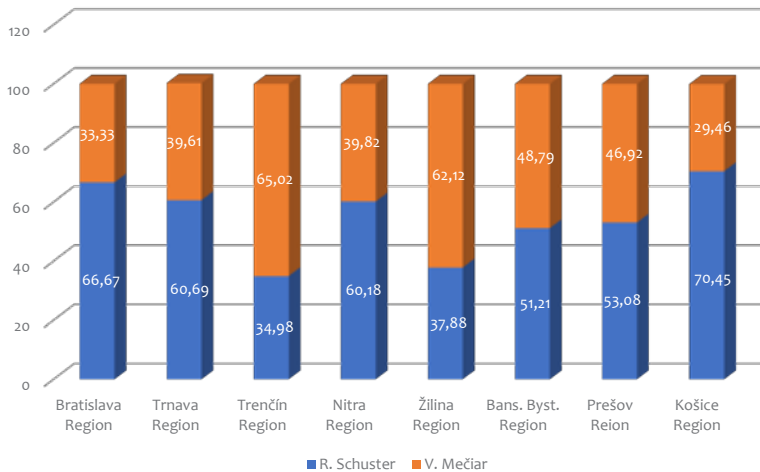
Rudolf Schuster won the second round of elections with more than 57 %, which represents the second closest outcome in the number of votes compared to the following second rounds of elections since then (2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019).



Graph 9. The second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1999

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Rudolf Schuster, the winner of the election, prevailed regionally in six of the eight regions. His opponent Vladimír Mečiar had strong voter support for north-western Slovakia in the Trenčín Region (65 %) and the Žilina Region (62 %). Rudolf Schuster received quantitatively similar support in the Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra regions – ie in the southwest of Slovakia. The former mayor of Košice received exceptionally high support in the Košice Region – 70 %.

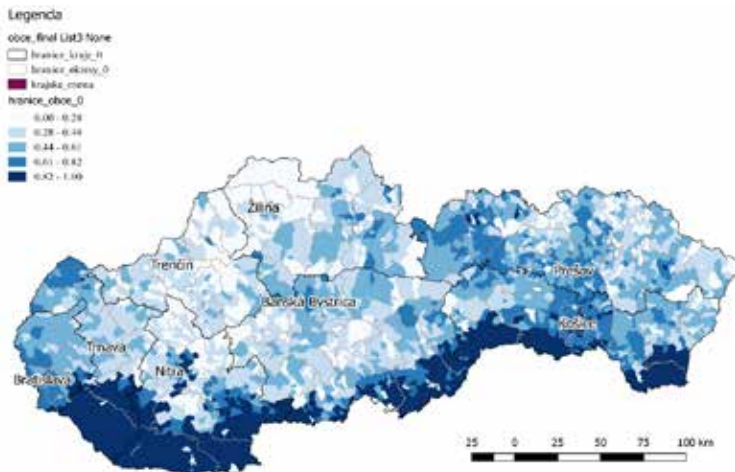


Graph 10. Support for candidates in the 2nd round of the 1999 presidential election by region

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

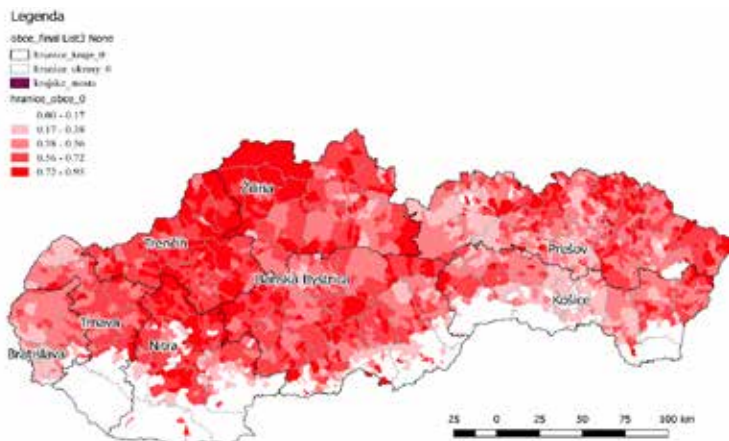
The compact territorial support of certain candidates in different regions – on the one hand in south-western Slovakia and the Košice Region and on the other hand in north-western Slovakia and partly in the Prešov Region will also hold in the next presidential elections. While the southern parts of Slovakia (with the exception of the Banská Bystrica Region) will be closer to candidates identifying more with liberal values (Rudolf Schuster had broad-spectrum political support, including political parties respecting liberal values), northern Slovakia will be closer to more authoritative types of politicians with social and national rhetoric.

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 4. Electoral support of Rudolf Schuster in the second round of the 1999 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 5. Voter support for Vladimír Mečiar in the second round of the 1999 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

As later development would reveal, the first direct elections of the President of the SR in 1999 confirmed the end of the significant political era of Vladimír Mečiar. „After the introduction of direct elections of the president, Slovakia experienced several cases of ‚cohabitation‘ of the president and the prime minister from various political factions. This was the case of centre-left President Rudolf Schuster, who repeatedly criticized the policy of the centre-right government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (2002–2004) and Ivan Gašparovič, who had some tensions with the government of Iveta Radičová (2010–2012). However, the tension in these cases never reached the level of confrontation from before 1998.“³¹

³¹ MARUŠIAK, J. The Political System in the Slovak Republic. In: GIZICKI, W. Political Systems of Visegrad Group Countries. Trnava – Lublin 2012. p. 118.

Chapter 4

Surprise in the election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 2004

At the beginning of the official presidential election campaign of the 2004, the daily Pravda published an article on March 19, 2004 entitled *The Campaign Begins: The Decided Undecided*, which contained the following statement: „There is little time left until the elections, no dramatic changes can be expected.“³² It was these words that stood at the beginning of the political episode, which ended in one of the biggest election surprises in Slovakia’s post-November history.

The political situation in Slovakia before the 2004 presidential elections changed significantly compared to the 1999 presidential elections. The Slovak Republic entered the historically second direct elections of the President of the SR as a new member of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the European Union (EU). The reform process, which began in particular during the second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (2002–2006), was at its political peak. Slovakia has acquired the image of a „tiger from the Tatras“ or a „Central European tiger“ in foreign media. In the first half of the election period, several economic reforms were implemented – especially the tax reform and the pension

³² Daily Pravda, 19th March 2004, number 46, Year 14. p. 2.

reform. The privatization process also continued, with foreign investors becoming co-owners of strategic companies. In the same year, Slovakia began to change into a country with a significant representation of the automotive industry in the national economy. Kia started production in Slovakia, followed by Groupe PSA Slovakia (Peugeot) and Jaguar Land Rover Slovakia.

Similarly to the first (1998–2002), the second government (2002–2006) of Mikuláš Dzurinda was also originally formed by four political parties. Both were ideologically heterogeneous and various economic groups and individuals also had their interests in it. The reform image was significantly damaged by privatization scandals in which Slovak government politicians and officials were to obtain private commissions as part of privatization processes. However, this context would not become a significant domestic policy issue until the beginning of 2012.

In 2004, the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) was the leader of the Slovak government, and due to the relatively high voter support in 2002 (15.09 %), it was expected that it would want to push through its own candidate for the President of the Slovak Republic. SDKÚ's presidential ambitions, however encountered limited support from coalition partners. Neither the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) nor the New Citizen's Alliance (ANO) nominated their presidential candidates, but the support of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Kukan (SDKÚ) was not their political priority. At the same time, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) evaluated the situation as an opportunity for political activity to promote its own candidate for President of the Slovak Republic, which came to be František Mikloško, Member of the NC SR.

Former Slovak Ambassador to the USA Martin Bútora, who was active in the Slovak non-governmental sector, also announced his candidacy. He based his candidacy on a pro-Western, non-communist and civic ethos. From a different social background, the well-known Slovak actor Ľubomír Roman applied for the presidential candidacy. He became politically active, especially in the second half of the 1990s, first as a deputy for the conservative KDH, and shortly thereafter he became vice-chairman of the liberal ANO party. He ran for President of the Slovak Republic as the elected chairman of the Bratislava self-governing region (BSK), but resigned from the elections. Nevertheless, more than 1,800 voters voted for him.

Just as the coalition political camp did not field its only candidate, the then opposition did not achieve political unity before the 2004 presidential election. The opposition – formed by the HZDS, the Smer party, which in the same period ideologically transformed into a social democratic party and the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) – did not negotiate together to find a common candidate. The HZDS, popularity of which began to decline in favor of the Smer party, needed to stabilize its position in terms of power, and therefore Vladimír Mečiar was again running for president.

Before the elections to the National Council of the SR in 2002, Vladimír Mečiar got into a political conflict with the „man number two of the movement“ Ivan Gašparovič, who did not get the expected position on the HZDS candidate list for the NC SR election and founded his own party in a response – the Movement for Democracy (HZD). Although his electoral support was not enough to enter the parliament (3.28 %), Ivan Gašparovič did not give up his political activities and decided to run for President of the Slovak Republic as well. Given the poor political success

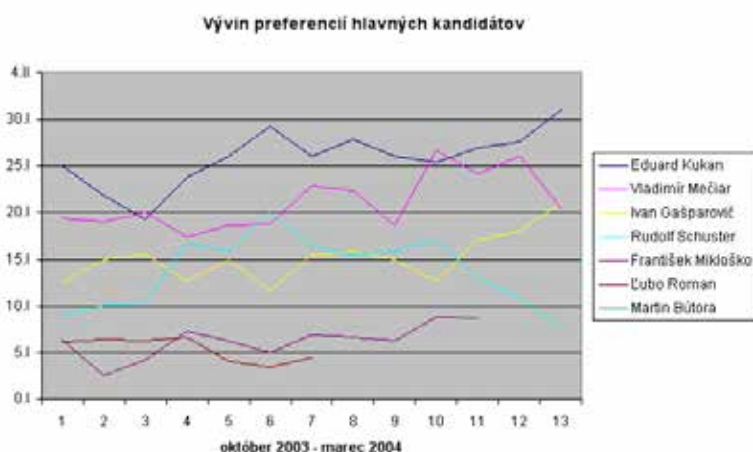
of his movement, he was aware that he would need the support of other political actors in the presidential election. This created a political agreement with the Smer party and the so-called Confederation of National Forces of Slovakia represented by the Slovak National Party (SNS), the Movement for Democracy (HZD), the People's Union (L'Ú), the Slovak National Unity (SNJ) and the Slovak People's Party (SLS), which did not run their own candidates to the 2004 presidential elections and supported Ivan Gašparovič instead. His later political motto became „I think nationally, I feel social“, which was also carried by his book of the same name.

Finally, the incumbent President of the Slovak Republic, Rudolf Schuster, entered the election, but his political style of serving as President of the Slovak Republic did not allow for his re-election. Health problems during which he accused the Prime Minister of the SR and the Speaker of the NC SR of desire for power; the legendary alcoholic distillate Drienkovic; passion for collecting and traveling; criticism of „partocracy“ (he was a member of two political parties); cooking on a „two-burner electric cooker“ and a comprehensive effort to catch attention of the media (and other issues) caused that the predominant media impression of the office of the President of the SR was closer to a political caricature than a adequately respected power institution.

A total of 12 candidates entered the presidential election, including Ján Králik, Jozef Kalman, Július Kubík, Jozef Šesták, Stanislav Bernát, who were among the least known candidates to the general public.

The development of electoral preferences indicated that the favourites of the first election of the President of the SR in 2004 were to be Eduard Kukan (SDKÚ-DS) and Vladimír Mečiar

(ĽS-HZDS). This was indicated by several continuous opinion polls. Their summary (by OMV SRo, ÚVVM, MVK, Median SK and Focus) was prepared by Andrej Školkay in his expert paper Presidential Elections in Slovakia – Communication in the Presidential Campaign in Slovakia.³³



Graph 11. Preferences of candidates for the 2004 elections of the President of the SR (October 2003 – March 2004)

Source: Školkay, A.: Prezidentské voľby na Slovensku – komunikácia v prezidentskej kampani na Slovensku

The graph above captures the so-called averaged preferences of candidates who had support above 1 % between October 2003 and March 2004, which implies that Eduard Kukan was to be the first to advance to the second round, with Vladimír Mečiar or Ivan Gašparovič as the second to advance. However, the situation changed significantly a month before the elections, when Smer-SD and also the SNS expressed their support for Ivan Gašparovič.

³³ <https://journals.muni.cz/cepsr/article/view/4042/5280> (cit. 12. 5. 2020)

The attitude of Smer-SD and SNS is also captured in the graph in the final measurement, which was the only time when Ivan Gašparovič even slightly surpassed Vladimír Mečiar. The attitude of Smer-SD was also fatal for the fourth preferentially strongest candidate – the incumbent President of the SR Rudolf Schuster, who thus lost hope for re-election. In retrospect, the spring of 2004 can be seen as a moment of a clear rise of the Smer-SD party, which found its constituency among not only social but also nationally oriented voters, who until then supported mainly the HZDS, the SNS and other smaller social and conservative political parties.

While the surprising duel between Vladimír Mečiar and his former party colleague Ivan Gašparovič took place, the development shifted to an even greater surprise on the centre-right. Although Eduard Kukan's advance to the second round of the 2004 presidential election was taken for granted, the post-election reality was different. At the end, 3644 votes separated Eduard Kukan (438 920 votes) from advancing to the second round, in which Vladimír Mečiar with 650 242 votes and Ivan Gašparovič with 442 564 votes ended up in a run-off against each other.

The astonishment from Eduard Kukan's failure to advance to the second round of the 2004 presidential election encouraged a number of professional and lay attempts to identify its causes. Among them is the style of election campaign, which seemed to some marketers to be excessively expensive (which, none of the marketers claimed before the first round of elections). However, the financing of Eduard Kukan's campaign has never been clarified. Despite the fact that the control of political campaigns is generally problematic, neither SDKÚ-DS nor Eduard Kukan addressed the issue right and left legitimate doubts as an article in the daily Pravda proves: „After just three days of the campaign

some presidential candidates have already spent half the money that they can legally use. They admit that billboards and media advertising cost the most. Vladimír Mečiar has already spent 2,4 million crowns on the campaign, Ivan Gašparovič 2,6 million. Despite advertising for several months, Eduard Kukan refuses to disclose how much money he has spent. SDKÚ claims that this money was not part of his election campaign. „As for the current expenses, they will all be published in the annual financial report for 2004“, said SDKÚ spokesman Martin Matko.“³⁴

Nevertheless, the unpopularity of Mikuláš Dzurinda’s second government seems like a more relevant reason – the government was losing public support since the first months of its existence. At the beginning of 2004, several unpopular reforms had already been implemented. However, none of the above-mentioned arguments may have been a precondition for the failure of the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the SR, who was one of the respected domestic politicians not directly related to the criticized socio-economic reforms. In the case of Eduard Kukan, it was also possible to „market“ the successful integration process of Slovakia (in March 2004, the Slovak Republic became part of NATO and in May 2004 it was to become a member of the EU). Neither the style of the election campaign nor the unpopularity of the second Dzurinda’s government would have become fatal for Eduard Kukan if František Mikloško (KDH) and Martin Bútora (independent) had not run in the same elections.

František Mikloško’s candidacy was a political „sulk“ of the KDH, which never ceased to oppose the SDKÚ politically and tried to be the dominant force in Slovak politics on the ideological right. The SMK also supported the KDH candidate, after deciding

³⁴ <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/145561-meciar-a-gasparovic-dali-na-kampan-najviac/>

between František Mikloško and Martin Bútora: „The SMK will recommend to its voters and supporters to support František Mikloško, the KDH candidate, in the presidential election. The chairman of SMK Béla Bugár informed about it after the meeting of the Republic Council of the SMK. As he said, the party decided between Mikloško and Martin Bútora. The fact that Mikloško represents certain values, which are also professed by the SMK, decided in his favour.“³⁵

The tactics of the SMK's political decision-making before the 2004 elections of the President of the SR can be questioned. The defiance of the SMK towards the SDKÚ after a demanding long-term cooperation full of compromises can be understood. At the same time, however, it is questionable whether at the end of the election the winner was acceptable to the SMK. And if backing a candidate with related values was worth it. He won less than 8 % in the Nitra self-governing region, suggesting that the SMK did not focus too much on preferences of its voters, who are concentrated mainly in the south of Slovakia.

In addition to conflicts with coalition partners, the SDKÚ had to address two other serious political issues during the presidential election. At the end of the year 2003, important former members of SDKÚ Ivan Šimko and Zuzana Martináková announced the formation of a new political party the Free Forum (SF). At the same time, the co-initiator of the SF idea, Ivan Šimko, indicated that the new political party would not aspire to cooperate with the governing coalition in the current election period. Coincidentally, the SF founding party congress was held shortly before the 2004 presidential election, with presidential candidate Martin Bútora also attending its meeting, which could be understood as mutual political assistance. Martin Bútora, as a guest of the assembly,

³⁵ <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/38170-smk-za-mikloska>

had the opportunity to introduce himself to the newly-formed political party, and the SF increased its political prestige by the presence of the presidential candidate. On the other hand Eduard Kukan and the SDKÚ could not be happy about this, as the SF had the ambition to address the SDKÚ voters and motivate them to pick Martin Bútora as their presidential candidate in the 2004 presidential election.

The second problem that SDKÚ-DS faced were the so-called fake money donors. On April 1, the daily Pravda published information that among the sponsors of SDKÚ were people who later claimed that they did not give anything to the party: “In SDKÚ’s financial reports, there are people among the donors who today refuse that they were among its donors. One of them is former member of SDKÚ Michal Ambrovič. Two years ago, he was to donate 5,000 crowns to Dzurinda’s party. ,I can’t understand how it’s possible that I’m on that list. They stated my name there untruthfully,’ Ambrovič said yesterday. He left the SDKÚ and entered the Free Forum together with Ivan Šimko.”³⁶ Despite the fact that the case was obviously biased, it helped to discredit SDKÚ-DS and its presidential candidate Eduard Kukan. Two years later, the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic stopped the criminal prosecution in the case of SDKÚ donors, but without publishing the entire decision, which continued to fuel doubts about the case. Finally, the case came to life once again in 2018 in connection with the investigation of other cases.

Martin Bútora – as a non-partisan candidate with the support of the SF – and his colleagues from the (Bratislava) non-governmental environment let themselves be carried away by the atmosphere of the reform period and underestimated the domestic political reality, thus helping to elect a candidate representing

³⁶ Daily Pravda, 1. 4. 2004, Number 49, Year 14. p. 1.



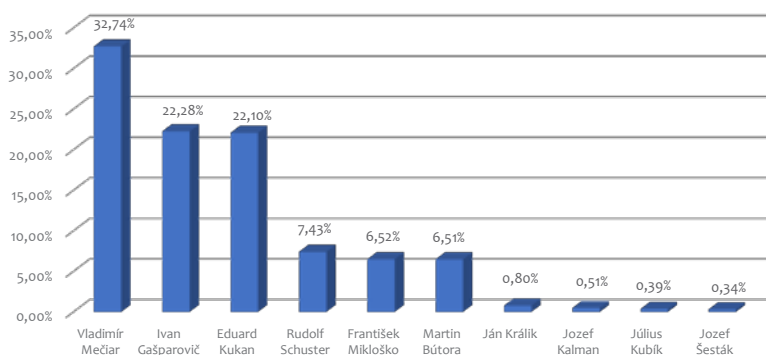
Picture 6. Election advertisement of Martin Bútora – the candidate for President of the Slovak Republic

Source: Daily SME, 29th March 2004; p. 33

the opposite of their life ideals. Eduard Kukan would only need a small part of the more than a quarter of a million votes received together by František Mikloško and Martin Bútora to advance to the second round of elections. However, this was not the first or last time that the Slovak right-wing environment was wrong in its political judgment and dared to enter the election competition in a fragmented manner, which was motivated mainly by its own intellectual arrogance and pride of the past merit. Paradoxically – the motto of November 1989 „there is strength in unity“, to which František Mikloško and Martin Bútora referred – remained forgotten by them.

The presidential election was also affected by a referendum on shortening the term of office of the NC SR, organized by the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ SR)

with the support of opposition and non-parliamentary left-wing political parties and which was held simultaneously with the presidential election. Opposition political parties supported it in the media by, among other things, filing a criminal complaint for its obstruction. But the obstruction was not supposed to be committed by the government or state authorities: „Two members of the Central Election Commission for the referendum, Róbert Madej and Katarína Tóthová, filed a criminal complaint. (...) The police in Trenčín started to deal with the discarding of the announcement yesterday. An investigator accused a 19-year-old student of obstruction of the preparation of the referendum. He was delivering announcements. Instead of handing them over to the voters, he threw them away.“³⁷ Although the effort to mobilize left-wing voters in particular did not result in high enough participation to ensure the validity of the referendum, it indirectly helped candidates declaring left-wing values.



Graph 12. The first round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2004

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

³⁷ Daily Pravda, 1. 4. 2004, Number 49, Year 14. p. 2.

The turnout in the first round reached only 47.94 %, which meant that, compared to the 1999 presidential election, about a third of voters lost interest in the election of the head of state. The last paradox of the first round of the 2004 presidential election was that non-advancing candidate Eduard Kukan was able to win in nine electoral districts, while the second advancing candidate Ivan Gašparovič only in two – but it was the absolute number of votes decided, not the number of electoral districts.

There was also a surprise among the main candidates in the presidential election. After ten years, Mária Benedikovičová returned to the results of the 2004 presidential election in a with an article for the SME daily. „Ivan Gašparovič slept at home in the spring of 2004 and had no idea that he was just having a chance to become president. He was awakened by phone calls from friends that the election favorite Eduard Kukan from SDKÚ failed and he advanced with Vladimír Mečiar to the second round of elections. (...) Kukan’s failure also surprised the then chairman of the HZD. ‚I knew how it would turn out, so I went home,‘ he explained why he spent the election night in bed.“³⁸

The candidates for the first round of the 2004 presidential elections had relatively homogeneous regional support. Vladimír Mečiar again had strong support in the Trenčín, Žilina and Prešov regions. The Banská Bystrica region, where the HZDS originally also had a higher electoral results, the support of Vladimír Mečiar was probably partially reduced by votes for Ivan Gašparovič (he was born in the town of Poltár). Of interest is the relatively high support of Ivan Gašparovič in the Trenčín Region. The Trenčín Region was the HZDS electoral stronghold in the previous elections, and the sum of votes for Vladimír Mečiar and Ivan Gašparovič in

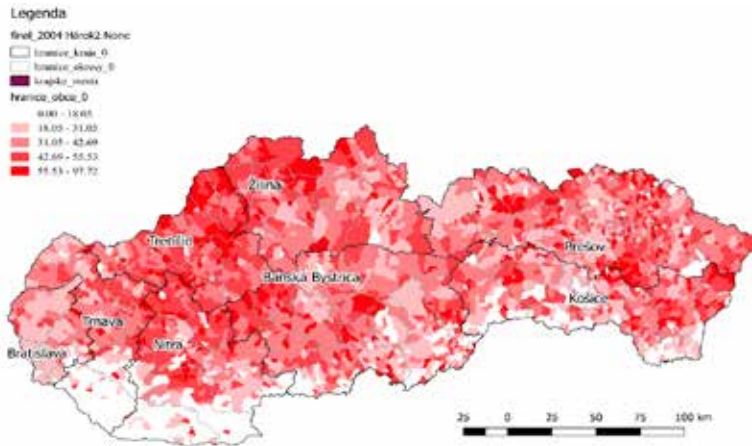
³⁸ <https://domov.sme.sk/c/7122756/volby-2004-gasparovic-doma-spal-uspech-necakal.html>

the presidential elections reached more than 66 %. The votes for Eduard Kukan came mainly from the Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra and Košice regions.

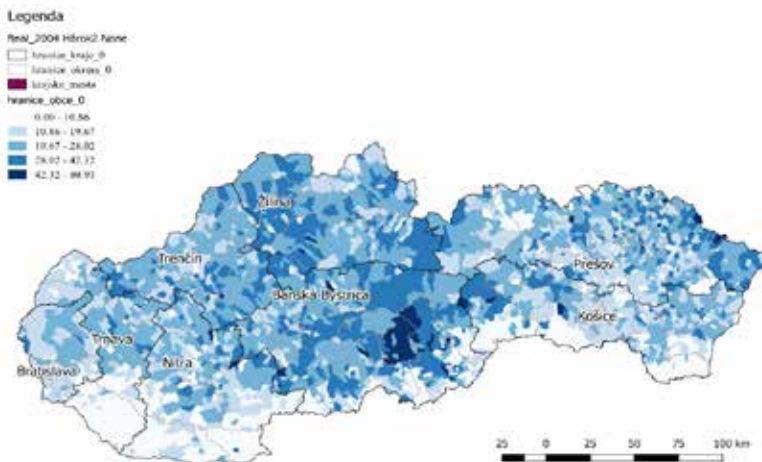
	S. Bernát	M. Bútora	I. Gašparovič	J. Kalman	J. Králik	J. Kubík	E. Kukan	V. Mečiar	F. Mikloško	R. Schuster	J. Šesták
BSK	0,16	12,6	16,15	0,38	0,44	0,3	34,89	22,84	7,57	4,26	0,27
TTSK	0,23	7,02	17,92	0,53	0,73	0,4	28,03	29,72	8,71	6,23	0,3
TSK	0,22	4,72	25,21	0,45	0,74	0,34	16,74	41,99	4,57	4,54	0,32
NSK	0,23	6,73	18,99	0,43	0,6	0,37	23,55	33,13	7,7	7,81	0,27
ZSK	0,66	3,86	27,6	0,37	0,71	0,37	15,1	38,35	7,42	5,15	0,29
BBSK	0,24	5,68	28,66	0,68	1,41	0,4	16,89	34,21	4,33	7,03	0,33
PSK	0,22	4,07	22,98	0,75	0,77	0,56	17,13	35,88	6,84	10,24	0,43
KSK	0,23	6,3	18,41	0,56	0,61	0,41	23,66	27,5	5,96	15,77	0,45

Table 3. Support of candidates in the 1st round of the 2004 presidential election by region

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

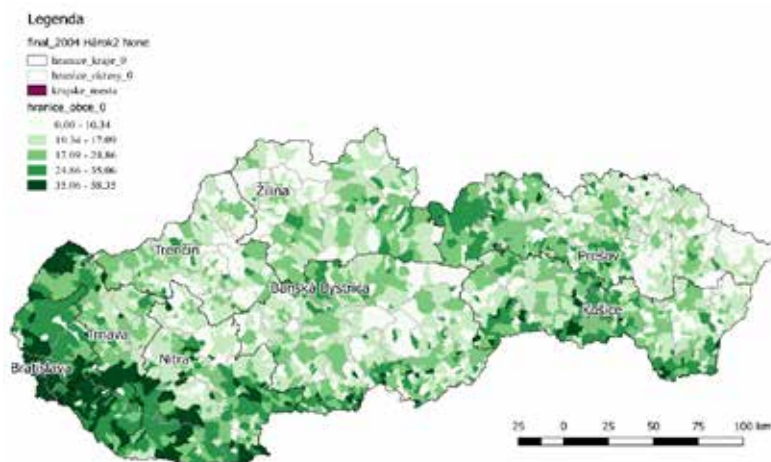


Picture 7. Voter support for Vladimír Mečiar in the first round of the 2004 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 8. Voter support for Ivan Gašparovič in the first round of the 2004 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019

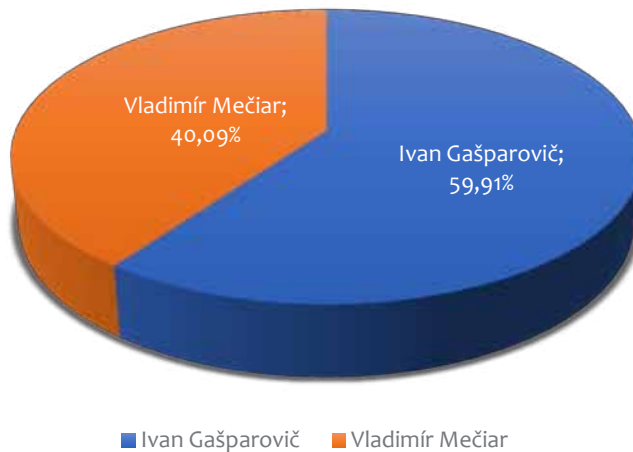


Picture 9. Electoral support for Eduard Kukan in the first round of the 2004 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The surprise and uneasiness of part of the public from the result of the first round of the 2004 Slovak elections were not entirely justified, as some voters deliberately and irrationally wanted to participate only in the second round. These emotions were reflected in the second round by even lower turnout, which reached 43.50 %. The winning candidate of the second round, Ivan Gašparovič, received 1 079 592 votes and Vladimír Mečiar 722 368 votes. This result for Mečiar was only seventy thousand votes more than in the first round and half a million votes less than in the second round of the 1999 presidential election. This apparent decrease in voter support was one of the reasons why these were the last presidential elections of Vladimír Mečiar. He, however, remained the leader of the HZDS and two years later became part of the first Robert Fico government with it. Only at

the end of the 2006–2010 election period, the HZDS would finally lose its electoral support, and Vladimír Mečiar would leave top politics after two decades.

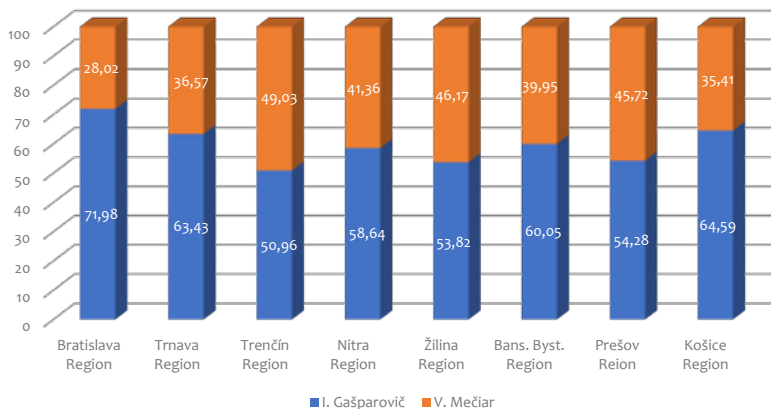


Graph 13. The second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2004

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

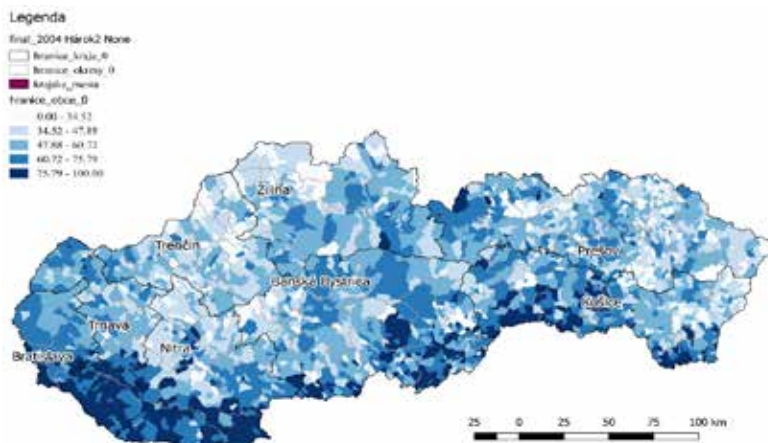
Within the regions, Ivan Gašparovič won an absolute majority of votes in all eight regions of Slovakia. However, the Bratislava region dominated and his support reached more than 70 % in it. He won more than 3/5 votes in the Trnava, Košice and Banská Bystrica regions. He achieved the relatively lowest support in the Trenčín Region, where the second round of the 2004 presidential elections ended up almost in a tie.

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



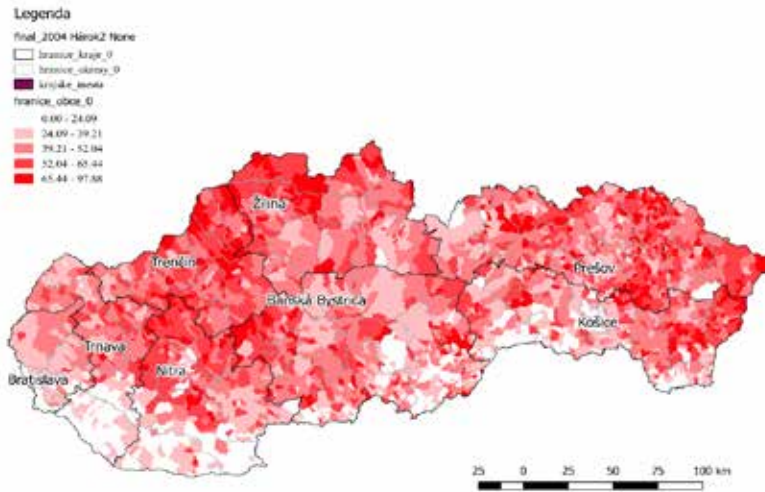
Graph 14. Support for candidates in the 2nd round of the 2004 presidential election by region

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



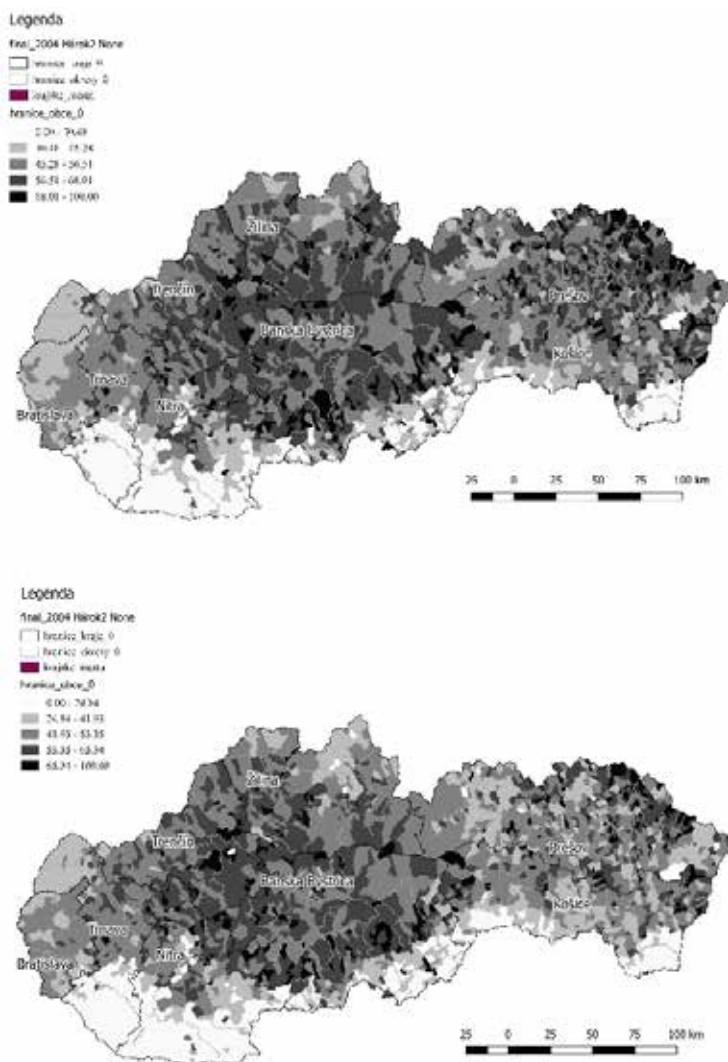
Picture 10. Voter support for Ivan Gašparovič in the second round of the 2004 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 11. Voter support for Vladimír Mečiar in the second round of the 2004 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 12. Voter turnout in the 2004 presidential elections by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Chapter 5

Woman almost becomes president in 2009 elections

Besides the elections of the President of the SR, the year 2009 can be remembered in the political history of Slovakia, by the emergence of new political parties, which later would later end the era of politicians who began their political career in the 1990s. In addition to the Most-Híd party, which separated from the original Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), liberal Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) was formed. The SaS profiled itself as a liberal and protest alternative to political parties, the so-called establishment. At that time, important opposition political parties were the SDKÚ-DS, the KDH and the SMK (Most-Híd). Opposition negotiations on a joint candidate for President of the SR began already at the end of 2007 and it was expected that as opposition political parties they would naturally try to find a strong candidate who would compete with the incumbent President Ivan Gašparovič. The opposition negotiations finally resulted in the decision of the SDKÚ-DS to nominate Iveta Radičová as the candidate, and the SMK later joined to support her. KDH found itself in a difficult political situation, but in the end it decided not to nominate its own candidate and support Iveta Radičová, even though František Mikloško also made the decision to run again, this time with the support of the KDS and the OKS instead of the KDH. In electoral mathematics, however, this meant that although KDH publicly supported Iveta Radičová, confessional

(especially Catholic) voters did not necessarily have to listen to KDH's recommendation in the elections. Finally, ecclesiastical authorities also sided with František Mikloško: „In February 2009, seven Catholic priests called on the KDH to distance itself from the ‚liberal candidate‘, ‚who is opposed to God's laws and Christian morality,‘ and to support F. Mikloško. (...) At the end of February 2009, however, the diocesan bishop of Banská Bystrica, Rudolf Baláž, entered the discussion on the profile of what a suitable candidate for Catholic believers should have in a robust way.“³⁹ He indirectly likened the position of the candidate for President of the Slovak Republic on cultural and ethical issues to the views of the leader of the Nazi Third Reich, Adolf Hitler.

Ivan Gašparovič had a less demanding role in his attempt to re-election as President of the Slovak Republic. The political parties Smer-SD and the SNS, which supported him in the previous elections in 2004, became government parties in 2006, and Ivan Gašparovič had conflict-free relations with them, which at was certain points turning into mutual political friendliness. This was already indicated by the non-appointment of Vladimír Tvarožka as Vice-Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia (NBS), proposed by the second government of Mikuláš Dzurinda at the end of its 2002–2006 parliamentary term. At that time, Ivan Gašparovič formally justified the non-appointment of Vladimír Tvarožka by unfulfilled precondition of five years of experience in a management position in the monetary or financial field.

Grigorij Mesežnikov described the tightness of Ivan Gašparovič's political alliance with the Smer-SD party in the publication *Slovakia Votes – European and Presidential Elections 2009*. In it he mentions the meeting of President of the SR Ivan Gašparovič with Smer-SD members in Košice a few days before the second round:

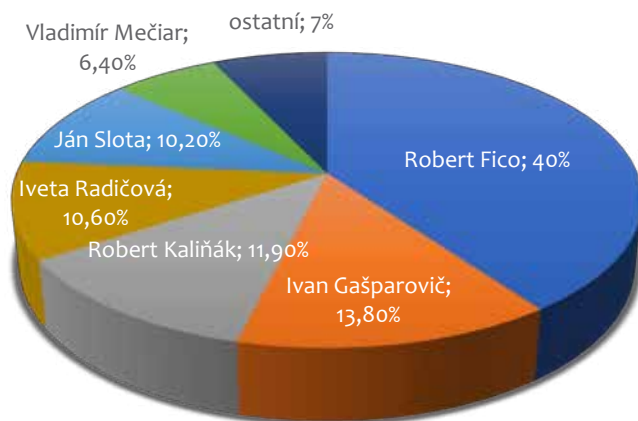
³⁹ MESEŽNIKOV, G.: Slovensko volí – európske a prezidentské voľby. IVO. 2009. p 73.

„Despite the fact that during the campaign and in the previous period, reflections on his programmatic and political proximity to the Smer-SD party were accompanied by I. Gašparovič declaring adherence to the principle of impartiality in the exercise of office and non-involvement in party politics, at the above-mentioned meeting in Košice he stated that elections will be important for the future of the Smer-SD party. According to I. Gašparovič, it is no longer about him, but about Smer-SD and the governing coalition, as the opposition will do everything in its power to deal a blow to the coalition by having its president (...), in this position and at this time I am practically as if a member, because my failure will be the failure of the Smer and my success will be the success of the Smer and of course, of the coalition.“⁴⁰ Apart from the level of evaluation of Ivan Gašparovič's (im)partiality, which can be considered formal, it is possible to perceive the tone of the president's speech as something between fear and servility towards the Smer-SD party members with an interest in mobilizing the Smer-SD party cadre to activity within his own election campaign. It was not a cultivated speech to a sympathetic political group, but a seemingly desperately tense and barely dignified request for political activity, which, if failed, would result in a great political damage.

In addition to the candidates already mentioned, four other candidates entered the election – former member of the SDKÚ-DS Zuzana Martináková, who left the party during the first government of Mikuláš Dzurinda (she focused on social affairs and Iveta Radičová took over after her as vice-chairman); Dagmar Bollová, who ran in the elections as a civic candidate, but before that she was a member of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) and she represented this political party in the 2002–2006 election period in the NC SR, but the KSS nominated Milan Sidor and the ĽS-HZDS, as one of the governing parties, nominated Milan Melník.

⁴⁰ MESEŽNIKOV, G. Slovensko volí – európske a prezidentské voľby. IVO. 2009. p 84.

In terms of initial credibility, Ivan Gašparovič clearly had the best starting position. His position in measured credibility of politicians has been slightly declining, but he was still the second most credible politician in the country. At the same time, he was supported in his candidacy by two coalition political parties, whose leaders were among the most trusted politicians. During 2009, the Prime Minister of the SR and the Smer-SD party chief had the support of up to 40 % of people, his party colleague and then Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic Robert Kaliňák almost 12 % and the chairman of the coalition SNS Ján Slota approximately 10 %. In a survey conducted by the Institute for Public Opinion Research (ÚVVM) at the Statistical Office of the SR, Iveta Radičová was only in the third place and was the only opposition politician to appear among politicians with significant public confidence.



Graph 15. Public confidence in politicians (February 2009)

Source: Institute for Public Opinion Research
at the Statistical Office⁴¹

⁴¹ <https://www.24hod.sk/gasparovicovi-dovera-klesla-radicovej-stupla-cl71182.html>
(cited 18. 5. 2020).



Picture 13. Iveta Radičová’s election billboard 2009

Source: Election information service⁴²

Although in February 2009, Iveta Radičová’s credibility was at the rise according to public opinion polls. „The credibility of Iveta Radičová has an increasing trend. In February, 10.6 percent of those surveyed said she was trustworthy, while in January it was 8.7 percent.“⁴³ However, the increase in her popularity was not enough to expect her victory in the first or the second round of elections, according to polls. The insufficient growth of her voter popularity was also not supported by the style of Iveta Radičová’s election campaign, which was more in the academic and civic style. As part of the outdoor campaign, Iveta Radičová was presented with glasses and a library within a blurred background, and at the same time personalities of cultural and artistic life (singers, actors, moderators, etc.) spoke in her support.

⁴² <http://www.infovolby.sk/index.php?base=data/prez/2009/kampan/1236727773.txt> (cited 18. 5. 2020).

⁴³ Also (cited 18. 5. 2020).

The election campaign of Ivan Gašparovič was mainly affected by the representatives of the Smer-SD party and the SNS to an extent that it can be perceived more as the campaign of the Smer-SD party itself than as the presidential campaign of Ivan Gašparovič. In addition to the standard presentation of Ivan Gašparovič mostly with the representatives of the Smer-SD party, his billboards with the slogan „Others don't speak for me“ also appeared later. Although Ivan Gašparovič's campaign probably did not significantly change the overall proportion of votes with this, it was a small and at the same time eloquent expression of marketing ingenuity, which was missed by Iveta Radičová's election presentation. The empty-sounding slogan „We can do it!“ and the heart-shaped tricolor, which were more of a reference to the symbolism of Václav Havel (president of Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic, who was not very popular among Slovaks), could not mobilize undecided voters enough even in larger cities.

At the same time, already in the 2009 presidential election campaign, we can perceive political dissonance between Iveta Radičová and her party, the SDKÚ-DS. Strategically, the non-involvement of SDKÚ-DS officials, who were low in polls measuring trust (and high in electoral distrust), can be seen as the right decision. But the fact that the candidate for president did not declare her party affiliation (and vice versa) gave the impression of political disconformity, which could have been disruptive to voter decisions. Iveta Radičová gave a professional performance in the campaign, as was her standard, but on several occasions she was openly defeatist in expressing her uncertainty of the election result. Iveta Radičová's defeatist approach was also noticed by Grigory Mesežnikov: „Before the official nomination and for some time after it, I. Radičová herself expressed doubts about whether she could get sufficient voter support, and especially



Picture 14. Ivan Gašparovič's 2009 election billboard

Source: Election information service⁴⁴

whether her candidacy would be supported by other opposition parties, especially the KDH. She pointed to the lack of political experience and to a certain handicap, stemming from the fact that, as a woman, she applied for the support of voters burdened by gender stereotypes.⁴⁵

Distrust or lack of interest in victory could not bring electoral success. And already in the 2009 presidential election, political rumours spread that Iveta Radičová's presidential candidacy was more a preference of her party boss Mikuláš Dzurinda in order to „take care“ of his more popular vice-chairman of the SDKÚ-DS. How Mikuláš Dzurinda could have forced Iveta Radičová to run was not explained by this political gossip.

⁴⁴ <http://www.infovolby.sk/index.php?base=data/prez/2009/kampan/1236727605.txt> (cit. 18. 5. 2020).

⁴⁵ MESEŽNIKOV, G. Slovensko volí – európske a prezidentské voľby. IVO. 2009. p. 86.

The other candidates did not succeed. František Mikloško's repeated candidacy (KDS, OKS) did not bring better results – quite the opposite. While the Christian Democratic candidate won almost 130,000 votes in 2004, five years later in 2009 it was just over 101 000 votes.

Even Zuzana Martináková reached comparable number of votes to him, while in 2006 she failed with her party the Free Forum. Now she won only 0,3 % less votes than Mikloško. Milan Melník, the candidate of the government's ĽS-HZDS, also ended up below three percent, which also foreshadowed the fate of the Vladimír Mečiar's movement, which would end as a relevant political party a year later in the 2010 parliamentary elections.

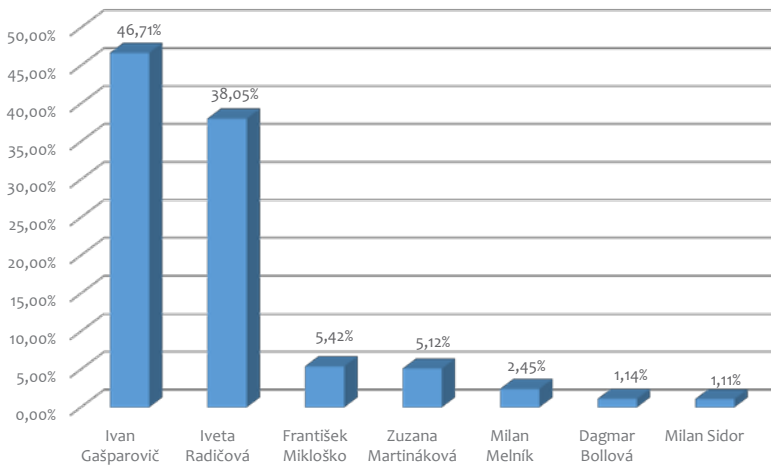
	D. Bollová	I. Gašparovič	Z. Martináková	M. Melník	F. Mikloško	I. Radičová	M. Sidor
Bratislavský	0,86	34,07	4,65	1,6	6,45	51,77	0,57
Trnavský	1,55	41,47	4,23	1,72	5,03	45,34	0,62
Trenčiansky	1,59	57,9	5,99	3,45	4,52	25,3	1,21
Nitriansky	0,88	43,01	4,18	1,97	3,64	45,52	0,77
Žilinský	1,25	57,81	5,41	3,43	7,29	23,71	1,06
Banskobystrický	1,27	54,41	5,25	2,33	3,27	32,13	1,3
Prešovský	1,36	55,75	5,67	3,04	7,64	23,85	2,65
Košický	1,06	42,08	5,44	3,04	4,94	41,97	1,43

Table 4. Support for candidates in the first round of the 2009 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

According to the regional distribution of votes, the first round was a manifestation of Ivan Gašparovič's dominant support in the Trenčín, Žilina, Banská Bystrica and Prešov regions. Iveta Radičová managed to succeed more significantly in the Bratislava region and had a slight electoral advantage over Ivan Gašparovič in the Trnava region.

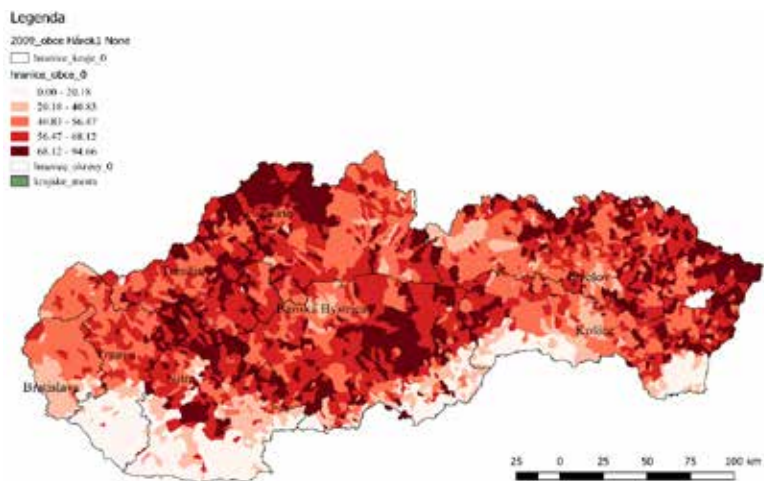
Regional data from the first round of the 2009 Slovak elections showed relatively evenly distributed support for Zuzana Martináková and slightly above-average support for František Mikloško in the Žilina and Prešov regions, which have long been characterised by a higher degree of religiosity.



Graph 16. The first round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2009

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019

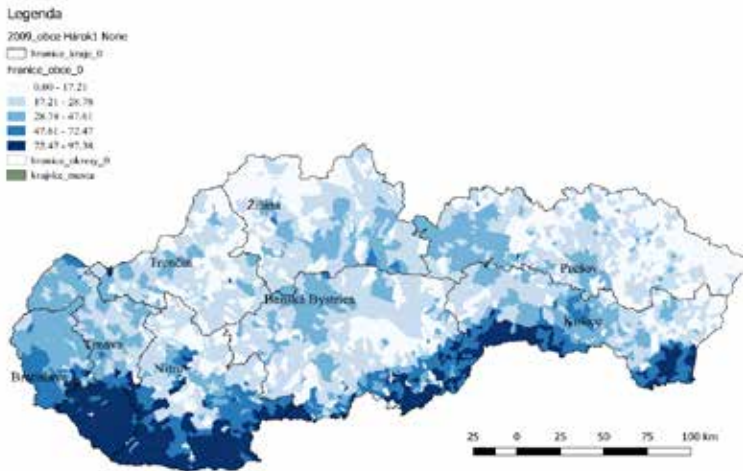


Picture 15. Voter support for Ivan Gašparovič in the first round of the 2009 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

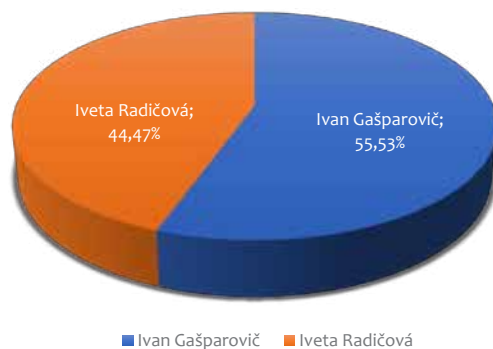
As expected, incumbent President Ivan Gašparovič, with the support of the majority of the governing political parties, and Iveta Radičová with the support of part of the opposition (SDKÚ-DS, SMK) advanced to the second round of the presidential election.

Iveta Radičová was not supported by any additional political parties or relevant social organizations in the second round. Therefore it could have been expected that the difference from the first round (more than eight percent) between Ivan Gašparovič and Iveta Radičová would be unsurpassable for the historically first woman to enter the second round of the presidential election.



Picture 16. Voter support for Iveta Radičová in the first round of the 2009 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

In order for Iveta Radičová to be at least partially successful in the second round of the 2009 elections, the percentage difference between her and Gašparovič would have decrease in comparison to the first round. However, this did not happen in the end, as Ivan Gašparovič won more than 11 % more votes than Iveta Radičová in the second round, which confirmed him as the favourite. While in the first round the incumbent president won in 36 electoral districts, Iveta Radičová succeeded only in 14. In the second round, the mutual balance changed slightly in favour of Iveta Radičová, but she managed to succeed only in 15 electoral districts.



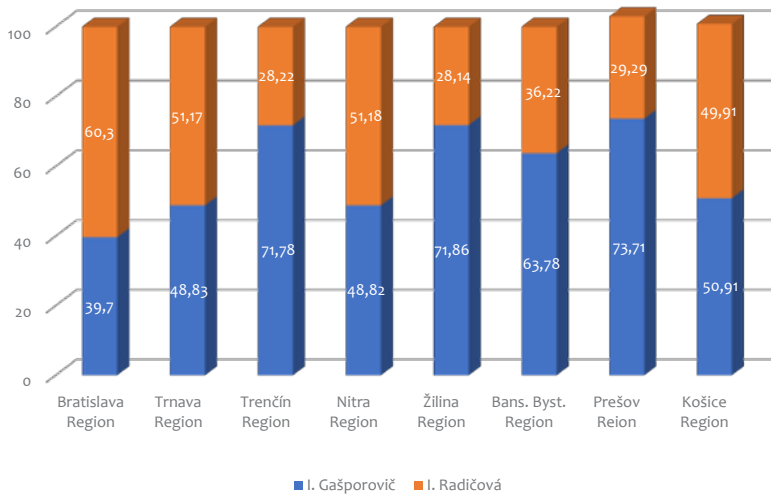
Graph 17. The second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2009

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Compared to the first round, when more than 43 % of possible voters participated in the election of the President of the SR, the turnout increased to 51 % in the second round, which was probably not due to low attractiveness of other candidates but because the voters repeated the same mistake again. Voters skipped the first round, convinced that they would choose their candidate only in the second round, but they lost the opportunity to decide on the participants in the second round in the process. Thus the result of the 2009 elections also answers the question of the electoral „lessons learned“ from the 2004 elections.

The results of the second round of the 2009 presidential election did not surprise even when looking at the support of the presidential candidates in the regions. Compared to the first round, the candidates had almost identical support. Ivan Gašparovič won votes mainly in the Trenčín and Žilina regions as well as in Prešov and Banská Bystrica. As expected, Iveta Radičová received support in the Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra regions. However,

the electoral support of Iveta Radičová in her victorious regions was relatively less decisive than the electoral support of Ivan Gašparovič in his victorious regions.

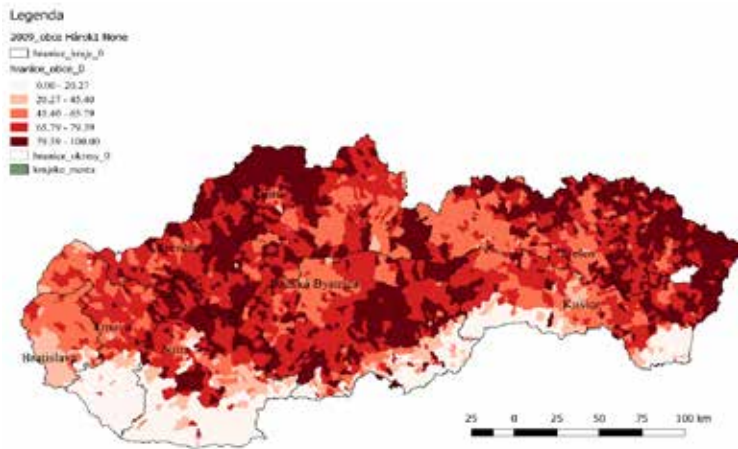


Graph 18. Support for candidates in the second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2009 by region

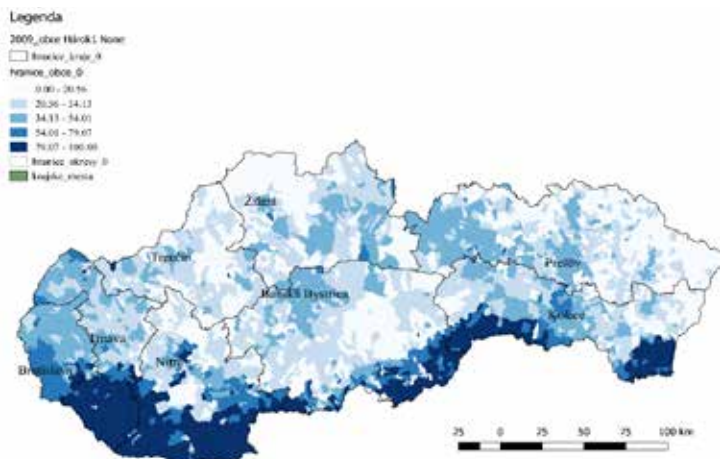
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The Smer-SD party pushed through its candidate in the 2004 and 2009 elections. The election of Ivan Gašparovič in these elections would not be possible without the support of the Smer-SD. This was the last time so far, as in the next presidential elections 2014 and 2019, the candidates of the Smer-SD party ended in failure in the second round of elections. Political fortune in the following presidential elections turned against the efforts of the Smer-SD – and this was despite the candidacy of the most popular domestic politician and party chairman Robert Fico.

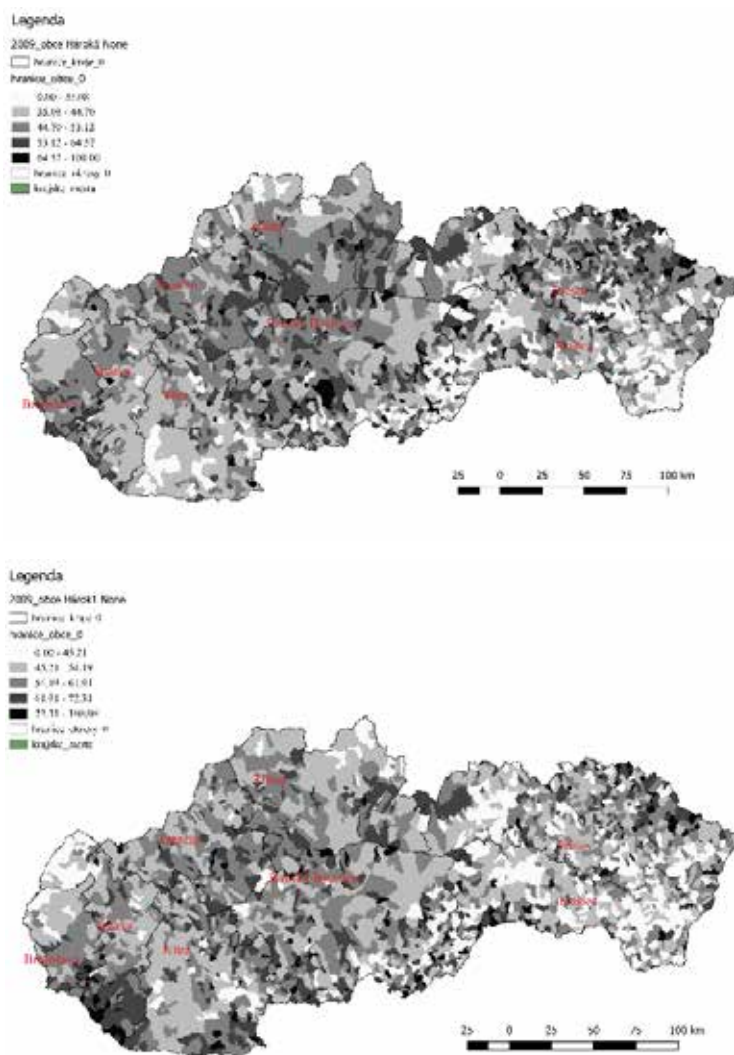
Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 17. Voter support for Ivan Gašparovič in the second round of the 2009 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 18. Voter support for Iveta Radičová in the second round of the 2009 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 19. Voter turnout in the 2009 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Chapter 6

A non-politician became president in 2014

The year 2014 was in the middle of the term of a one party government of the Smer-SD, which won the early parliamentary elections of 2012 with more than 44 % votes and thus did not need coalition partners to gain confidence in the NC SR. For Robert Fico and the Smer-SD party, this victory was an unprecedented political success, as, with the exception of the 1946 democratic elections, no political party ever won such strong electoral support. For the first time since 1989, Slovakia was ruled by one political party, and although it is not possible to speak of a threat to political plurality, the Smer-SD political party would later pay its political tax from this period of government.

The position of Smer-SD and its leader Robert Fico could be described by the ancient Greek allegory from the time of Alexander the Great, about whom one legend said that when he looked around after one of the victories, he wept because there was nothing left to conquer. For Smer-SD and its chairman Robert Fico, only the position of the President of the SR remained without direct control (although Ivan Gašparovič was supported by the Smer-SD party).

Robert Fico's candidacy for the office of the President of the Slovak Republic was preceded by several public speculations, which

resulted in December 2013, when Robert Fico finally informed about his decision to run. His candidacy was unanimously accepted by the leadership of the Smer-SD party, although several of its members had unspoken doubts whether their chairman's presidential ambitions are wise. The tension over the possible candidacy of Robert Fico to run for president of the SR was briefly replaced by a slight relief from solving this political riddle. But the same time Smer-SD and its leader were overcome by uncertainty about the election results. Robert Fico's candidacy can be understood in the context of the mental background of the origin and operation of the Smer-SD party, as well as Robert Fico's understanding of politics as a competition consistently subordinated to success.

Although the focus on political success (winning elections or participating in government) is a natural part of political parties as such, success has always been at the forefront of political priorities for the Smer-SD, and a different outcome has been a problem. Just as the existence in the opposition or outside parliamentary politics was a long-term part of other party projects (OKS, KDH, KSS, SMK, etc.), in the environment of the Smer-SD party the failure represented a certain stigma. The chairman of the Smer-SD party, who was the dominant co-creator of this success-oriented political mentality risked a long-built and demanding image of successful politician with this decision. Failure in the elections could bring Robert Fico contempt from both the party's sponsors, but also, in part, the lower party structures. Not only the power positions of the Smer-SD party but also the political prestige of Robert Fico were „in the game“ here.

After 2006, when Robert Fico formed his first coalition government (2006–2010) with the SNS and the ĽS-HZDS, and with the gradual erosion and political decline of the original political right

(SDKÚ-DS and KDH) between 2009–2011, the slogan of the Slovak right became the struggle against Robert Fico and corruption. After all, Robert Fico himself helped to promote this paradigm, as he liked to use it as a phrase in political discussions. His blog in the *Sme* newspaper is a good example. In it, Fico explained, among other things, the reasons for his presidential candidacy: „I want to run for president. And in the economic field, I will do this, this with taxes, this with unemployment, and this with the rule of law and the judiciary. These words are starting to appear more and more often a year before the presidential election. And also it is necessary to oppose R. Fico.“⁴⁶

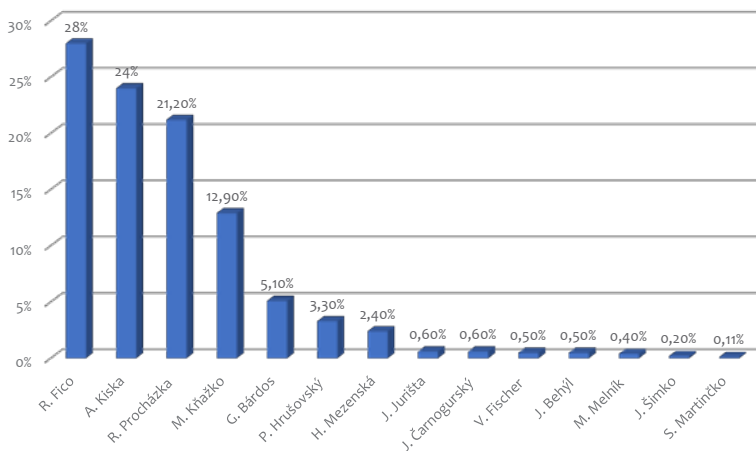
The supposed or real „mantra“ of uniting against Smer-SD or Robert Fico did not ultimately have the influence on the decisionmaking of other politicians, activists and political parties on their candidates for president of the Slovak Republic as in the 2014 presidential election another thirteen candidates ran. In two cases they withdrew their candidacy before the elections began. In addition to Robert Fico, perceived as a certain participant in the second round in the elections, KDH nominee Pavol Hrušovský ran. However, he was not only former chairman of the Christian Democrats running. Along with the announcement of the presidential candidacy, its founding member and former chairman Ján Čarnogurský terminated his membership in the KDH. And Radoslav Procházka, a deputy of the NC SR who resigned as a member of the KDH shortly beforehand, also announced his candidacy.

Most of the other candidates had partial political experience. They worked in top politics as deputies of the National Council of the SR (Milan Kňažko, Gyula Bárdos, Helena Mezenská, Peter Osuský), in municipal politics (Jozef Šimko) or in the non-governmental sector (Stanislav Martinčko). Finally, significant domestic

⁴⁶ <https://fico.blog.sme.sk/c/322451/Chcem-kandidovat-za-prezidenta.html>.

experts in their fields also ran in the elections. The first was Viliam Fisher (a cardiac surgeon cooperating in the first domestic heart transplant in Slovakia, who later admitted to corruption) and Milan Melník (a scientific figure), who also ran for president of the Slovak Republic in 2009 with support of the ĽS-HZDS.

The biggest election battle was naturally expected between experienced politicians. In addition to Robert Fico, this included senior politicians such as Pavol Hrušovský and Milan Kňažko, but also Radoslav Procházka, whose “political star” began to rise together with the candidacy for president. In the end, however, a complete political “newcomer” Andrej Kiska advanced to the second round with the political “veteran” Robert Fico. The exact ranking of the candidates in the first round is shown in the chart below.



Graph 19. The first round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2014

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

What preceded the outcome of the first round of the 2014 presidential election? The choices of the voters were naturally influenced by the events from the immediate time before the elections – the Gorilla corruption case; disintegration of the SDKÚ-DS; government of one party within a multi-party system; claims about the division of political representation into new and old politicians (which was then also present in the elections to the National Council of the SR 2016 and 2020); increasing influence of social media and more. These are just some of the visible factors that influenced the outcome of the 2014 presidential election. As in the case of other Slovak elections, there are no publicly available exit polls that would explain voters' choice in more depth.

The table below puts together public opinion polls of several agencies (the date next to the agency's name is the day of publication) in the final five weeks before the 2014 Slovak presidential election. If we are to perceive them as an indicator of the development of voter support for individual candidates, it is possible to see the increasing support of a single candidate – Andrej Kiska. During the final weeks, the other candidates stagnated (Pavol Hrušovský's support even declined) – which can be assessed as a fatal failure of their campaign (given that the candidates themselves did not make any significant mistakes). It failed to help Radoslav Procházka that Petr Osuský, who was originally sent to the elections by the SaS, resigned in his favour.

We might hypothetically admit that some supporters of the conservative candidate Pavol Hrušovský leaned towards Andrej Kiska, but it is clear that Andrej Kiska was mainly supported in the first round of elections by originally undecided voters, or voters who did not originally plan to participate in the elections.

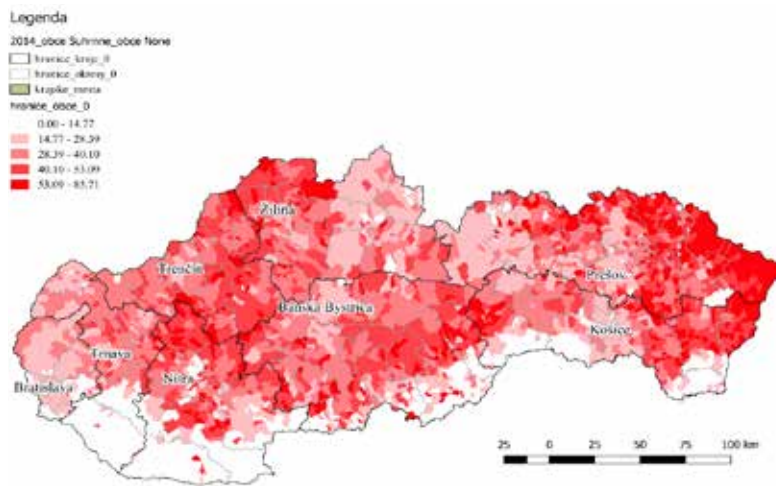
	Focus 5.2.2014	Focus 14.2.2014	Polis 22.2.2014	Focus 3.3.2014	MVK 4.3.2014	Polis 7.3.2014	Focus 9.3.2014
R. Fico	38,00 %	37,00 %	38,80 %	35,00 %	38,00 %	37,80 %	36,10 %
A. Kiska	17,30 %	20,40 %	23,00 %	23,80 %	23,00 %	26,40 %	27,10 %
R. Procházka	10,80 %	10,30 %	9,50 %	9,90 %	11,50 %	8,10 %	10,00 %
M. Kňažko	9,50 %	12,90 %	9,50 %	9,70 %	8,00 %	11,20 %	11,10 %
P. Hrušovský	9,30 %	7,30 %	6,80 %	7,90 %	9,00 %	5,20 %	5,00 %
G. Bárδος	5,60 %	4,50 %	4,30 %	5,30 %	4,50 %	4,50 %	4,30 %
J. Čarnogurský	3,70 %	1,70 %	2,20 %	3,20 %	1,50 %	2,50 %	1,30 %
H. Mezenská	2,50 %	3,00 %	2,10 %	2,70 %	2,00 %	1,40 %	2,60 %

Table 5. Support of candidates for the President of the Slovak Republic 2014

Zdroj: <https://www.vysledkyvolieb.sk/prezidentske-volby/2014/prieskumy>

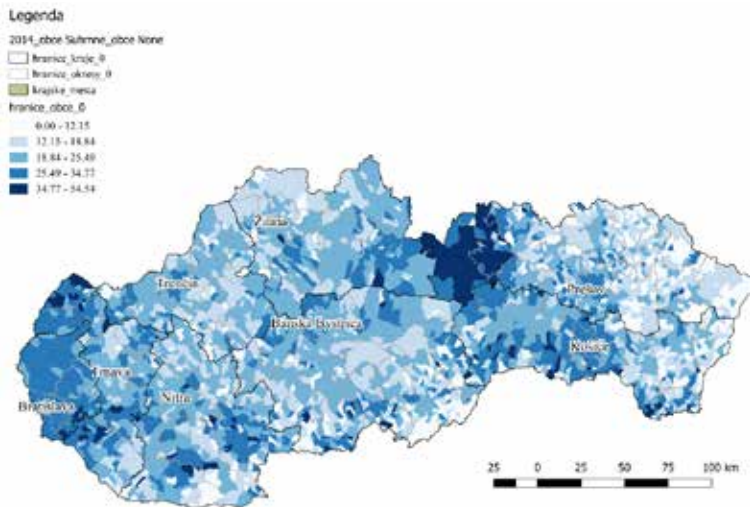
At the end of March 2014, the second round took place. It was accompanied by the greatest suspense from the expected result since 1999. Both in the 1999 elections (Rudolf Schuster) and in 2004 and 2009 (Ivan Gašparovič), the result of the second round was more predictable based on the results of the first round. Given the atmosphere in the country and the results of the 1998 and 2002 elections to the NC SR, interpreted as a rejection of Vladimír Mečiar's political style, it was unlikely that the chairman of the ĽS-HZDS could be successful in the second round of the 1999 or 2004 presidential elections. In 2009, the success of Iveta Radičová was unlikely due to the 8 % difference in votes between her and the first advancing Ivan Gašparovič, who won the first round in 36 electoral districts, while Iveta Radičová only in the 14.

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 20. Voter support for Robert Fico in the first round of the 2014 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The starting situation before the second round of the 2009 presidential election was only a 4 % difference between Robert Fico (28 %) and Andrej Kiska (24 %). In addition, it was expected that voters of unsuccessful candidates from the first round Radoslav Procházka (21.2 %) and Milan Kňažko (12.9 %) would participate and these voters had a clearly higher affinity for Andrej Kiska than Robert Fico. The chairman of the Smer-SD party and then the two-time prime minister of the Slovak Republic thus found himself in the same political situation as Vladimír Mečiar in the 1999 and 2004 elections, when in the second round of elections he failed to gain sufficient support from voters of unsuccessful candidates from the first round or non-voters.



Picture 21. Voter support of Andrej Kiska in the first round of the 2014 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

In the elections to the NC SR in 2012, Robert Fico, as the leader of the Smer-SD party, which received exceptional voter support of more than 44 % of voters, gained 762 360 preferential votes. However, two years later, in the first round of elections of the President of the SR, he received only 531 919 votes. In the second round it as much as 893 841 votes, but his opponent Andrej Kiska almost tripled the number of his votes (1 307 065) compared to the first round (455 996 votes). For the first time, Robert Fico's political instinct was significantly wrong. Although the chairman of the Slovak socialists did not publicly admit he would make political decisions according to public opinion polls, his decision to run for president of the SR could have been supported by public opinion polls. He was doing well in measuring

of the credibility of politicians and e.g. in October 2013, according to a representative survey by the PRIESKUMY agency, 38 % of respondents trusted Robert Fico.⁴⁷ Similar values of support for the acting Prime Minister were also estimated by pre-election public opinion polls in February and March 2014 (Table 5). Support for 28 % in the first round of the presidential election must have been a clear disappointment compared to the survey estimates.

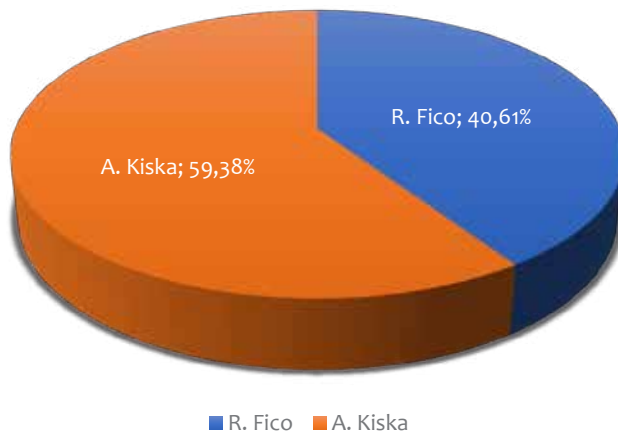
	Bratislava Region	Trnava Region	Trenčín Region	Nitra Region	Žilina Region	Banská Bystrica Region	Prešov Region	Košice Region
G. Bárδος	1,56	10,78	0,11	16,42	0,11	5,84	0,35	5,72
J. Behýl	0,38	0,44	0,58	0,39	0,49	0,66	0,53	0,43
J. Čarnogurský	0,83	0,52	0,62	0,49	0,839	0,52	0,72	0,55
R. Fico	17,92	24,81	36,55	27,91	33,14	32,83	37,34	27,93
V. Fisher	0,43	0,51	0,72	0,54	0,55	0,52	0,53	0,39
P. Hrušovský	1,74	3,08	2,92	3,01	4,93	2,63	5,88	3,33
J. Jurišta	0,4	0,48	0,8	0,45	0,94	0,8	0,82	0,64
A. Kiska	26,73	25,85	22,02	22,44	21,51	20,72	22,67	24,87
M. Kňažko	23,73	10,69	10,05	9,48	9,6	11,34	7,08	13,26
S. Martinčko	0,05	0,07	0,1	0,07	0,1	0,12	0,23	0,35
M. Melník	0,34	0,31	0,52	0,31	0,44	0,42	0,56	0,43
H. Mezenská	1,73	2,09	2,94	2,07	2,64	3,25	2,46	2,33
R. Procházka	24,06	20,23	21,91	16,23	24,54	19,06	20,59	19,51
J. Šimko	0,05	0,06	0,08	0,1	0,1	1,2	0,2	0,2

Table 6. Support for candidates in the 1st round of the 2014 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

⁴⁷ <https://www.topky.sk/cl/100535/1367419/Tymto-politikom-najviac-verime--Vedu-Fico-Kalinak-Lipsic-a-Bugar>

Despite the high total number of candidates, voter support concentrated mainly around five candidates. In addition to Robert Fico and Andrej Kiska, both of whom continued to the second round, Radoslav Procházka and Milan Kňažko received relevant support. With support higher than 5 % (parliamentary electoral threshold), we can also include Gyula Bárdoš (5.10 %) as a successful candidate of the Hungarian national minority. The candidacy of the former chairman of the KDH and the former Speaker the National Council of the Slovak Republic Pavol Hrušovský was a significant failure. He gained only 3.30 % of the votes due to the candidacy of Ján Čarnogurský and Radoslav Procházka. This level of support was only 0.80 % more votes than the electoral support of Helena Mezenská (OĽaNO). However, the KDH did not seem to properly understand this signal from the voters, so a political shock must have come during the elections to the NC SR two years later.

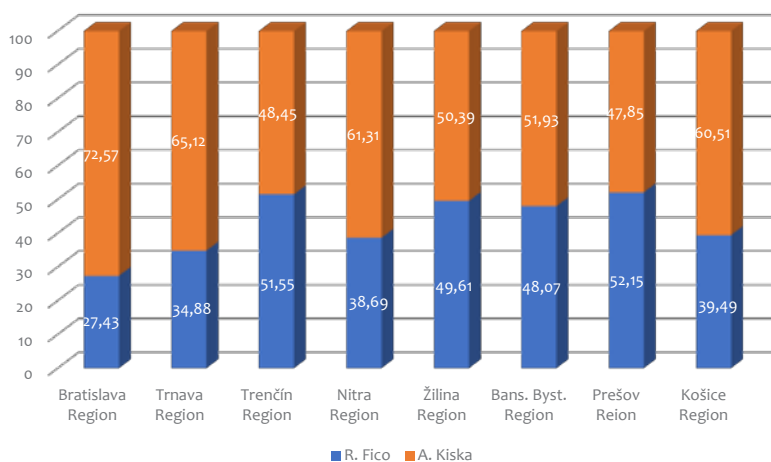


Graph 20. The second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2009

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

In the second round of the 2014 presidential election, Robert Fico won an almost identical share of votes (40.61 %) as Vladimír Mečiar ten years earlier in the second round of the second direct presidential election in 2004 (40.08 %). In the next elections of the President of the SR in 2019, another candidate of the Smer-SD party, Maroš Šefčovič, would receive a very similar share of votes (41.59 %).

Only a few months before the 2014 presidential elections, elections to the bodies of self-governing regions took place in 2013. During the announcement of results of regional elections in the Banská Bystrica Region, Robert Fico coined the term “bag of potatoes”. Cartoonists and commentators subsequently enjoyed using the same metaphor for the outcome of presidential elections in which, surprisingly, Robert Fico did not succeed.

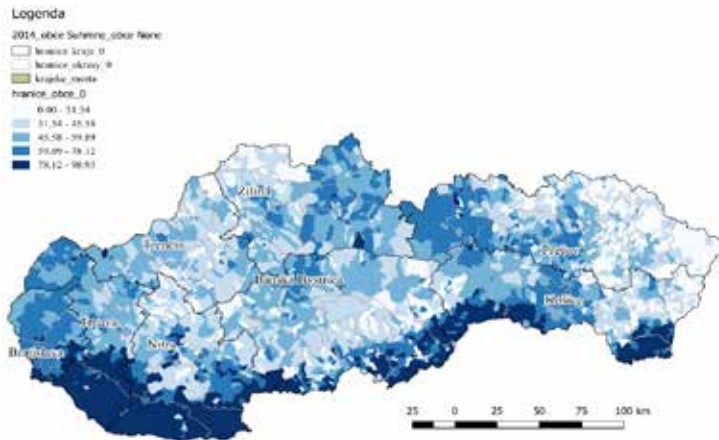


Graph 21. Support for candidates in the second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2014 by region

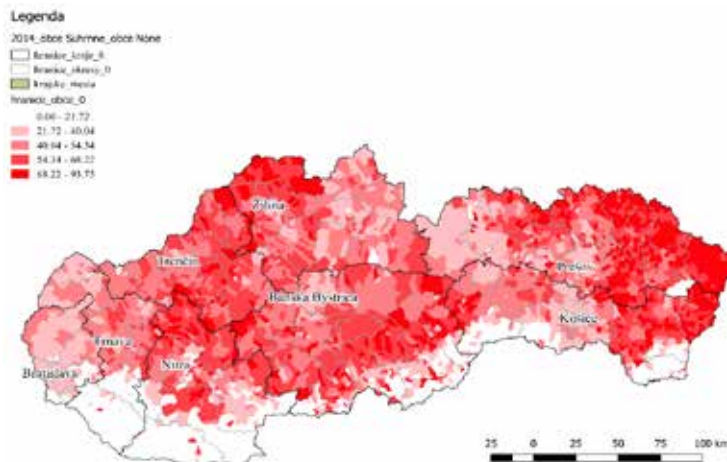
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

A closer regional examination of the results of the second round of elections of the President of the SR in 2014 shows a clear predominance of voters supporting Andrej Kiska, especially in the Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra and Košice regions. The only region where Robert Fico outweighed the support for Andrej Kiska was the Trenčín region and he won just under 50 % in the Žilina and Banská Bystrica regions. It was a very similar distribution of voter support to the 2004 elections – the same regions that used to support Vladimír Mečiar now slightly more convincingly supported Robert Fico in the 2014 elections.

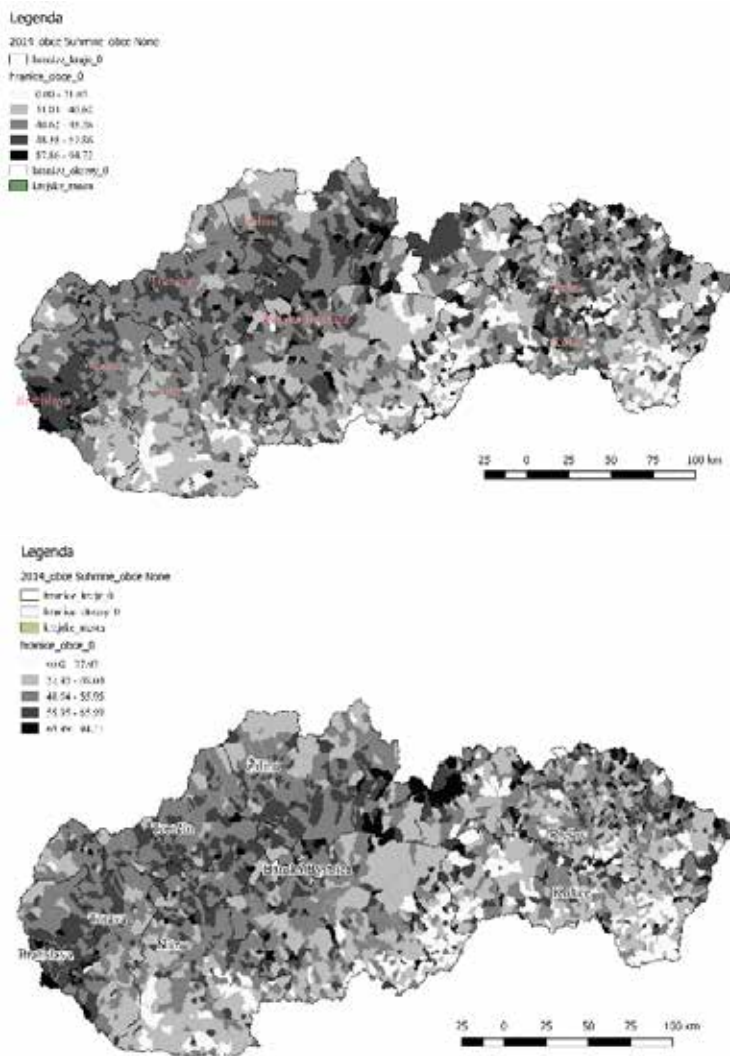
Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 22. Electoral support of Andrej Kiska in the second round of the 2014 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 23. Voter support for Robert Fico in the second round of the 2014 presidential election by municipality
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 24. Voter turnout in the 2014 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Chapter 7

Triumph of the will of a woman 2019

On Wednesday evening, February 21, 2018, in Veľká Mača, a small Slovak village in southern Slovakia, the assassination of two young people took place. The murdered couple was young investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancé Martina Kušnírová. Four days later, the Slovak Police found their bodies in their family house. The first information about the murder was publicized on Monday morning, February 26 – thanks to social media, the information quickly spread among the public, which started a political earthquake.

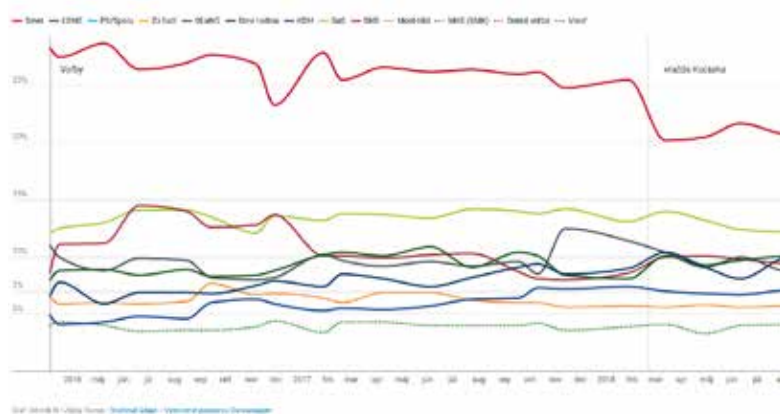
Since the first information was published, the possibility that the young journalist was murdered along with his girlfriend for the exercise of his profession was one of the considered scenarios. This subsequently presupposed a connection with politics. The first public protest was organized by the OĽaNO opposition movement on February 27, but subsequent protests were organized by non-partisan initiatives calling on political parties not to participate. These took place on Friday, March 2, 2018, especially in larger Slovak cities. On March 4, 2018, the President of the SR Andrej Kiska called for the reconstruction of the government. On Friday, March 9, 2018, the largest demonstration since the Velvet Revolution took place in the capital Bratislava, which was probably attended by approximately 50 000 people.

Demonstrators demanded the resignation of the Minister of the Interior of the SR Robert Kaliňák and the Police President Tibor Gašpar. The Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico refused any reconstruction of the Government of the SR, but finally resigned on March 15, 2018 and the government was formally reconstructed under the leadership of the new Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini.

Slovakia has come to the centre of international attention not only of the world media, but also of several international organizations. The European Parliament has also paid close attention to the murder investigation. Europol, Scotland Yard and the FBI cooperated directly in the investigation.

The murder of two young people with a political background brought an emotional shock to the Slovak public. The atmosphere in the country, in cooperation with the media, put pressure on the governing coalition, especially on the Smer-SD. The popularity of Smer-SD has been declining slightly since the 2016 elections (28 %). But in March 2018 it experienced the largest drop, when it jumped to an estimated 20 %. In the picture below, it can be noted that the popularity of the Smer-SD party was attacked by rising support for SNS in the first half of the electoral term (autumn 2016). However, at the beginning of 2017, the support for the SNS decreased and the Smer-SD reached the original voter support from before the slump at the end of previous year. Also noteworthy was the development of the OĽaNO's preferences. This party was supported by only 8.5 % of the voters before the 2017 regional elections, but after the surprisingly favourable results of the regional elections, its support has temporarily risen above 12 %.

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Picture 25. Preferences of political parties and movements
2016–2018 (Focus agency)

Source: <https://dennikn.sk/volby-preferencie-politickyh-stran/>

Municipal elections were held in the autumn of 2018, and in the spring of 2019 Andrej Kiska's term in the office of the President of the Slovak Republic was ending. Already in May 2018 he announced that he would not run for the highest office for the second time. Since the announcement of Andrej Kiska's intention, it has been clear that Slovakia will elect a new president and that the elections will be significantly influenced by the mood in the society from the spring of 2018.

As much as 15 candidates originally wanted to run for president. József Menyhárt resigned as a candidate of the Hungarian Community Party (formerly Hungarian Coalition Party, both abbreviated as SMK) on February 19, 2019, expressing his support for Robert Mistrík. However, Robert Mistrík would also later give up his candidacy, which was a key moment for the overall election result. He announced his candidacy on May 15, 2018, with

the support of two significant opposition political parties, the SaS (which he co-founded in 2009) and, in part, the OĽaNO. The support of part of the opposition in the opinion polls earned him the position of one of the favourites of the elections already in the summer of 2018. In the initial phase of the (real) presidential campaign, Robert Mistrík appeared to be a candidate likely to get to the second round of elections. Gradually, however, other candidates announced their candidacy, such as the chairman of the ĽSNS Marián Kotleba, former Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic Štefan Harabin, a deputy of the National Council of the SR Milan Krajniak for the We Are Family movement. František Mikloško also decided to run again – this time as an independent candidate but the KDH and the OKS expressed their support for him. Until the end of 2018, it was not clear who would be the candidate for the Smer-SD, which was still the strongest political party in terms of voter support. Robert Fico rejected his own candidacy, while there was public speculation about the candidacy of the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Miroslav Lajčák.

The results of the presidential elections in Slovakia from March 2019 differed significantly from the February polls, and it was practically impossible to estimate the final result according to the support for candidates according to the polls from autumn 2018. Back then the later winner of the elections Zuzana Čaputová, still had very low numbers of voter support and at the same time the candidate of the Smer-SD party was still unknown. During the election campaign, however, the high support for Štefan Harabin was relatively surprising. According to polls he could have advanced to the second round of elections, provided that a more significant opposition candidate would not appear.

Two events had a key impact on the final outcome of the 2019 presidential election. The first was that in January 2019, the Vice-President of the European Commission (EC), Maroš Šefčovič, announced that he would run for President of the Slovak Republic and would be supported by the Smer-SD party. His candidacy was presented from a marketing point of view as the candidacy of an independent candidate, but he was proposed by a group of deputies for the Smer-SD party and the same party also financed his election campaign. In the following months, there was a slightly absurd situation where a de jure party candidate applied for voter support in the elections, but he was silent about the political party, which made him the candidate and at the same time this political party only marginally admitted connection to its candidate. It is possible to talk about a similar phenomenon as in the case of Iveta Radičová and SDKÚ-DS in the 2009 presidential elections.

Maroš Šefčovič found himself in an extremely difficult personal situation, since he publicly had to subscribe to the diametrically different values than he actually held. A cosmopolitan diplomat without any demonstrable conflict with the liberal political agenda presented himself as a patriot and a Christian in the election campaign. The most eloquent evidence of inauthentic self-presentation was a television discussion where Maroš Šefčovič tried to answer the question of whether he can name the Ten Commandments: „Thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not take the name of God in vain, thou shalt not commit mortal sins, thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother, and perhaps I have forgotten something else.“⁴⁸

The second crucial event was the resignation of the candidacy of Robert Mistrík, who was supported in the campaign by the

⁴⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pco20s0o5Pg> (cit. 25. 5. 2020).

SaS and OĽaNO parties. Robert Mistrík was already one of the important candidates in the course of 2018, and his candidacy was only politically ruined by the leaders of the supporting parties Richard Sulík and Igor Matovič. Robert Mistrík's election campaign was presented as a moderate conservative and he reacted in such a spirit to the so-called cultural and ethical issues: „Mistrík declared that marriage is reserved for a relationship between a man and a woman, but same-sex couples must be granted rights such as access to medical records or to facilitate the settlement of property.“⁴⁹ Liberal politician Richard Sulík commented on Robert Mistrík's candidacy in a similar way, seeing him as a suitable candidate for president of conservative Slovakia. However, Robert Mistrík actually had a similar problem as Maroš Šefčovič. Due to his authentic attitudes, Robert Mistrík could not really be a candidate close to conservative voters. Lukáš Krivošík, editor of the Postoj.sk portal, expressed it in the name of all conservative media in the article „Is Robert Mistrík a denier of evolutionary theory?“ In it he quoted Mistrík's reaction to the question whether God created life: „ I don't know because I wasn't there at the beginning, I have no evidence, I can't form an opinion. Was anyone there? What we have read, any circumstantial evidence or evidence from our consciousness, is not objective evidence. Human consciousness means nothing in this respect, anything can happen in it. Take any drug and you will get into ecstasy when you dream of all kinds of things. The only reliable thing is logic, hard evidence. The only thing that applies is logic, hard evidence.“⁵⁰

Igor Matovič also played an ambiguous political game, recommending a choice of three presidential candidates to his political

⁴⁹ <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/666076/mistrik-a-caputova-hovorili-aj-o-partnerstvach-ludi-rovnakeho-pohlavia/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.postoj.sk/40575/je-robert-mistrik-popierac-evolucnej-teorie>

supporters in the second half of February 2019: „We can recommend, but we will stand on our original statement that we support three candidates representing the democratic spectrum, namely František Mikloško, Robert Mistrík and Zuzana Čaputová“. Igor Matovič did not listen to the public call of his former party colleague Richard Sulík to support Robert Mistrík in the elections with his OĽaNO movement, despite the fact that in order for the opposition candidate to stand any chance to get to the second round of elections he clearly needed the widest possible political agreement of opposition parties. In the end, however, the issue of consensus on one presidential candidate was resolved by a completely different situation than the agreement of political leaders or opposition political parties.

In January 2019 according to a public commitment by Robert Mistrík and Zuzana Čaputová, one of them was expected to give up the candidacy in favour of the other, while the resignation was essentially supposed to be decided solely by spontaneous pre-election development, during which the advancing candidate was to naturally manifest. People's creativity responded to the unconventional pre-election situation as they began adding a frame with profile slogans to their profile photos on social networks: „I will choose the one in whose favour the other gives up“ and so on.

Even before the decisive moments in the election campaign, the OĽaNO party, which did not have a clear preference of a candidate before the elections, created pressure on Zuzana Čaputová to resign in favor of Robert Mistrík. The results of previous polls did slightly favor Robert Mistrík, but Zuzana Čaputová firmly resisted the challenge: „In response, Mistrík stated that he saw no reason to resign and was the only one who would be able to defeat both Maroš Šefčovič and Štefan Harabin in a possible

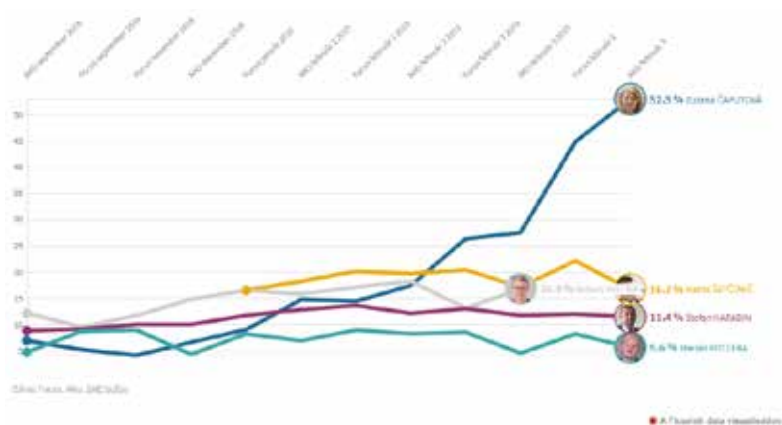
second round of the presidential election. Čaputová, on the other hand, points out that she has risen the most in the polls in recent weeks. Nevertheless, the leader of the Ordinary People, Igor Matovič, called on her to give up in favour of Mistrík. He warned that in the current situation there is as a danger that Harabin might be the second candidate to get to the second round in addition to Šefčovič. (...) Zuzana Čaputová said: ,I react to what is happening, to the trust of the people. That is why I remain in the campaign.“⁵¹ Within a few days, the mood in the society began to change sharply in her favour.

The decisive moment for resolving the (almost traditional) presidential puzzle for the right side of the Slovak political spectrum was a two-hour discussion of the Trend weekly magazine between Maroš Šefčovič, Robert Mistrík, Zuzana Čaputová, Štefan Harabin and Milan Krajniak, broadcast online on Facebook on 5th February 2019.⁵² By the time of preparation of this monograph, the discussion had more than 31 000 views, while in most other videos of the same magazine the number of views did not exceed 5 000. During the discussion, Zuzana Čaputová managed to gain sympathies of a clear majority of opposition-leaning spectators, especially with the concise and non-aggressive criticism of Štefan Harabin. Her electoral competitor Robert Mistrík on the other hand could not prevail in the discussion. As part of the comments below the discussion, it was possible to observe a change in the opinion of the relevant number of supporters of Robert Mistrík, who expressed a change of opinion and their new sympathies for Zuzana Čaputová. The turnaround of voter preferences is recorded in the graph below depicting the results of the Focus agency poll from February 2019. Subsequently, it

⁵¹ <https://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/413752-zuzana-caputova-sa-nevzdava>

⁵² https://www.facebook.com/zcaputova/posts/1046893242185326?comment_id=1047529695455014&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R%22%7D

was also confirmed by a survey by the AKO agency. For the completeness of the reader's information, it is necessary to add that one of the moderating couple was Marián Leško, who, after the elections, would become an adviser to the President of the Slovak Republic on internal policy. This does not indicate, however, that the discussion was influenced by the moderator in favour of Zuzana Čaputová. She also managed her communication skills at an extremely good level in the following discussions. However, this does suggest a too thin dividing line between Slovak journalists and politicians.



Graph 22. Preferences of candidates for the election of the President of the Slovak Republic 2019

Source: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22063152/vyvoj-preferencii-kandidatov-volba-prezidenta-sr-2019.html>

Due to the agreement from the previous month, it was Robert Mistrík, who ultimately became the candidate to resign. Czech Television reported on his decision in the following words: „One

of the favourites of the presidential election in Slovakia, scientist Robert Mistrík, resigned. He supported the candidate of the new non-parliamentary party Progressive Slovakia Zuzana Čaputová, whose popularity is growing. According to opinion polls, the main favourites were these two personalities and the candidate with the support of the governing party Smer and the vice-president of the European Commission for the Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič.⁵³

The development of preferences after the discussion organized by the Trend magazine not only brought about the unification of opposition political parties behind the main candidate, but even brought information that Zuzana Čaputová could advance to the second round with a convincing electoral lead over Maroš Šefčovič, whose own advance began to be slightly threatened by declining preferences. His numbers began to approach levels similar to the support for Štefan Harabin. The attention that Zuzana Čaputová attracted in the candidate discussion of the Trend weekly influenced more than just supporters of the opposition. Final polls before the first round of the 2019 presidential election showed that Zuzana Čaputová was also supported by some sympathizers of anti-system or protest parties and non-voters – she became a candidate for people from across the ideological spectrum. It was an extremely rare moment, as the voter sympathy was largely won by a little-known woman, who was accepting same-sex partnerships, was involved in the environmental causes and had more understanding of the European than national dimension of foreign policy. At the same time, the opposite values were generally considered a domestic voter „standard“ and her opponents were counting on that.

⁵³ <https://ct24.ceskatelivize.cz/svet/2744717-zvrat-slovenskych-voleb-spolufavorit-mistrík-se-vzdal-kandidatury-a-podporil-caputovou>

Zuzana Čaputová's decisive victory could not be prevented even by reports from the Slovak alternative media, which until February 2019 focused on attacks against Robert Mistrík. The analysis of the NGO Globsec focused on the impact of misinformation in the relatively emotionally tense 2019 presidential election: „The analysis of the Globsec organization showed that the disinformation Facebook pages supported Štefan Harabin the most in the campaign and led the disinformation anti-campaign against Robert Mistrík and after his resignation mainly against Zuzana Čaputová. The Glob.sk portal issued a report stating that a name matching the name of Mistrík's father appeared in the archives of the ŠtB (the communist State Security), which should have disqualified Mistrík in his candidacy. However, Mistrík turned to the Institute of the Memory of the Nation, which confirmed that his father had not cooperated with the State Security Service. However, the main target of the misinformation was Zuzana Čaputová. Some deputies of the SNS and Smer, together with the disinformation media, conspired that Čaputová was only a figure in the hands of Eset.“⁵⁴

Various alternative media on the Slovak Internet offered fantastic stories of candidates for President of the Slovak Republic, which were trying to discredit them. The most concise visual example was a photograph by Zuzana Čaputová, which appeared on the Facebook page of the Zem a Vek magazine, the editor-in-chief of which was prosecuted for defaming race and nation (anti-Semitism). A photo of Zuzana Čaputová, which appeared on its Facebook page was manipulated and supposed to resemble the so-called Jewish nose. Although the editor-in-chief, Tibor E. Rostas, tried to prove that the photograph originated elsewhere, doubts about the provoking of anti-Semitic sentiments could not be removed.

⁵⁴ <https://antipropaganda.sk/vyber-top-dezinformacii-roku-2019-podla-antipropaganda-sk/>



Picture 26. Edited photo of Zuzana Čaputová

Source: <https://strategie.hnonline.sk/media/1908452-tyzden-v-mediach-caputova-dva-omyly-a-nechutne-protizidovske-tazenie>

Since the 1999 presidential elections, when the struggle over the character of the state caused increased public emotions, Slovakia did not hold more emotional elections of the head of state. This time, the emotions were also experienced through social media. The humorous website Zomri also intervened in the course of the elections. At the time of the 2019 presidential election it attracted the attention of more than 150 000 fans and had several times higher reach of other users. Gabriel Tóth assessed the significance of the Zomri phenomenon in his blog: „In terms of the number of reactions, the situation is similar, with Harabin constantly attracting the most interest. However, Čaputová skyrocketed, in a few days the posts about her had more interactions than any candidate for the whole of February. It is especially interesting in comparison with Mistrík, about whom a comparable number of jokes has been created in recent days, but they have not attracted so much attention.“⁵⁵ The same author also published the conclusions of his research into the scope of the Zomri website.

⁵⁵ <https://www.trend.sk/blogy/kto-je-favoritom-zomri-spustili-sme-zomri-index>

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



Graph 23. Reactions to the candidates for President of the Slovak Republic 2019 on the Zomri website

Zdroj: <https://www.trend.sk/gal/blogy/>

[kto-je-favoritom-zomri-spustili-sme-zomri-index/2](https://www.trend.sk/gal/blogy/kto-je-favoritom-zomri-spustili-sme-zomri-index/2)

Political pressure against the Smer-SD party, which lasted since the assassinations of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová resulted in extraordinary behaviour of the Smer-SD during the 2019 presidential election. It was inconspicuously supporting Maroš Šefčovič, who in turn had to personally „transform“ from an open-minded European to conservative Slovak. In a fight against professional and at the same time highly empathetic, friendly and authentic Zuzana Čaputová this brought a catastrophic result in the first round. Zuzana Čaputová, who started as a relatively unknown candidate a few weeks before, won in all regions of Slovakia. Again, however, it was the Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra regions, together with Košice, where she won the largest share of votes. The „independent“ candidate of the Smer-SD party, Maroš Šefčovič, had the highest share of votes in the Trenčín, Žilina and Prešov regions.

	Bratislava Region	Trnava Region	Trenčín Region	Nitra Region	Žilina Region	Banská Bystrica Region	Prešov Region	Košice region
B. Bugár	2,05	8,35	1,22	9,41	1,31	6,31	1,98	6,22
Z. Čaputová	54,06	42,94	31,7	34,16	29,08	32,14	24,46	31,71
M. Daňo	0,43	0,46	0,55	0,61	0,56	0,54	0,6	0,68
Š. Harabin	11,35	12,04	16,16	13,43	16,81	13,56	19,03	15,49
E. Chmelár	2,64	2,41	3,07	2,56	2,61	2,43	2,18	2,1
M. Kotleba	7,30	10	14,07	11,54	15,71	17,24	13,75	13,38
M. Krajniak	2,35	2,51	2,8	2,83	2,97	2,38	4,59	4,1
J. Menyhárt	0,02	0,15	0,02	0,2	0,01	0,11	0,03	0,11
F. Mikloško	4,61	4,24	5,04	4,22	9,39	3,14	10,78	5,4
R. Mistrík	0,12	0,16	0,19	0,19	0,21	0,2	0,21	0,17
M. Šefčovič	14,18	15,83	23,88	19,8	20,26	20,86	21,17	19,61
R. Švec	0,21	0,3	0,38	0,43	0,32	0,4	0,33	0,32
B. Tauchmannová	0,15	0,15	0,15	0,13	0,23	0,21	0,21	0,17
J. Zábajník	0,26	0,19	0,52	0,25	0,29	0,23	0,37	0,26
I. Zuzula	0,20	0,18	0,18	0,16	0,18	0,18	0,24	0,2

Table 7. Support for candidates in the first round
of the 2019 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019

Legenda

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▬ hranice_obce_0

▬ hranice_mesta

hranice_obce_0

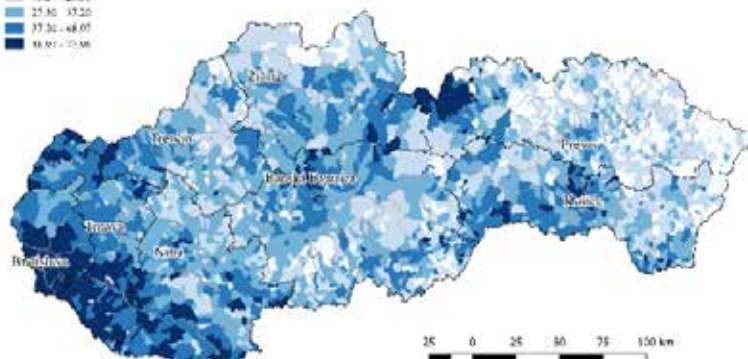
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17.70 - 25.20

25.20 - 37.50

37.50 - 48.07

48.07 - 75.96



Legenda

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▬ hranice_mesta

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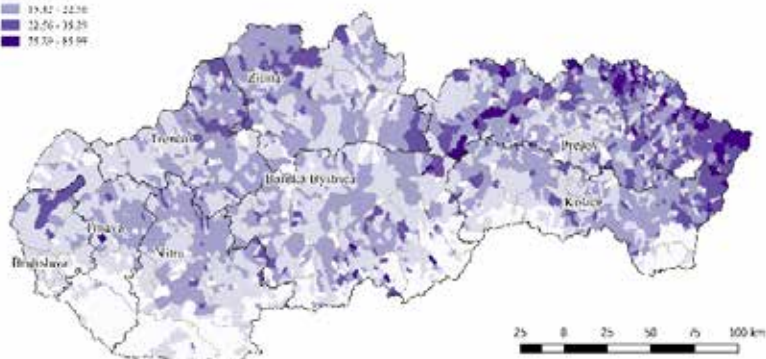
0.00 - 6.80

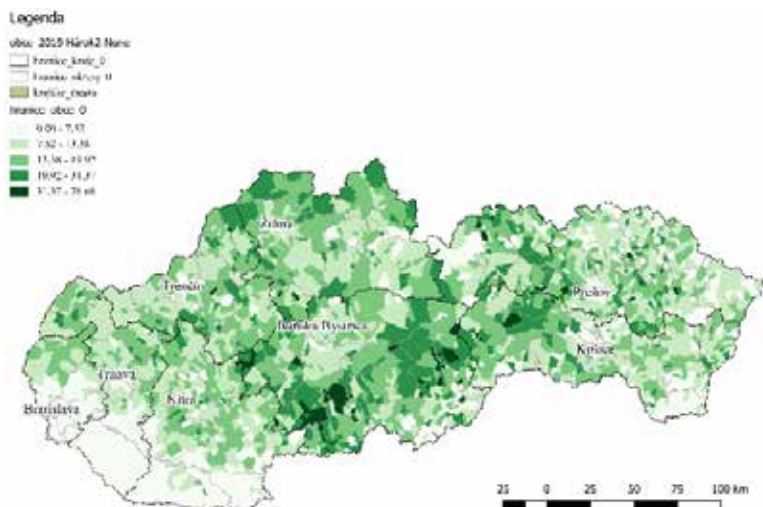
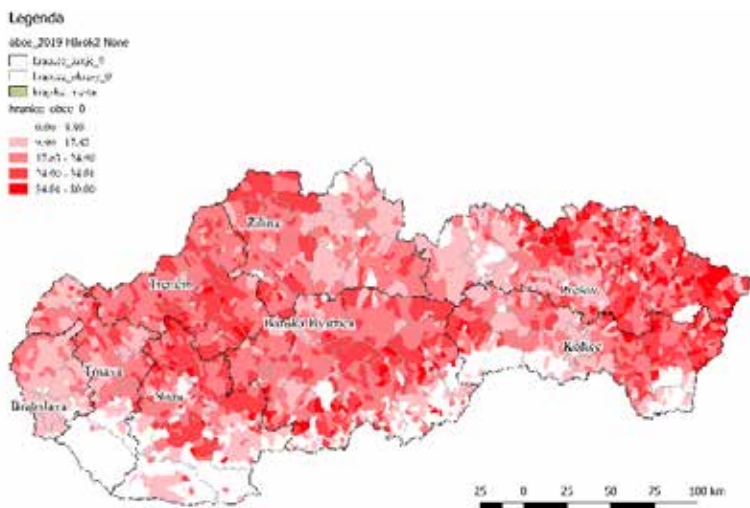
6.80 - 19.43

19.43 - 22.70

22.70 - 35.35

35.35 - 85.99





Picture 27. Voter support for Zuzana Čaputová, Maroš Šefčovič, Štefan Harabin and Marián Kotleba in the first round of the 2019 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Considerations about the possibility that Štefan Harabin could advance to the second round instead of Maroš Šefčovič were not confirmed, although e.g. in the Prešov Region, the difference between the support for these candidates was only 2 %. At the level of speculation, it is also useful to note that Štefan Harabin and Marián Kotleba, whose sum of votes obtained in the elections clearly exceeded the number of votes of Maroš Šefčovič were considering similar agreement as Robert Mistrík and Zuzana Čaputová made. This theoretically could have sent one of them to the second round of the elections instead of Maroš Šefčovič. Their negotiations were not successful, however.



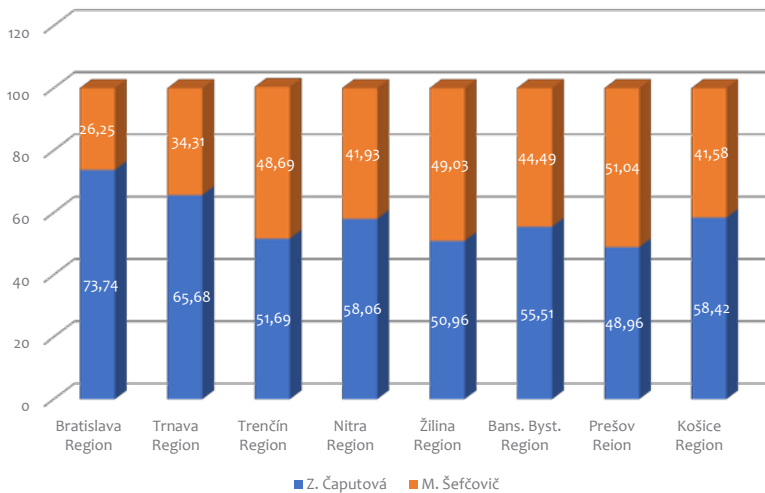
Graph 24. The second round of elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2019

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

The second round two weeks later became only a confirmation of the expected result. Zuzana Čaputová won more than 58 % of the vote. In terms of the proportion of votes obtained for the candidates in the second round, the result was comparable to the previous second rounds of the election of the President of the Slovak Republic – with one exception – that a woman has

never won a similar political victory in Slovakia. The fact that the second round of the 2019 presidential election had the historically second lowest turnout (48.74 %) does not change much. The difference did not quantitatively represent a relevant argument for speculation about the „power of the mandate“ of the first female president of the Slovak Republic, which appeared in alternative media after the elections.

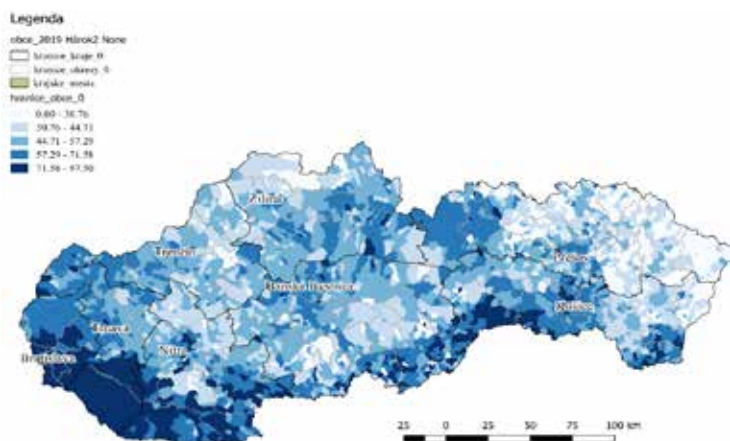
Zuzana Čaputová won in all regions of Slovakia with the exception of the Prešov region, where in the first round the difference between her and Maroš Šefčovič was only 3 %, while in other regions it was on average in double digits.



Graph 25. Support for candidates in the second round of the 2019 Presidential elections by region

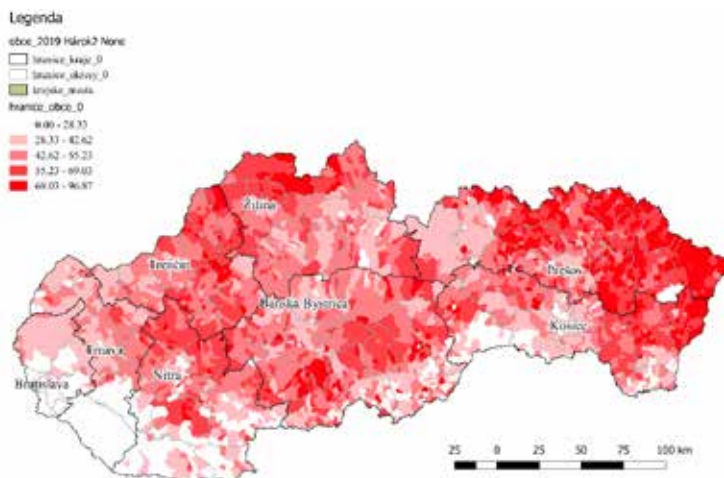
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019



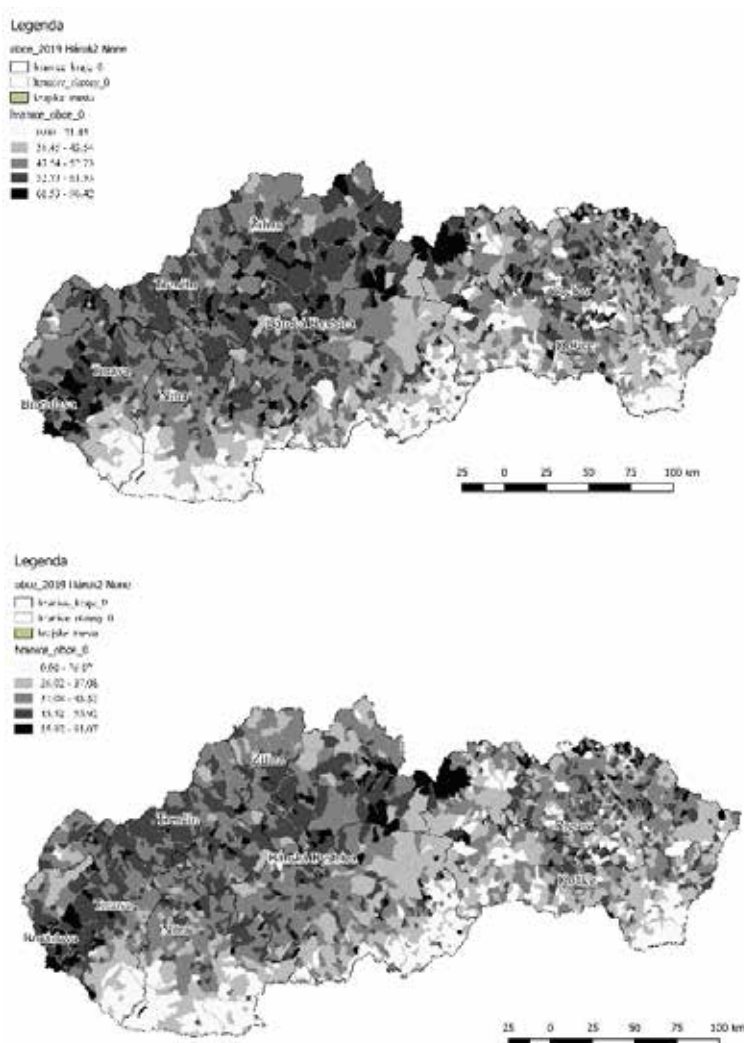
Picture 28. Voter support for Zuzana Čaputová in the second round of the 2019 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 29. Voter support for Maroš Šefčovič in the second round of the 2019 presidential election

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic



Picture 30. Voter turnout in the 2019 presidential election by municipality

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

Conclusion

The presidential elections in Slovakia from 1993 to 2019 significantly complement the modern political, social and civilizational context of Slovakia. From the first elections in 1993, when the need for a dignified election of a representative head of a new state was at the centre of political interest, five years later it became an unproductive interlude in the conflict over the character of the state. The first indirect elections of the President of the Slovak Republic in 1993 were a matter in the hands of the leadership of the political parties. In particular, the presidencies of the parties, surrounded by the deputies of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, really decided on the future head of state. Significant proof is the fact that members of the narrow party leadership – chairmen and vice-chairmen – became the candidates. The 1993 elections also had certain socializing dimension for political parties in the National Council of the SR. The parties were to some extent learning to cooperate (including the parties in the governing coalition) and cope with political responsibility (no party wanted to take responsibility for inappropriate politicking with the election of the head of state).

In the following presidential elections in 1998, the positions of political parties and deputies of the NC SR were radically different. In Slovak politics, the struggle over the character of the state and its foreign policy orientation was „raging“. In this situation, compared to 1993, the situation was reverse and it was a matter of prolonging political obstruction with the election of the president, because neither the coalition nor the opposition

had sufficient political strength to push their own candidate. It is therefore not surprising that the nominated were lesser-known candidates or people without a significant political background or activities. In the unsuccessful elections, therefore, there was no one from the party leadership willingly offering himself into this public failure.

Already in the following year 1999, the situation changed again. There were three chairmen of the parliamentary political parties willing to apply for the prestigious political position, and even former Slovak President Michal Kováč re-considered his candidacy. But it was too late, because the governing political parties had already agreed to support the chairman of the SOP, Rudolf Schuster, who then handily won the first direct election of the President of the Slovak Republic. Although the beginning of his presidency he was in line with the cause of government political parties, the socio-economic situation of the country, the break-up of political parties that were part of the NC SR after 1998 and populist rhetoric of the president resulted in a slight political shock, which was the victory of Ivan Gašparovič as an outsider candidate in the 2004 presidential election.

During the first decade after the introduction of the direct election of the President of the Slovak Republic – i.e. in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections, no significant independent candidate was found who would have been able to succeed in the elections without the support of relevant political parties. Although Magdaléna Vášáryová (1999) and Martin Bútora (2004) managed to get almost 7 % voter support for themselves, it was far from enough to advance to the second round.

It was only after the success of the party alternative in the form of the Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS) in the 2010 elections to

the NC SR, the subsequent establishment of the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO) and the Gorilla corruption case (2012) – which changed the public perception of the political parties – that the presidential election in Slovakia could have been won by a candidate without party affiliation and party past. And he even made it his comparative advantage. Already in 2014, Andrej Kiska, who was hitherto politically inexperienced and little known to the public, managed to win the elections. He won convincingly in the second round of elections over the most trusted politician and Prime Minister of the SR, Robert Fico.

The elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2019, which were a partial reprise of the 2014 elections, were also held in a similar spirit, but with the difference that the target of party antipathies was not the somewhat verbally stiff Andrej Kiska anymore but the more insightful and empathetic Zuzana Čaputová. The possibility that the relevant political parties could have influenced the result of the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic was unlikely for all the cases and scandals associated with the political party Smer-SD, while the Gorilla case in October 2019 also briefly came to life.

Until the 2014 elections, the method of electing the President of the Slovak Republic was not of key importance for their winners. Political parties played a central role in the direct elections of 1999, 2004 and 2009 in terms of their results. Without the support of the governing parties, Rudolf Schuster would not have become the President of the Slovak Republic in 1999, and without the support of Smer-SD, Ivan Gašparovič would not have become one either. The fundamental decline of public confidence in political parties, which manifested itself especially between 2009 and 2012, meant that in 2014 and subsequently in 2019, voters preferred the candidates without significant party support.

Since a candidate without restrictive ties to political parties is more likely to be elected in direct elections than in indirect elections, voters in given socio-political context have preferred non-partisan candidates after 2014. This made direct election a useful tool for the voters enabling their free choice. The direct election of the head of state could thus be assessed positively. However, given that the Constitution of the Slovak Republic entrusts the president with only a minor part of the executive powers, it is the so-called weak president. This causes partial consternation of the presidential candidates in the election campaign, since in order to gain greater voter support they are forced to tactfully omit the fact that they do not have competencies for all their political goals. This moment – a certain programmatic ambiguity of the elections, which are actually reduced only to the competition of personalities, makes Slovak politics less predictable. This is proved by the results of the majority of direct elections of the President of the Slovak Republic (2004, 2014, 2019), in which originally unlikely or known candidates won.

Statistical data on the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1993

The first election: 26th and 27th January 1993

		1. round	2. round
Roman Kováč	HZDS	69 votes	78 votes
Milan Ftáčnik	SDL'	30 votes	31 votes
Anton Neuwirth	KDH	27 votes	–
Jozef Prokeš	SNS	17 votes	–

The Second election: 15th February 1993

		1. round
Roman Kováč	HZDS	106 votes

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1998

The first election: 29th January and 6th February 1998

1. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Štefan Markuš (SDK)	34	79	17
Juraj Hraško (SDL')	20	62	46
Augustín Kurek (independent candidate)	14	91	25

2. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Štefan Markuš (SDK)	37	80	12
Juraj Hraško (SDL')	24	64	41

The Second election: 15th February 1993

1. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Ladislav Ballek (SDL')	49	60	8
Milan Fogaš (independent candidate)	5	91	21

2. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Ladislav Ballek (SDL')	50	67	3
Milan Fogaš (independent candidate)	resignation		

The third election: 16th and 30th April 1998

1. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Milan Sečánsky (HZDS)	59	25	41
Brigita Schmögnerová (SDL)	63	71	11
Zdeno Šuška (independent candidate)	5	63	57

2. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Milan Sečánsky (HZDS)	72	45	11
Brigita Schmögnerová (SDL)	47	77	4

The fourth election: 9th May 1998

1. and 2. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Vladimír Abrahám (independent candidate)	13	49	17
Vladimír Abrahám (independent candidate)	resignation		

The fifth election: 9th July 1998

1. and 2. round	for the candidate	against the candidate	abstain
Otto Tomeček (HZDS, SNS a ZRS)	86	11	5
Otto Tomeček (HZDS, SNS a ZRS)	86	4	2

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1999

First round: 15th May 1999

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Rudolf Schuster	SOP, SDK, SDL, SMK	1 396 950	47,38 %
Vladimír Mečiar	HZDS	1 097 956	37,24 %
Magdaléna Vášáryová	independent candidate	194 635	6,60 %
Ivan Mjartan	independent candidate	105 903	3,59 %
Ján Slota	SNS	73 836	2,50 %
Boris Zala	independent candidate	29 697	1,01 %
Juraj Švec	independent candidate	24 077	0,82 %
Juraj Lazarčík	independent candidate	15 386	0,52 %
Michal Kováč (resignation)	independent candidate	5 425	0,18 %
Ján Demikát	NaAS, JSP, SNP	4 537	0,15 %
invalid votes	36 022		
Voter turnout	73,89 %		

Second round: 29th May 1999

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Rudolf Schuster	SOP, SDK, SDL, SMK	1 727 481	47,38 %
Vladimír Mečiar	HZDS	1 293 642	37,24 %
invalid votes	28 098		
Voter turnout	75,45 %		

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2004

First round: 3th April 2004

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Vladimír Mečiar	HZDS, SĽS, SNS	650 242	32,74 %
Ivan Gašparovič	HZD, ĽÚ, PSNS, SMER	442 564	22,28 %
Eduard Kukan	SDKÚ, ANO, DS, SDA	438 920	22,10 %
Rudolf Schuster	independent candidate	147 549	7,43 %
František Mikloško	KDH,OKS, SMK	129 414	6,52 %
Martin Bútora	SF	129 387	6,51 %
Ján Králik	SDĽ, SDSS, ZŽS	15 873	0,80 %
Jozef Kalman	ĽB	10 221	0,51 %
Július Kubík	independent candidate	7 734	0,39 %
Jozef Šesták	independent candidate	6 785	0,34 %
Stanislav Bernát	independent candidate	5 719	0,29 %
Ľubomír Roman (resignation)	ANO	1 806	0,09 %
invalid votes		29 675	
Voter turnout		47,94 %	

Second round: 17th April 2004

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Vladimír Mečiar	HZDS, SĽS, SNS	1 079 592	59,91 %
Ivan Gašparovič	HZD, ĽÚ, PSNS, SMER	722 368	40,09 %
invalid votes		26 347	
Voter turnout		43,50 %	

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2009

Second round: 21th March 2009

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Ivan Gašparovič	SMER-SD, SNS, HZD, ND	876 061	46,71 %
Iveta Radičová	SDKÚ, KDH, SMK, OKS, SAS, LIGA	713 735	38,05 %
František Mikloško	KDS, MISIA 21	101 573	5,42 %
Zuzana Martináková	Slobodné fórum	96 035	5,12 %
Milan Melník	ĽS-HZDS	45 985	2,45 %
Dagmar Bollová	independent candidate	21 378	1,14 %
Milan Sidor	KSS	20 862	1,11 %
invalid votes	17 810		
Voter turnout	43,63 %		

Second round: 4th April 2009

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Ivan Gašparovič	SMER-SD, SNS, HZD, ND	1 234 787	55,53 %
Iveta Radičová	SDKÚ, KDH, SMK, OKS, SAS, LIGA	988 808	44,47 %
invalid votes	18 567		
Voter turnout	51,67 %		

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2014

First round: 15th March 2014

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Robert Fico	SMER-SD	531 919	28,00 %
Andrej Kiska	independent candidate	455 996	24,00 %
Radoslav Procházka	independent candidate	403 548	21,24 %
Gyula Bárdos	SMK – MKP	97 035	12,86 %
Pavol Hrušovský	KDH, SDKÚ – DS, MOST – HÍD, SZ	63 298	5,10 %
Helena Mezenská	NEKA	45 180	3,33 %
Ján Jurišta	KSS	12 209	2,37 %
Ján Čarnogurský	independent candidate	12 207	0,64 %
Viliam Fischer	independent candidate	9 514	0,64 %
Jozef Behýl	independent candidate	9 126	0,50 %
Milan Melník	independent candidate	7 678	0,48 %
Jozef Šimko	SMS	4 674	0,10 %
Stanislav Martinčko	KOS	2 547	0,05 %
invalid votes	14 689		
Voter turnout	43,40 %		

Second round: 29th March 2014

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Andrej Kiska	NEKA	1 307 065	59,38 %
Robert Fico	SMER-SD	893 841	40,61 %
invalid votes	23 476		
Voter turnout	50,48 %		

Elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 2019

First round: 16th March 2019

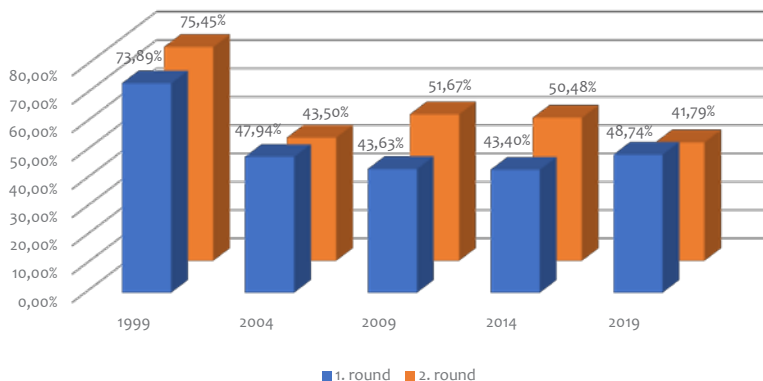
name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Zuzana Čaputová	independent candidate	870 415	40,57 %
Maroš Šefčovič	independent candidate	400 379	18,66 %
Štefan Harabin	independent candidate	307 823	14,34 %
Marian Kotleba	independent candidate	222 935	10,39 %
František Mikloško	independent candidate	122 916	5,72 %
Béla Bugár	MOST-HÍD	66 667	3,10 %
Milan Krajniak	SME RODINA	59 464	2,77 %
Eduard Chmelár	independent candidate	58 965	2,74 %
Martin Daňo	independent candidate	11 146	0,53 %
Róbert Švec	independent candidate	6 567	0,30 %
Juraj Zábajník	independent candidate	6 219	0,28 %
Ivan Zuzula	SKS	3 807	0,17 %
Bohumila Tauchmannová	independent candidate	3 535	0,16 %
Robert Mistrík (resignation)	independent candidate	3 318	0,15 %
József Menyhárt (resignation)	SMK-MKP	1 208	0,05 %
invalid votes		13 495	
Voter turnout		48,74 %	

Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019

Second round: 30th March 2019

name	party or independent candidate	number of votes	% share
Zuzana Čaputová	independent candidate	1 056 582	58,40 %
Maroš Šefčovič	independent candidate	752 403	41,59 %
invalid votes		38 432	
Voter turnout		41,79 %	

Participation in the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1999–2019



Graph 26. Participation in the elections of the President of the Slovak Republic 1999–2019

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

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Presidential elections in Slovakia 1993–2019

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