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**Electoral behaviour – persistent volatility or clear sign of consolidation?
Case of Slovakia**

1. Division lines around which the political competition has formed

1.1. Divisions and hypotheses

Social divisions present structured and stable lines of significant societal cleavages in the society. They differentiate voter support for political parties and determine the form of political conflict as well as of a political party system. When the existence of deep societal cleavages results in strong linkages to political parties, the vote primarily becomes an expression of a social position (social status) and established values and interests linked with this position (Evans, 2004).

So far dozens of studies have been written about the formation of dividing lines – cleavages – in post-communist societies on the basis of which new party systems were created after the fall of communism. Basically, two principal hypotheses have been formed:

1. hypothesis of continuity, which suppose “the effect of freezing“ or “the effect of freezer” – the formation of societal divisions in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was interrupted by communist regimes. It was expected that after the fall of these regimes the development will follow up the pre-communist past and that the pattern of party systems which existed before communist coups will preserve;
2. hypothesis of discontinuity (“tabula rasa”) tries to point out that post-communist party systems are created from “scratch” since the new socio-economic dividing lines that emerged during the communist period have nothing in common with pre-communist ones, and after the fall of communism they have to form anew (Mangott, 1992:107).

Contrary to the opinions stressing the role of social cleavages, the authors of different concepts put an emphasis on the peculiar role of elites and political parties. “On the one hand there are works on alignments in post-communist democracies explaining divisions on the basis of economic structures from the pre-communist period or in a broader range of underlying cultural and economic differences. ... On the other hand there are studies that emphasize the role of political parties as “essential agencies of mobilization in political conflicts this process is described as elite and state shaping of the party system from above” (Krause, 2006: 19).

Some of these studies formulate a thesis that political parties in post-communist countries “did not rise” on societal cleavages, but they “were established by politicians in order to succeed in political competition”. Post-communist heritage provides party elites with free hands in shaping strategies. In party systems in which the party elites have significant autonomy in deciding on strategies when developing patterns of party competition, election results in this region play, according to N. Sitter, “the role of major catalyst of change of party system” (Sitter, 2002: 84).

After almost two decades of a democratic development in post-communist countries and after dozens of empirical studies written on this subject matter the picture is rather mixed – many conflict lines are historically rooted, while the others are newly formed. Kitschelt and his team: „empirically refuted many of the arguments that inspire tabula rasa interpretations of post-communist – democracy“ and pointed out that „social structure, for example is far less leveled than such argument presume and citizens´ structural positions do help us to predict their preferences and – mediated by such preferences

and – mediated by such preferences – their electoral choices among competing parties“ (Kitschelt et al., 1999: 394).

Arguments and evidence in relation to existing structure of divisions in new democracies are mixed – some authors tend to believe that new democracies lack social basis and collective identities, and therefore they are not able to “produce” cleavages necessary for the formation of a stable party system (Elster – Offe – Preuss 1998; White – Rose – McAllister, 1997). However, most empirical studies do not confirm this argument. According to Tucker (2002), most studies confirm the existence of social cleavages. Some authors have even discovered increasing dependence between social structure and political attitudes, voter patterns and election results (Kostecký, 2002). However the nature and localization of these divisions differ from those in established democracies. Class and socio-economic divisions in new democracies are not that significant, since egalitarian economic policy and disaggregation of social sources, such as property, education, status, occupation and wealth, suppresses the formation of social classes (Elster – Offe – Preuss, 1998).

In regard to Slovakia, Kevin D. Krause is coming to conclusion that “the divisions that shaped politics in Slovakia and the Czech Republic did not simply reflect the ever-changing rivalries of the powerful, nor did they simply mirror age-old societal differences“ (Krause 2006:19).

1.2. Earlier years

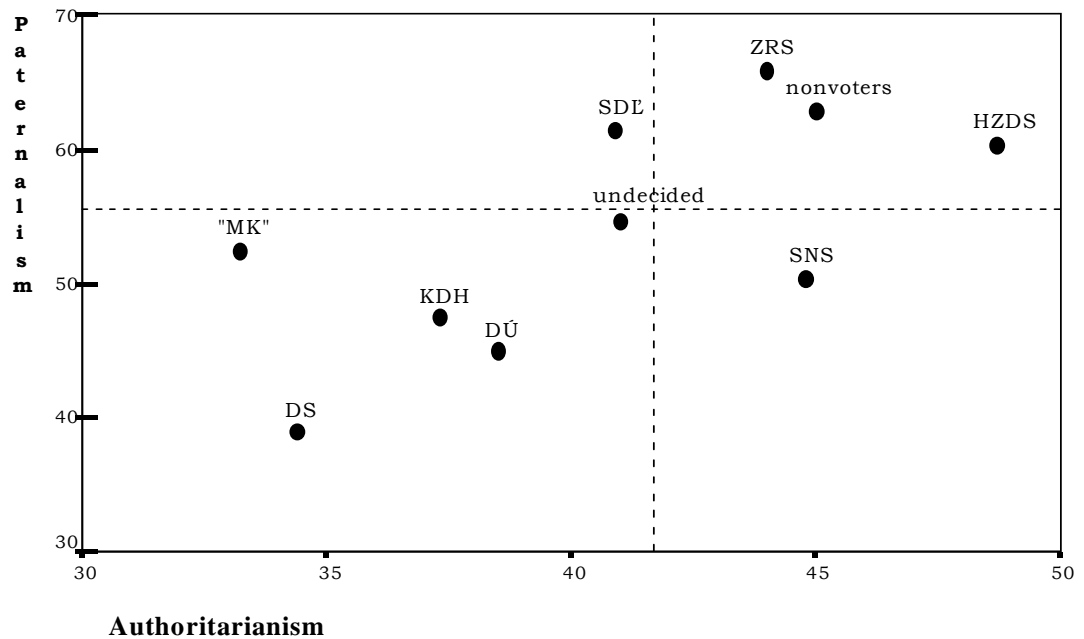
When exploring the development and forms of social cleavages in Slovakia, which determined the configuration of political scene, one can talk about three principal phases:

1. phase – period between the collapse of communist regime and 1992 (two parliamentary elections, namely in 1990 and 1992). The most significant conflict of this period can be considered the conflict over the nature of a political regime. This line divided an old regime and a new one, while all newly established political parties and movements opposed the unreformed KSS. According to Rybář, another three cleavages are typically Rokannian: state vs. church, centre vs. periphery and socio-economic line in the form of transformation into market economy vs. preservation of strong role of the state. The cleavage centre-periphery had two forms: Slovak periphery vs. Prague centre and minority Hungarian periphery vs. Slovak centre (Rybář, 2005:144). Following the first democratic elections, the conflict over the form of the state resulted in the split of the ČSFR. After the establishment of independent Slovak Republic, the ethnical division of the society has become more visible;

2. phase – period between 1994 and 1998, when the coalition HZDS-SNS-ZRS was in government. This period was characterized by culmination of a dominant conflict – conflict over the rules of the game that is also called the “accountability issue divide” (Krause 2006).

The most significant dividing line presented a conflict based on a line political liberalism vs. authoritarianism. This line defined basic dominant conflict and determined political competition more significantly than the position on the line right-left. On the level of voters’ attitudes this conflict can be illustrated through data collected by surveys conducted in May 1994 and autumn 1997.

Graph 1: Value Orientations of Party Adherents Before the 1994 Elections: Levels of Authoritarianism and Paternalism (group means).



Source: FOCUS, May 1994. Legend: Measured on 0 / + 100 scale; Supporters of the Hungarian Coalition are supporters of all Hungarian parties added together.

In May 1994, the supporters of all three parties of future ruling coalition (HZDS-ZRS-SNS) ranked in the quadrant with above-average figures of authoritarianism and paternalism (see Graph 1). Such division also continued in autumn 1997 (see Graph 2) and in January 1999¹. “Political parties merged according to positions on the first axis, not on the second one with existing individual differentiation.

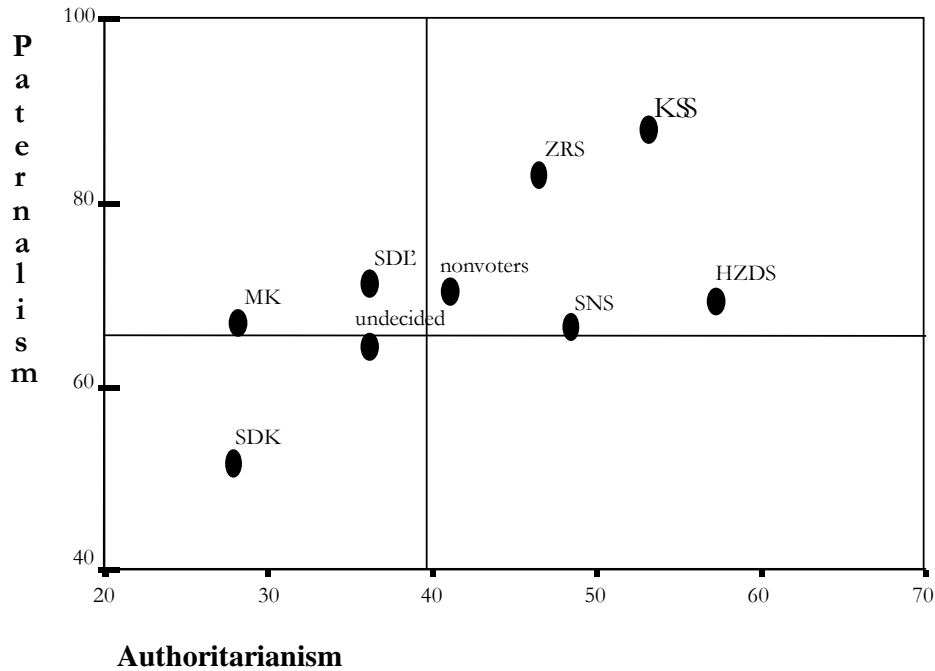
The value differences on the axis authoritarianism – liberalism resulted in political cleavage. This political conflict strongly influenced recruiting and “migration” of supporters and voters to “respective parties” (Krivý 2005:97).

3. After the parliamentary elections in 1998 and 2002 this principal political conflict gradually dissipated and Slovak politics started to be shaped by socio-economic conflict on left-right axis. At the same time the conflict over liberal and conservative values comes into focus, while classical cleavage

¹ In the Czech Republic, this quadrant includes KSČM, SPR-RSČ and ČSSD (1996); KSČM and ČSSD (1998), and KSČM in 2000 and 2001 (Plečtitá-Vlachová 2003:129).

centre vs. periphery is projected as an increasing difference between the region of Bratislava and other regions of Slovakia.

Graph 2: Supporters of political parties on the axis authoritarianism and paternalism in 1997



Source: Institute for Public Affairs, October 1997. Legend: Measured on 0 / + 100 scale.

Based on empirical evidence, the configuration of divisions in Slovakia differed from that in the Czech Republic, where the left-right dividing line in space of political parties and voters has been evident since 1992 (Plecitá-Vlachová, 2003:127). On the other hand, the line libertarianism – authoritarianism in the Czech Republic appears to be unimportant, similarly as the strength of other possible cleavages (materialism – post-materialism, cosmopolitan-national etc.)

In the 1990s Slovakia represented a case of a weak left-right division and confirmed the hypothesis of Inglehart and Klingemann from 1976 (quoted according to Krause, 2000:27) that “left and right would perform poorly in certain countries, particularly those with open ‘question of national identity’”. Based on results of data analysis Krause pointed out that “party choice in Slovakia after 1992 involved national and democratic questions more than economic, social or religious ones“ (38), what influences

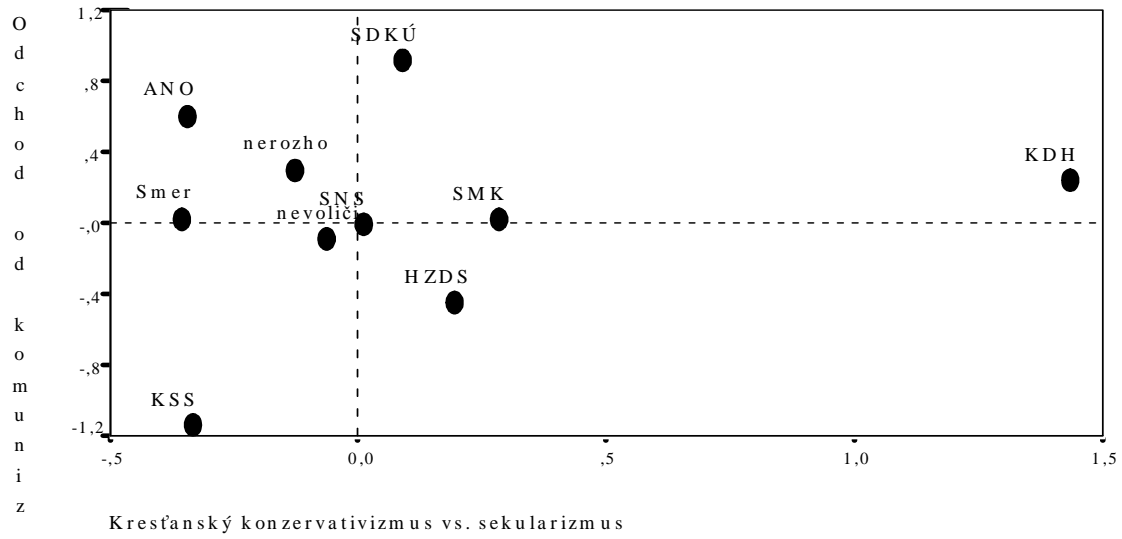
the political competition, because: „voters´ emphasis on democracy issues also reshapes the political landscape in ways that damage democracy. When voters base their political choices on a particular set of issues, they shape the internal composition of parties by forcing them to clarify their position on the issue in question“ (Krause, 2000:41).

1.3. The 2006 parliamentary elections in terms of dividing lines and key conflict issues

Based on empirical surveys conducted between the 2002 and 2006 elections² we can identify three principal axes of dividing lines on the level of voters´ attitudes:
conflict over communism , which should be seen primarily as a left-right clash. However, the fact that this axis also includes people´s perception of the systemic changes implemented or pursued in Slovakia puts a slightly different spin on the simple left-right conflict adding to it fundamental issues such as the legitimacy of the “new” relations, social disparities, distribution systems and justice. In other words, it is not merely a classic political rivalry over left-wing or right-wing solutions to topical issues, although it does include the issue of whether communism is good or bad;
conservative-liberal axis;
conflict between nationalist resentment of Hungarians on the one hand and civic tolerance on the other hand (Krivý, 2005:99).

Graph 3: Adherents of political parties on axes Christian conservatism vs. secularism and Ridding of the communist heritage: support vs. refusal

² In the analysis following data sets have been used: IVO: September 2003; November 2004; November 2005; April 2006.



Source: Institute for Public Affairs, September 2003. Note: The analysis is based on factor analysis.

Compared to the 1990s there is a visible shift. Each axis configures different alliances and antagonisms. In the first case (“conflict over communism”) there is a conflict between the supporters of the SDKÚ, ANO and KDH on the one hand, and supporters of the KSS and HZDS on the other hand; the conflict over conservative and liberal values set KDH, SMK and HZDS supporters against Smer, ANO and KSS sympathizers; and the third conflict separated SMK, the SDKÚ, KDH and ANO from SNS, HZDS and KSS. It is remarkable that supporters of Smer assumed a neutral position. Smer was founded at the end of 1999 and presented itself as an “alternative” to the two parties of a dominant conflict. Undecided opinions as well as “wide-spectrum” were typical of parties of the so-called centrist populism (Učeň 2003, 2004, Učeň – Gyárfášová – Krivý 2005) and presented significant factor of a broad voter support (also) in Slovakia. The “wide-spectrum” also characterized Mečiar’s HZDS in the years of strong voter support as well as the most popular political party from inter-war period: Also Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party (HSLS) was “wide-spectrum” and it was difficult to place it into a dogmatic scheme left – centre – right” (Lipták 1999:241).

The conflict over communism can also be identified as a redistributive conflict that presents a basis of right-left division. In 2003 this axis set the supporters of four then coalition parties against HZDS and KSS sympathizers. The bulk of SMK supporters, similar as the supporters of then opposition parties Smer and SNS were found on coalition-opposition dividing line. If we interpret this axis as a conflict over reforms, similar arrangement of party sympathizers can be seen in November 2005. The reforms were largely supported by the SDKÚ and KDH adherents (upon KDH leaving the government at the

beginning of February 2006, pro-reform attitude of KDH supporters wakened – see Table 1). On the contrary, the camp of largest opponents of reforms included the supporters of HZDS and the KSS.³

The largest conflict of pre-election competition (2006) can be considered the conflict over the future of reforms between the SDKÚ-DS and Smer-SD. As for voters' attitudes, these two electorates did not present opposite poles of given axis (as mentioned above, the reforms were opposed mainly by the supporters of HZDS and the KSS). Nevertheless, both parties based their pre-election campaigns on the subject of reforms. The paradox is that original project of Smer in earlier years was based on a centrist relation to crucial political conflict for and against Mečiarism (on centrist populism see more> Učeň 2003, 2004; Učeň, Gyárfášová, Krivý 2005). R. Fico and his Smer rejected the conflict between Mečiar and Dzurinda which helped him to establish a good position and subsequently – in a new dominant conflict over reforms – he opposed “Dzurinda”, and thus displaced opportunistic Mečiar and attracted his voters.

Before the 2006 elections, the division on socio-economic axis has strengthened, and the linkage between socio-economic status and election choice has become more transparent than in the 1990s.

However, Slovakia will not incline towards two strong political parties, left-wing and right-wing, since there are strong collective identities that are evident predominantly outside left-right competition. The SMK expresses mainly collective identity, SNS is based on vulgar form of Slovak nationalism, and KDH expresses confessional collective identity. As for HZDS, this party cannot be primarily defined by left-right terms. Moreover, the behaviour of this party than could be defined in this way collides with the attitudes of its voters. In the 2006 elections KDH found itself outside main election competition (reforms and national/ethnic identities) since it was not able to communicate its agenda – traditional conservative values – effectively and failed to place this subject into public discourse. At the same time KDH did not capitalize on its long performance (although untimely finished) in the government and did not claim the share in its achievements. The party wanted to distance itself from reforms that were painful to its sympathizers (social reform and reform of health care system).

Also HZDS found itself outside main dividing lines, but in case of this party is was a deliberate strategic decision. HZDS did not put emphasis on the mobilization of its voters; leader of the party reduced his public appearances and presented him as less confrontational. It could be said that based on the experience from the elections 1998 and 2002, the party swapped strong voter potential for coalition potential.

As far as the election competition in 2006 is concerned, it could be interesting to explore not only discussed subjects, but also subjects that were lacking in the public discourse. In the first elections after Slovakia's accession to the EU (and NATO), the issues related to Slovakia's membership in the European Union and internal development of the EU were lacking the pre-election campaign. As for the issues of foreign policy, the only discussed was the withdrawal of Slovak troop from Iraq (the issue opened by Smer).

1.4. Attitudes of supporters of political parties before the 2006 parliamentary elections

³ Slovakia on the Threshold of the Election Year. Survey Report. Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs 2005.

Let's have a closer look at some voters' attitudes that appeared to be potentially or currently significant in the period before the 2006 elections. They can help us to understand later expectations of supporters of ruling coalition formed shortly after the 2006 elections.

Table 1

Attitudes of supporters of political parties on five axes (coefficients on the scale from +100 to -100)

Supporters	Attitudes to...				
	Implemented reforms	Redistribution	Communism	Respect for ethnic minorities	Relation between state and church
SDKÚ	23.0	11,5	-55.0	24.5	-43.9
SMK	0.3	33,8	-40.5	69.6	-12.4
KDH	-8.7	34,7	-45.2	-2.7	27.0
SNS	-19.0	37,6	-9.8	-18.4	-42.4
Smer-SD	-24.6	51,1	-15.9	3.0	-49.9
HZDS	-34.2	55,7	-9.1	-11.6	-36.4
KSS	-35.7	74,5	38.9	-10.7	-60.0
Sample	-13.9	42,4	-18.6	5.9	-40.4

Source: Institute for Public Affairs, April 2006.

Note: Dominant parameters of individual groups of party sympathizers (in terms of most significant distinctiveness compared to nationwide average) have been graphically highlighted.

The supporters of individual parties have differed especially in their attitudes towards:

1. implemented reforms: the SDKÚ vs. the KSS and HZDS
2. redistribution: the KSS as well as HZDS and Smer vs. the SDKÚ
3. communism: the KSS vs. the SDKÚ
4. respect for ethnic minorities: the SMK vs. SNS as well as HZDS and the KSS
5. relation between state and church: the KDH vs. the KSS as well as Smer, the SDKÚ and SNS.

In terms of voters' perception, three political parties are rather "monothematic": SMK, SNS and KDH. The SMK mainly focuses on the advocacy of interests of (Hungarian) minority; SNS concentrates on Slovak interests (inverse profile of hopes and fears compared to SMK); and KDH considers the most important to strengthen the influence of Catholic Church and Christian religion in public life.

There is a gap between the attitudes of the SDKÚ supporters and the KSS supporters towards implemented reforms, redistribution and communism. Similarly to June 1992, Slovak voters refused clear nationalism of the SNS when they gave preference to less clear nationalism of the HZDS, and in 2006 they refused anti-reform KSS when they supported less anti-reform Smer-SD. Groups of supporters of Smer and HZDS were characterized by critical attitudes towards implemented reforms as well as by the approval of extensive redistribution in the society. Overall closeness of attitudes of Smer and HZDS supporters, which was pointed out by pre-election surveys, has made a mass transfer of voters from HZDS, which showed signs of reduced vitality, to dynamic Smer much easier. Moreover, the group of Smer supporters diverged from the "average attitudes" to a minimum extent. This reminded of HZDS in early 1990s when the electorate of this party "copied" crucial distribution of structures and attitudes in the society as much as possible.

The attitudes of supporters of political parties (orientation, closeness and remoteness) make possible the identification of major clusters. Anti-reform cluster includes the supporters of KSS, HZDS, Smer-

SD and to smaller extent also SNS, i.e. also parties of future ruling coalition. As for the issues of redistribution, the attitudes of KDH sympathizers approximate the attitudes of SNS voters, while attitudes towards communism set the cluster of SDKÚ, KDH and SMK against the cluster of KSS, HZDS, SNS and Smer. Respect for ethnic minorities is mainly supported by the SDKÚ supporters. The attitude of KDH voters towards the church is well known and markedly removed from all other groups of voters.

1.5 Unpopular parties – shifts between 2002 and 2006

Changes in configuration of space of political competition can also be illustrated by an indicator of perceived closeness and remoteness between political parties – choice of the most disapproved party asking the question “which party would you definitely not vote”.

Table 2
Supporters of political parties in 2002 and 2006: Which party would they definitely not vote for in the upcoming elections? (in %)

Supporters	Who would they not vote for								
	ANO	HZDS	KDH	KSS	SDKÚ	SMER	SMK	SNS+PSNS 2002 / SNS 2006	SF
2002									
ANO		58.7	10.9	2.2	6.5	0.0	6.5	4.4	x
HZDS	12.2		16.8	4.1	31.5	0.0	19.8	3.6	x
KDH	2.4	54.8		14.3	7.1	2.4	9.5	0.0	x
KSS	12.0	12.0	4.0		24.0	0.0	24.0	8.0	x
SDKÚ	13.0	66.7	1.4	8.7		0.0	2.9	5.5	x
Smer	8.9	23.3	10.0	2.2	10.0		26.7	0.0	x
SMK	1.1	65.9	0.0	3.4	2.3	2.3		25.8	x
SNS+PSNS	8.1	19.3	4.8	0.0	14.5	0.0	37.1		x
2006									
HZDS	10.2		9.2	9.2	30.6	1.0	22.4	1.0	6.1
KDH	10.8	6.8		24.3	0.0	18.9	18.9	1.4	0.0
KSS	10.7	1.8	17.9		33.9	0.0	16.1	0.0	1.8
SDKÚ	8.0	24.1	2.3	26.4		12.6	9.2	6.9	1.1
Smer	7.7	7.4	12.1	7.7	30.5		18.8	2.9	0.7
SMK	2.3	19.5	1.1	8.0	0.0	4.6		49.4	0.0
SNS	6.0	2.4	6.0	4.8	15.5	0.0	53.6		3.6
SF	5.0	13.3	3.3	11.7	18.3	3.3	18.3	10.0	

Source: IRI/FOCUS, June 2002, Institute for Public Affairs, April 2006.

Notes: While distributions for 2002 are based on the first out of three possible answers, in 2006 the respondents could choose only one political party. The remainder of the 100% figure comprises

answers “other parties” and “don’t know”. The highest figures in individual lines have been graphically highlighted.

While before the 2002 elections Mečiar’s HZDS was completely unacceptable for all parties of future ruling coalition (the SDKÚ, SMK, KDH, ANO), in April 2006 it was acceptable for almost all groups.

The voters of the SDKÚ and KDH negatively defined themselves especially against the KSS; supporters of SMK negatively defined themselves against SNS; and voters of Free Forum, which split off from the SDKÚ, rejected especially the “mother” party as well as SMK. The voters of opposition parties (HZDS and the KSS) have continued in distancing themselves from the SDKÚ. While before the 2002 elections the voters of Smer rejected especially SMK and HZDS, before the 2006 elections they negatively defined themselves especially against the SDKÚ (conflict over reforms). However, it should be mentioned that the electorate of Smer in 2002 differed from the electorate in the 2006 elections.

2. Election success of political parties blocks in the period of 1992 – 2006

From the 1992 elections one can distinguish several groups of parties on Slovak political scene: not only left-wing parties and central-right parties, but also Slovak nationalistic parties and HZDS as an independent category. The development of voter support for these groups of parties has been very interesting.

Table 3
Elections 1992 – 2006, shares of valid votes for blocks of parties⁴ (in %)

Blocks of parties	Parliamentary elections				
	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006
Central-right parties	25.9	32.3	35.5	42.8	44.3
HZDS	37.3	35.0	27.0	19.5	8.7
The left	20.4	20.7	27.0	24.1	33.8
Slovak nationalists	12.0	7.5	9.5	7.2	12.1
Other parties	4.4	4.6	1.0	6.4	1.0

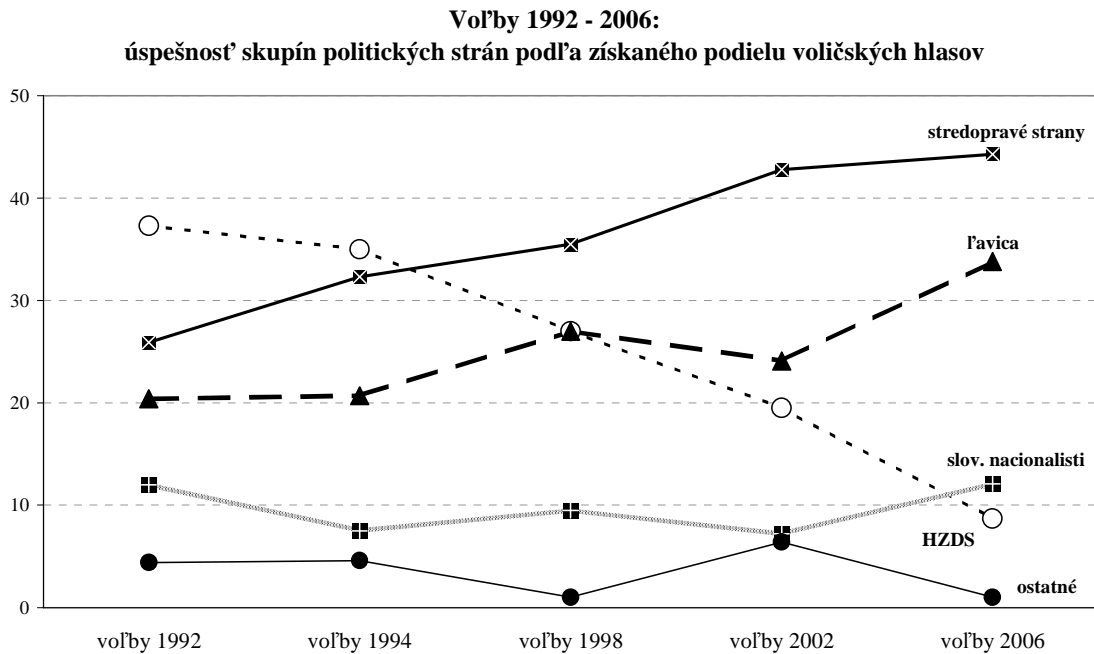
⁴ Categorisation of political parties into individual blocks: explanation for the elections 1992 – 2006,

Year and elections, blocks of parties	Political parties
1992, Slovak National Council	
Central-right parties	MKDH-Eg.+KDH+ODÚ+DS-ODS+MOS
HZDS	HZDS
The left	SDĽ+SPI+SDSS+KSS
Slovak nationalists	HSD-SMS+HZOS+SSL-SNZ+SKDH+SNS+SĽS
Other parties	HZSP-SRÚ+HSS+SZ+RSČ+NALI+ROI
1994, National Council of the SR	
Central-right parties	MK+DS+KDH+DÚ
HZDS	HZDS
The left	SV+SD+ ZRS+KSS
Slovak nationalists	SNS+KSÚ
Other parties	HPČS +SPK+Republik.+NS+ROI+RSDSS
1998, National Council of the SR	
Central-right parties	SDK+SMK
HZDS	HZDS
The left	SDĽ+SOP+KSS+ZRS+JSPS+ BRRS
Slovak nationalists	SNS+SĽS+SNJ
Other parties	MEHYP+NAS+NS+NEI+HTC
2002, National Council of the SR	
Central-right parties	SDKÚ+ SMK+KDH+ANO+OKS
HZDS	HZDS
Left-wing parties	Smer+SDĽ+ SDA+KSS+ZRS+ĽB+BRRS+ROSA
Slovak nationalists	SNS+PSNS+ĽS+SNJ
Other parties	HZD+SZS+SDPO+ ROMA+ŽAR+NOSNP+ROISR
2006, National Council of the SR	
Central-right parties	SDKÚ+SMK+KDH+SF+ANO+Nádej+OKS+PS
HZDS	ĽS-HZDS
Left-wing parties	Smer+KSS+ĽB+ZRS+SDĽ
Slovak nationalists	SNS+SLNKO+SĽS
Other parties	SOS+Misia21+HZD+ASV

Total	100	100	100	100	100
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Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

Graph 4: Election 1992 – 2006: performance of the political blocs according to the votes



Zdroj: ŠÚ SR, vlastné prepočty

Table 4
Elections 1992 – 2006, shares of valid votes for blocks of parties (calculated from among the parties that qualified for the seats in the parliament, in %)

Blocks of parties	Parliamentary elections				
	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006
Central-right parties	16.3	28.8	35.5	42.5	38.3
HZDS	37.3	35.0	27.0	19.5	8.8
Left-wing parties	14.7	17.8	22.7	19.8	29.1
Slovak nationalists	7.9	5.4	9.1	0.0	11.7
Other parties	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	76.2	86.9	94.2	81.8	88.0
Forfeited votes	23.8	13.1	5.8	18.2	12.0
Total, including forfeited votes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

Election success of central-right parties has continually increased since 1992 elections. However, if we take into account only parties that qualified for the seats in the parliament, the election success in 2006

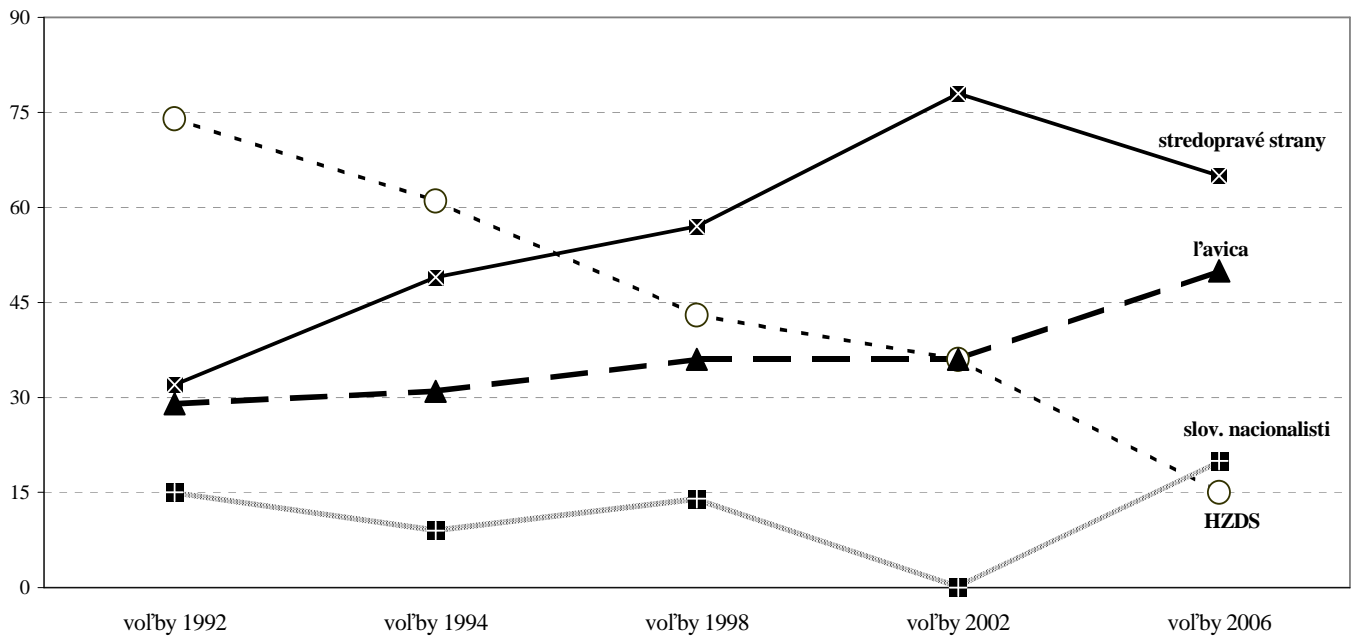
was smaller than four years ago (see Table 4). Since 2002 the support for left-wing parties has significantly increased. In the 2006 elections the central-right and left-wing parties gained 78 % of all valid votes, while in the 1992 elections it was only 31%. This trend shows the strengthened importance of left-right division and its stronger political and voter “occupations“.

Large support for Slovak nationalistic parties in the 2006 elections was similar to the support in 1992 (wave of Slovak nationalism in early 1990s and less obvious rise of anti-Hungarian moods at the end of second Dzurinda’s government).

At the beginning of the surveyed period, HZDS was a dominant subject. It was this party that has been permanently loosing its voters since the 1992 elections. All rises of blocks of parties from the 1992 elections mentioned above could only come about due to the alternation of generations of voters and voter fluctuations. Under the surface of these transfers one should see mainly the voter decline of HZDS whose voters supported other parties, especially Smer.

Graph 5: Election 1992 -2006: performance of the political blocs according to the mandates

Voľby 1992 - 2006: získané mandáty pre skupiny politických strán



Zdroj: ŠÚ SR, vlastné prepočty

3. Voters fluctuations between 2002 and 2006 at the level of individual parties

An overview of election results of individual political parties in Slovakia since 1990 show great volatility in people's election choices. Significant proportion of Slovak voters makes a new voting decision every election. According to our calculations, in the 2002 elections only about 41% of voters voted for the same party as they did in the previous elections⁵, while in the 2006 elections one fourth of all eligible voters voted for the same party as in 2002 (group of stable supporters of political parties)⁶. According to self-assessment before the 2006 elections, 42% of respondents "rather steadily vote for the same party", while 40% of respondents "rather change their decisions"⁷. There are various reasons for this – first of all, the unstable political scene and specific settings of the part of Slovak voters: the fluctuations depend on new disappointment as well as hopes kindled by some other political party. Moreover, prior to 2006 at least one new political party succeeded in each parliamentary elections. However, taking into account great volatility, it is appropriate to distinguish between two cases:

People without a clear ideological background continue to favour and then condemn political parties that fail to live up to their expectations. Such was the case of the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), but also the Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO).

People with stable values desert parties that change (e.g. the transformation of the Communist Party of Slovakia into the Party of the Democratic Left, which stood for elections in broader coalition Common Choice) and support another party that better suits their value orientations. This was why many former voters of "fresh" post-communist SDL, especially from east Slovakia, supported the ideologically closer Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS), the KSS or the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) in the 1994 elections (Krivý, 2005). In the 2006 elections this was a case of HZDS that lost charisma in the eyes of its supporters who subsequently supported the party that better suited to their distinct value orientations.

An analysis of voter fluctuations between elections in 1998 and 2002 show differentiated volatility and puts the parties into two categories: 1. parties with stable electorate – SMK, KDH, KSS and HZDS; and 2. parties with less stable electorate – the SDKÚ, ANO, Smer (i.e. parties established after the 1998 parliamentary elections; however while Smer and ANO can be considered new parties in

⁵ The post-election survey was conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs in October 2002 and calculated the ration of "loyal" voters to all voters participating in the 2002 elections. The voters of KDH and the SDKÚ from 2002 have been considered the voters of the SDK in 1998. The basis for the calculation was all eligible voters participating in the 2002 elections, not including first-time voters, which came to approximately 3.8 million voters. The following categories were used: stable supporters of political parties, unstable supporters of political parties (who changed their preferred party compared to 1998), stable non-voters, mobilized non-voters (who did not vote in 1998, although they were of age, but they did vote in 2002) and demobilized voters (who voted in 1998 but did not vote in 2002). Austrian sociologists have long used this method to examine the development of voting preferences (Hofinger – Jenny – Ogris, 2000:126; for more details see Gyárfášová 2004, 2006). The reliability of these calculations is complicated by organizational discontinuity of political parties as well as the fact that post-election answers of respondents can be burden by "memory failing".

⁶ Post-election survey conducted by the Institute for Public Affairs, July 2006.

⁷ Institute for Public Affairs, April 2006, proportions are calculated from the sample of respondents after deducting eligible first-time voters in 2006. The remainder of the 100% figure comprises the answer "I do not know".

terms of organization, the SDKÚ was established as a result of organisational transformations within the same opinion stream) (for more details see Gyárfášová, Krivý, Velšic et al. 2000, Gyárfášová 2003). While the former category comprises “identity parties” representing ethnic, religious, cultural or value identities, the latter includes two new parties along with the SDKÚ that are closer to “program parties”. This pattern of “volatility differentiated according to the type of a party” has changed in the 2006 elections. The outflow of voters was evident in the case of HZDS and the KSS. Smer, on the other hand, managed to both maintain its original support and attract new voters.

In spite of significantly lower voter turnout, two political parties increased their electorates – Smer-SD and SNS. Compared to the 2002 elections, the largest increase achieved Smer (+284 thousand votes) that was supported especially by former voters of HZDS, the SDKÚ, the ANO and the KSS, but also by first-time voters and people who had not participated in the 2002 elections. Net increase in votes for SNS presented about 70 thousand and originated especially from former voters of HZDS. The decline of electorate of one the strongest party in terms of voter support was of benefit especially to Smer and SNS. In total, voters of former parliamentary opposition supported parties that formed the ruling coalition after the 2006 elections.

The largest outflow of voters presented people who decided not to participate in the elections. This is especially the case of ANO, followed by HZDS and KDH (Institute for Public Affairs, July 2006). As far as the outflow of HZDS voters is concerned, former voters of HZDS decided to support Smer and partially also SNS. Although original voters of KDH did not find new “political home”, they were not mobilized for participation in the elections.

In general, voter fluctuations between 2002 and 2006 elections had four directions:

1. “blanket” decrease of interest in the elections (many former voters decided not to vote; while in 2002 the voter turnout reached 70% of eligible voters, in 2006 it was less than 55% of eligible voters);
2. transfers of votes in favour of Smer that promised to stop, or slow down reforms and that managed to address supporters of other parties of former parliamentary opposition more effectively; this party was also supported by voters of parties of former ruling coalition;
3. significant reduction of HZDS voters;
4. strengthening of SNS also due to the inflow of former HZDS voters; success of Slovak nationalists was a result of organizational unification and more effective mobilization of existing voter potential rather than voter fluctuations.

Significant voter fluctuations between 2002 and 2006 were evident within the blocks of parties that formed new ruling coalition and parliamentary opposition after the 2006 elections. Using Kitschelt’s

language (Kitschelt et al., 1999), in Slovakia we can talk about the existence of “shallow” block volatility (within the block of parties) rather than “deep” volatility (between blocks of parties). In most cases, the transfers of voters took place either within blocks of parties, or in favour of new parties that entered the “space between” the actors of a dominant conflict (in particular the case of SOP in 1998, and ANO and Smer in 2002).

4. Have the urban-rural voter profiles of parties and blocks of parties changed between 1992 and 2006?

4.1 Blocks of parties

As mentioned above, the support for the block of central-right parties has gradually increased since 1992, especially in urban environment. In rural environment the support increased from 28.3% to 40.7%, while in urban environment it was an increase from 23.9% up to 47.2%. While “at the beginning” this block was preferred by residents of rural areas (along with electorate of Hungarian parties and KDH we should also mention voters who wanted to preserve Czechoslovak Republic) rather than by residents of towns (28 : 24), at the end the ratio changed (41 : 47). Main source of increases in urban environments presented original voters of HZDS and young voters (first-time, second-time voters), in 1994 also voters of Slovak nationalistic parties and in the 2002 elections also original voters of left-wing parties.

Before 2002 the support for left-wing parties was higher in urban (however, not in the cities) development than in rural one. The 2006 elections have brought two significant changes. Support for left-wing parties (dominant subject is Smer-SD) has significantly increased in both environments, but the increase was more visible in rural environment. This also means that voter fluctuations were larger in rural environment.

Voter support for HZDS has dropped significantly. Initially it started to drop in urban environment, where it was traditionally lower. In the 1990s, the voters from urban environment were attracted to central-right parties, while the voters from rural environment supported mainly left-wing parties and Slovak nationalistic parties. This trend became obvious in the 2006 elections.

As far as the support for Slovak nationalistic parties is concerned, this dropped following the 1992 elections, but increased again in the 2006 elections. These parties were initially supported mainly in towns (for instance in the 1992 elections, Bratislava-Petržalka was the stronghold of Slovak nationalistic parties), but since the 1998 elections the voter support has moved to rural environment.

Table 5
Elections 1992 – 2006, voter support for political blocks of parties – according to size of municipalities

Year and size of municipalities	Central-right parties	HZDS	The left	Slovak nationalists	Other parties
1992					
under 4,999 inhabitants	28.3	38.9	18.5	10.6	3.7
over 5,000 inhabitants	23.9	35.8	22.1	13.1	5.0
1994					
under 4,999 inhabitants	31.3	38.8	18.6	7.2	4.2
over 5,000 inhabitants	33.3	31.4	22.7	7.7	4.9
1998					
under 4,999 inhabitants	33.2	32.3	23.5	9.9	1.1
over 5,000 inhabitants	37.2	22.8	29.8	9.2	1.0
2002					
under 4,999 inhabitants	39.1	23.9	22.5	7.9	6.6
over 5,000 inhabitants	45.8	16.0	25.4	6.6	6.2
2006					
under 4,999 inhabitants	40.7	10.3	34.9	12.9	1.1
over 5,000 inhabitants	47.2	7.5	33.0	11.4	0.9

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

4.2 Individual political parties

Let's have a closer look at urban-rural profiles of some political parties.

Table 6

Development of urban-rural profile of HZDS voters in the elections 1992 – 2006 (gained % of valid votes only in Slovak municipalities in which the ratio of ethnic Hungarians does not exceed 20%)

Size of municipalities	Voter support for HZDS in the elections...				
	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006
1 (the smallest)	44.1	46.0	41.0	28.3	12.2
2	44.7	45.3	38.8	28.1	12.3
3	44.6	45.8	38.4	28.6	12.6
4	47.0	47.5	39.0	29.0	12.6
5	46.4	45.8	37.4	27.8	11.7
6	47.8	43.0	32.7	22.9	9.9
7	44.8	39.9	29.9	21.6	9.4
8	41.3	38.2	27.1	19.5	8.9
9	40.0	34.2	24.4	17.4	8.2
10 (the largest)	27.0	23.2	17.3	11.1	5.9
Total	41.7	39.5	30.4	21.9	9.8

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

Note: Figures that are higher than respective total average have been graphically highlighted.

In this respect, HZDS only enjoyed balanced support in both environments in 1992. Later it has become a party with above-standard representation of voters from rural environment.

The case of SNS (in the 2002 elections SNS+PSNS) is differentiated by the transfer of voter support from cities to rural environment and small towns.

Table 7

Development of urban-rural profile of Smer electorate in the elections 1992 – 2006, and the development of the support for SDL, SV and SDA in earlier parliamentary elections (gained % of valid votes), calculated only in municipalities in which the ratio of ethnic Hungarians does not exceed 20%

Size of municipalities	Voter support for parties in the elections...					
	SDL 1992	SV 1994	SDL 1998	SDL + SDA 2002	Smer 2002	Smer 2006
1 (the smallest)	19.8	10.8	14.7	4.4	12.9	38.5
2	16.4	9.7	14.2	3.1	13.5	37.0
3	13.8	8.9	13.3	2.7	13.6	35.7
4	12.3	7.7	12.7	2.5	13.9	34.9
5	12.6	8.0	12.9	2.7	14.0	34.4
6	15.5	10.0	16.7	3.3	15.2	34.9
7	17.5	11.7	18.2	3.8	17.3	34.9

8	19.1	12.7	20.0	3.9	17.1	34.9
9	17.3	13.0	19.9	4.1	16.4	30.9
10 (the largest)	16.7	14.5	15.3	4.2	12.6	22.4
Total	15.7	10.9	16.0	3.5	14.8	32.5

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

Note: Figures that are higher than respective total average have been graphically highlighted.

In the elections 1994 – 2002, left-wing parties (in their various organisational forms) achieved the greatest election success in urban environment which was also true in the case of Smer in the 2002 elections, however not in the elections of 2006. As for the 2006 elections, the latter party reminded of the early years of HZDS in terms of voter support, when it achieved equally large support in municipalities of various sizes except for big cities (Bratislava and Košice). The change that occurred between the elections in 2002 and 2006 is an immediate result of the transfer of large part of voters from HZDS to current Slovak social democracy.

Since its establishment, the SDKÚ has achieved the best election results in largest towns and cities.

4.3 The ruling coalitions

In the parliamentary elections 1992 – 2006 two clusters of ruling coalitions revealed. The first cluster includes coalitions formed after the 1994, 2006 and to a large extent also after 1992 elections: these coalitions are characterized by above-average support from ethnically Slovak environment as well as from rural or at least not metropolitan environment. Second cluster includes coalitions that emerged from the 1998 and 2002 elections: these coalitions were supported by ethnically Hungarian environment as well as urban and especially metropolitan environments. Basic discourse, differences of opinions and political conflict were usually different, but the circumstances that can be considered to a large extent accidental were of an utmost importance as well. The 1992 elections were about the future of Czechoslovakia, people's choice was also influenced by attitudes to economic reform proposed by V. Klaus and by promises of a "specific Slovak path" (the pre-election period was dominated by events such as withdrawal of V. Mečiar from the post of Prime Minister, nationalism in the streets and in the media, dramatic increase in unemployment, media arrangement of preventing V. Mečiar from casting his vote). The 1994 elections were about the style of V. Mečiar's governance, about nationalistic or civic nature of the state (predominant events included division of Czech-Slovak Federative Republic, stagnation of bad socio-economic situation, partisan privatization, fall of the government after the departure of the part of MPs from the HZDS). The 1998 elections can be considered a plebiscite on Mečiarism that was characterized by authoritarian style of governance, split with the West and political clientelism (dominant causes include the kidnap of president's son, thwarted referendum, "villa Elektra" as well as rapid moving away from the EU, NATO and neighbouring V4 countries). The 2002 elections were the least clear; the main conflict presented a deeper implementation of socio-economic reforms; however the split of SNS into two political parties that failed to form an election coalition in the consequence of which neither party qualified for seats in parliament decided this conflict. Main subjects of the 2006 elections included socio-economic reforms and social differentiation as well as behaviour of politicians. Pre-election period was dominated by political scandals, corruption, and decrease in the perception of the EU as an institution important for

Slovakia. After the failure in the previous elections and after unification of the party, SNS as well as people attracted by its agenda were motivated and longed for satisfaction.

Table 8
Voter support for the parties of ruling coalition in the elections 1992 – 2006 according to size of municipalities (calculation only includes Slovak municipalities in which the ration of ethnic Hungarians does not exceed 20%)

Size of municipalities	Ruling coalition				
	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006
under 5,000 inhabitants	53.2	60.1	42.7	29.0	62.8
over 5,000 inhabitants	48.6	48.4	60.7	41.7	50.4
Total	50.6	53.6	53.2	36.4	55.6

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

Note: Figures that are higher than the average for respective sub-category of municipalities and year have been graphically highlighted.

Table 9
Voter support for parties of ruling coalitions in elections 1992 – 2006 in cities and other environments (calculation only includes Slovak municipalities in which the ratio of ethnic Hungarians does not exceed 20%)

Size of municipalities	Ruling coalition				
	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006
under 100,000 inhabitants	52.3	56.6	49.4	32.6	59.4
Bratislava + Košice	40.3	35.8	73.6	56.3	36.0
Total	50.6	53.6	53.2	36.4	55.6

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, authors' own calculations.

Note: Figures that are higher than average for respective sub-category of municipalities and year have been graphically highlighted.

Table 10
Ruling coalitions 1992 – 2006 in terms of voter profiles

Ruling coalition	Support from the environment		
	Hungarian municipalities (compared to Slovak ones)	Urban (compared to rural one)	Big cities (compared to other ones)
1992	below-average***	average	below-average*
1994	below-average***	below-average*	below-average**
1998	above-average***	above-average**	above-average***
2002	above-average***	above-average*	above-average***
2006	below-average***	below-average*	below-average***

Explanation: number of stars expresses differential effect of a respective factor.

Support or disapproval of parties of future (post-election) ruling coalitions was most specific in municipalities with higher ratio of ethnic Hungarians. The ruling coalitions except for that emerging from the 1992 elections also differed in terms of different support from urban and rural environments.

This difference was most obvious in the 1998 elections that can be considered the vote “for and against” Mečiarism. In general, the differences between the two (internally differentiated) environments are not steep. They become more obvious if we leave aside the municipalities with higher ratio of ethnic Hungarians, which are defined mainly by ethnic structure. In terms of voter support for parties of the ruling coalition, metropolitan environment has gradually crystallized compared to the environment of other Slovak towns and municipalities.

Ruling coalition that emerged from the 1992 elections had the largest voter support in Slovak environments except for metropolitan one. The coalition that emerged from the 1994 elections had similar profile, but it has strong link with rural environment and disapproval of coalition parties in metropolitan environment was stronger than two years ago. Though ruling coalitions formed after the elections of 1998 and 2002 significantly differed from each other, inter alia, by the level of public support, they were exceptionally supported by Hungarians and residents of urban areas, in particular big cities. Urban-rural differences in terms of voter support for parties of the ruling coalition were historically largest in the 1998 elections. The ruling coalition that emerged from the 2006 elections is based on similar environments than the coalition from the first half of the 1990s, in particular the coalition that emerged from the 1994 elections. However there are some differences that are related to more significant distinction of metropolitan environment in terms of the support for the ruling coalition 2006, namely more significant disapproval of future parties of the ruling coalition than in the elections in 1994 and 1992.

According to surveyed indicators, one cluster of ruling coalitions includes coalitions emerging from the 1992, 1994 and 2006 elections, and the second cluster of ruling coalitions includes coalitions that emerged from the 1998 and 2002 elections. Naturally, the two clusters differ in terms of internal structure.

5. Development of electorates socio-demographic profiles

In the first half of the 1990s (1992 and 1994 elections) the demographic profiles of main parties were not considerably deflected. The profile of HZDS – then the strongest party in terms of voter support – copied age and educational structure of the whole population. SNS was characterized by above-average proportion of young voters in 1992 and 1994.

The conflict between HZDS and anti-Mečiar coalition SDK pointed up socio-demographic “deflections” in voter background of the two largest political rivals. In 1998 the SDK was supported mainly by people from urban environment, people with higher education, younger and middle generation, expert workers, entrepreneurs and students. In many respects, socio-demographic profile of HZDS voters presented an inverse picture of the SDK electorate (and later the SDKÚ) – above-average support among older voters, people with lower education, workers, pensioners and people from rural environment. Regional “strongholds” of HZDS were Trenčín and Žilina region. Young people gave preference to the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP) and in later periods to ANO and Smer.

The break-up of the SDK strengthened the “demographic inversion” of HZDS and the SDKÚ electorates in the 2002 elections. HZDS maintained its profile despite the reduction of voters. The SDKÚ, on the other hand, was able to mobilize its voters with university degree more efficiently in the 2006 elections. While in the 2002 elections it was 24% of voters (OMV of Slovak Radio, exit poll), in 2006 it was 34% of voters (MVK, exit poll).

Stable elements in the structure of party electorates in Slovakia can be considered strong influences of collective identities. In case of SMK it is an ethnical identity. The SMK continues to be a party of Hungarian minority without numerous voters of Slovak nationality. The strength of basic determination is documented by the fact that the party is not disintegrated by its considerable ideological heterogeneity. Another structural features of the SMK electorate only copy structural features of Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Second example of “strength” of collective identity presents KDH whose voters are defined by creed – proportion of voters of Roman-Catholic bent oscillates around 90% in long term (Institute for Public Affairs, June 2002, April 2006) and large part of KDH voters characterizes themselves not only as “believers” but as “strong believers”. In the 2006 elections the SDKÚ continued to be a party of voters with largest social and cultural capital. Although the SDKÚ fall behind the winning Smer by 11 percentage points, in some specific environments it actually analytically won the elections, namely in the environments of people with university degree, students, entrepreneurs and traders, managers, executive workers and experts.

According to pre-election surveys, Smer-SD maintained socio-demographic profile of the “average of Slovak society”. Given the profile of real voters in 2006, the party markedly diverted in favour of socially weaker environments, especially due to the fact that it absorbed considerable part of former HZDS voters.

In terms of proportion of older voters, the potential of HZDS increased, while the potential of SNS and the SDKÚ dropped. On the contrary, first-time voters distributed their votes notably between Smer (25.9%), the SDKÚ-DS (22.5%) and SNS (15.3%). In both cases, their inclinations towards pro-reform SDKÚ and nationalistic SNS presented nationwide averages (see Table 11).

In general, conflict over reforms strengthened the linkage between voters’ social status and their election choice. Compared to the 2002 elections, this fact moved Smer closer to socially weaker groups of voters.

Table 11
How did different environments vote in 2006?

Characteristics and groups	Smer-SD	SDKÚ-DS	SNS	SMK	LS-HZDS	KDH
Age						
First-time voters	25.9	22.5	15.3	10.3	2.5	6.8
23 – 29 years old	22.6	26.2	10.4	12.3	4.6	7.3
30 – 39 years old	25.8	24.9	11.6	11.4	5.0	6.6
40 – 49 years old	30.2	18.6	10.0	12.1	6.9	6.2
50 – 59 years old	30.8	14.4	10.2	10.2	10.0	8.8
60 and more years old	27.2	12.8	6.9	13.1	14.5	11.8
Education						

Primary and incomplete secondary	31.4	7.9	11.1	14.5	12.4	7.7
Complete secondary	28.3	20.9	10.8	11.0	6.2	7.4
University	20.2	33.5	7.5	8.3	4.7	10.2
Election result	29.1	18.4	11.7	11.7	8.8	8.3

Source: MVK for TV Markíza, exit poll, June 17, 2006.

5.1. What does the shifts of voter profiles of Smer and HZDS between the 2002 and 2006 elections express?

In the part “Urban-rural profiles of electorate” we have documented altered profile of Smer voters. Smer changed from a party with above-average voter support in towns (except for cities) into a party with largest voter support in smaller towns and particularly in municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants (see Table 7).

According to post-election surveys⁸ the following table documents stability and changes in age structure of HZDS and Smer electorates between the 2002 and 2006 elections. The common feature of the two electorates can be considered an increased proportion of older voters. However, while “the ageing” of Smer is a result of inflow of older voters from HZDS, in case of HZDS the proportion of older voters increased after the outflow of young voters who supported different party in the 2006 elections (most probably SNS), or decided not to participate in the elections.

Table 12
Age structure of HZDS and Smer electorates in the 2002 and 2006 elections (in %)

Age	Total sample 2002	Total sample 2006	HZDS 2002	HZDS 2006	Smer 2002	Smer 2006
18 – 24 years	16.4	16.2	5.4	2.2	18.4	15.1
25 – 34 years	19.0	19.7	13.5	7.1	30.1	17.7
35 – 44 years	20.8	19.3	13.5	11.8	23.3	23.1
45 – 54 years	16.6	18.7	19.6	22.3	13.6	15.4
55 – 59 years	6.2	6.2	9.5	10.3	2.9	6.5
60 and more	21.0	19.8	38.5	46.3	11.7	22.1

Sources: IVO, October 2002, post/election survey; IVO, July 2006, post/election survey.

In its first parliamentary elections in 2002, Smer presented itself as a new centrist alternative, and succeeded in attracting young voters (20% of voters at the age of 18 – 29 years, source: OMOV, exit poll). However the total election result was only 13% of eligible votes. In the period between elections Smer profiled as anti-reform party, absorbed social disappointment and became opposition alternative to reform coalition. This has made Smer attractive to environments with average or even lower status.

⁸ Given the selection sample (about 1,000 respondents) and the fact that the surveys were conducted one or two weeks after the elections, these results are less accurate than results of the exit poll. Variable data from election surveys.

Conclusions: Electoral behaviour – persistent volatility or clear sign of consolidation?

Similarly to other new democracies, political scene in Slovakia is unstable and fragmented. So far an average of more than twenty political parties and election coalitions have been running in parliamentary elections, and five to seven political parties or formations qualified for seats in the parliament. Moreover, these political parties usually split up in the post-election period. With the exception of the 2006 elections, all parliamentary elections presented an election success for a new political party (HZDS in 1992, ZRS in 1994, SOP in 1998, ANO and Smer in 2002). Compared to a previous electoral term, the number of parties represented in the National Council of the SR reduced to six after the 2006 elections. These two outcomes may indicate some stabilization of party system. But to what extent will it stabilize electoral behaviour? What can be expected in the future – persistent volatility or – at least some degree of – consolidation?

1. In the 1990s Slovakia was characterized by polarization of political scene and voter transfers took place either within blocks of parties, or – more often – in favour of new parties established and performing in the space between polarized blocks (notably in 2002 – Smer, ANO). In 2006 the HZDS electorate more or less fragmented and former HZDS voters supported especially Smer and SNS. The pattern of “the volatility within the block of parties” remained preserved. The 2006 elections and subsequent alternation of power newly arranged positions of individual parties, and thus also relations between these parties and electorates. It is especially the case of the most successful party Smer that faces a challenge to “manage pre-election promises” in order to maintain voter support. The test of government may present outflow of voter support for a populist party (and Smer can be ranked into this category according to several criteria). Such was the case of Austrian right-wing party FPÖ that formed the ruling coalition with people’s party in 2000, or Slovak parties such as ZRS, SOP and ANO. Smer as a dominant coalition party has room for political manoeuvring. Potential gap between promises and real political steps can be to a certain extent bridged by symbolic steps. An attempt to get over these discrepancies through nationalistic agenda could be dangerous. National identity still remains debated issue, and it is questionable how will the “distribution of labour” between Smer and SNS look like.
2. The “consolidation” of voters is supported by expressions of stabilization of a political scene mentioned above. More significant outflow of Smer voters can only “activate” entirely new political party. However, the failure of new political parties in the 2006 elections (SF, Hope, Mission 21 etc.) may slow down numerous attempts to found new political parties. It can signal closing of “election market”, reduction of possible alternatives and effort of relevant parties to stabilize electorates in the framework of “sectors” defined on the basis of dividing lines outlined by the 2006 elections.
3. Further development of shaping the political competition will depend on whether the new ruling coalition (Smer/SNS/HZDS) re-opens the conflict over “the rules of the game”/liberal democracy, accountability. Post-materialistic agenda, which helped the Green Party in the Czech Republic to enter the parliament, has not been “activated” in Slovakia yet.
4. The processes indicating stability of this trend also include the strengthening of right-wing and left-wing blocks against nationalistic and ambivalent parties. However, the question whether right-wing and left-wing program parties socialize their voters sufficiently enough is still open.

5. Factors of uncertainty arise especially from the nature of the most successful party in terms of voters support in the 2006 elections that is ideologically non-transparent and its “social democratization” is considered superficial and purpose-built (Mesežnikov 2006, Henderson 2006). Moreover, Smer continues to be a one-man party without broader background of personalities attractive to voters.

Global trends in position and functioning of political parties in democratic societies, which affected Slovakia (and other new democracies) in the phase of structuring party system and formation of bonds between political parties and their electorates, presents another strong factor of further development. This situation is not typical of Slovakia; it is an expression of general trend identified by Ingrid van Biezen: “... many of the parties developing in these democracies has an institutional rather than societal origin and generally did not follow the traditional West European path of party formation by which parties were created to represent the interest of a particular segment of society that can be defined in structural terms. Instead, party formation was often based on politicized attitudinal divisions regarding the desirability, degree and direction of regime change rather than politicized social stratification” (van Biezen, 2005:154). Weak embedment of parties in social structure reduces their responsiveness to voters and provides the elites with more autonomy in determining topics of conflicts. This phenomenon presents a factor of volatility that will be difficult to predicate also in the future.

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List of Abbreviations:

- ANO – Aliancia nového občana (Alliance of a New Citizen)
 DS – Demokratická strana (Democratic Party)
 DU – Demokratická únia (Democratic Union)
 HZDS – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia)
 KDH – Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie (Christian-Democratic Movement)
 KSS – Komunistická strana Slovenska (Communist Party of Slovakia)
 MK – Maďarská koalícia (Hungarian Coalition)
 PSNS – Pravá Slovenská národná strana (Right Slovak National Party)
 SF – Slobodné fórum (Free Forum)
 SDK – Slovenská demokratická koalícia (Slovak Democratic Coalition)
 SDKÚ – Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union)
 SDE – Strana demokratickej ľavice (Party of the Democratic Left)
 Smer-SD – Smer- Sociálna demokracia (Smer-Social Democracy)
 SMK – Strana maďarskej koalície (Party of the Hungarian Coalition)
 SNS – Slovenská národná strana (Slovak National Party)
 SOP – Strana občianskeho porozumenia (Party of Civic Understanding)
 SV – Slobodná voľba (Free Choice)
 ZRS – Združenie robotníkov Slovenska (Slovak Workers' Association)

Attachment

Table 13: Age structure of the biggest parties in 1992 – 2006 (column %)

Age	Supporters.....													
	HZDS	KDH	MK	SDE	SNS	SV	DU	ZRS	SDK	SOP	SDKÚ	Smer	ANO	KSS
1992														
18-29	25,0	18,9	23,1	17,8	28,8									
30-44	42,9	33,8	37,7	50,1	47,3									
45-59	21,6	25,8	23,9	22,9	18,5									
60 +	10,5	21,4	15,3	9,2	5,4									
1994														
18-29 r.	20,2	19,6	23,5		30,4	19,5	28,3	24,3						
30-44	36,2	35,4	35,4		39,4	43,8	42,0	44,0						
45-59	26,8	24,5	22,9		21,2	24,2	20,6	24,3						
60 +	16,8	20,5	18,2		9,0	12,6	9,1	7,4						
1998														
18-29 r.	16,1		24,1	31,4	33,4				32,1	39,7				
30-44	30,5		33,1	35,3	37,8				35,6	37,8				
45-59	31,4		25,3	24,5	20,9				22,2	17,7				
60 +	22,0		17,5	8,8	7,8				10,2	4,8				
2002														
18-29 r.	12,2	9,4	27,6								19,1	34,0	41,9	10,2
30-44	20,3	28,1	23,0								42,6	37,9	30,6	32,7
45-59	29,1	32,8	29,9								21,7	16,5	22,6	30,6
60 +	38,5	29,7	19,5								16,5	11,7	4,8	26,5

2006														
18-29 r.	4,3	20,0	21,0		25,4						23,8	22,8		
30-44	17,0	22,2	29,0		30,2						40,6	32,9		
45-59	31,9	26,7	21,0		33,3						24,8	22,2		
60 +	46,8	31,1	29,0		11,1						10,9	22,2		

Sources: MVK, exit-poll 1992, MVK, exit-poll 1994, IRI/FOCUS, exit poll 1998, IVO, October 2002, post/election survey, IVO, July 2006, post/election survey.

Table 14: Structure of the electorates of the biggest parties according to the education in 1994 – 2006 (column %)

Education	Supporters...													
	HZDS	KDH	MK	SDĽ	SNS	SV	DU	ZRS	SDK	SOP	SDKÚ	Smer	ANO	KSS
1994														
Elementary	20,8	17,2	24,1		9,7	7,5	7,1	15,2						
Second. without M	33,3	17,6	29,1		28,1	18,6	15,9	44,9						
Second. with M	36,6	40,9	35,0		46,5	48,7	47,0	34,5						
University	9,3	24,3	11,8		15,7	25,1	30,0	5,3						
1998														
Elementary	34,0		32,4	12,2	18,7				12,7	12,3				
Second. without M	37,3		35,1	30,8	36,8				29,5	39,0				
Second. with M	25,0		28,4	44,2	37,1				40,0	37,3				
University	3,7		4,2	12,9	7,3				17,8	11,5				
2002														
Elementary	48,6	39,1	36,0								20,9	17,6	23,0	34,7
Second. without M	29,1	25,0	27,9								26,1	32,4	24,6	40,8
Second. with M	17,6	28,1	26,7								33,0	40,2	41,0	22,4
University	4,7	7,8	9,3								20,0	9,8	11,5	2,0
2006														
Elementary	37,4	24,5	25,8		14,1						8,1	22,4		
Second. without M	35,5	17,8	32,4		46,9						16,2	29,5		
Second. with M	16,9	37,8	35,5		35,9						49,5	37,8		
University	10,3	20,0	6,5		3,1						26,3	10,3		

Sources: MVK, exit-poll 1994, IRI/FOCUS, exit poll 1998, IVO, October 2002, post/election survey, IVO, July 2006, post/election survey.