

Political system of Slovakia

Parliament, government, president

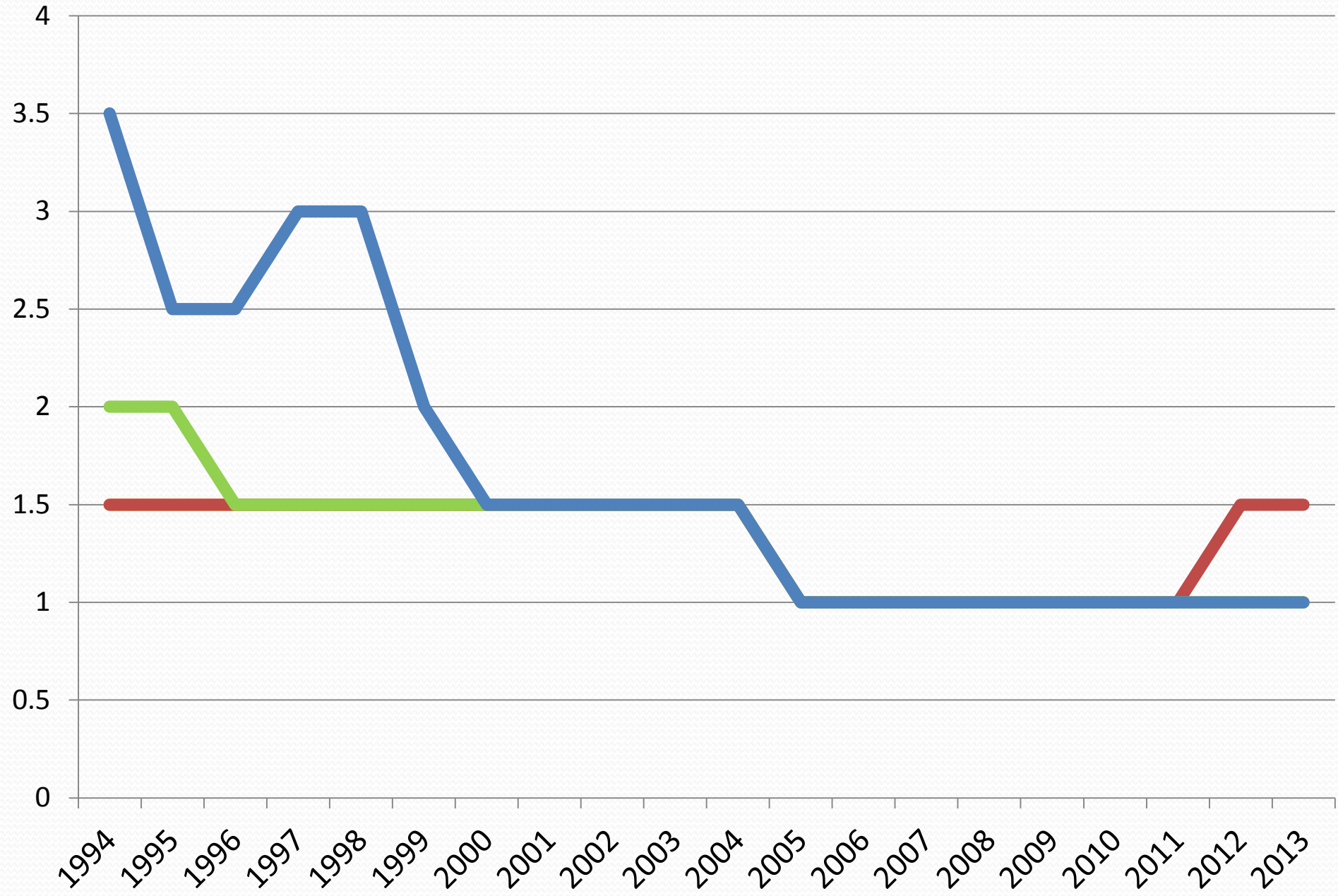
Peter Spáč

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Basic facts about Slovakia

- One of two successor of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic
- Parliamentary republic
- Liberal democracy:
 - „*Free*“ according to Freedom House
 - Political rights – rank 1
 - Civil liberties – rank 1

Czech Republic Hungary Poland Slovakia



Division of power

- **Legislative:**
 - Parliament
- **Executive:**
 - Government
 - President
- **Judicial**

Parliament



- Name:
 - Until 1993 – Slovak National Council
 - Since 1993 – National Council of Slovak Republic (NR SR)
- Unicameral, 150 MPs
- 4 year electoral term

Parliament

- Free (representative) mandate
- MPs :
 - Are not bound by any directives
 - Act according to their „sense and conscience“
 - Cannot be dismissed from NR SR except a few situations stated by law
 - Cannot be revoked by voters



Parliament - powers

- Adoption of law
- Control of the government and the executive power in general
- Main arena for government-opposition relations
- Personal nominations:
 - Chairman of the Supreme Audit Office
 - General Attorney

Legislative process

- Condition – at least 76 MPs have to be present

| Issue | MPs needed |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Common decisions and „simple“ laws | Majority of at least the needed 76 MPs |
| Overriding president's veto | 76 MPs (majority of 150) |
| Constitution, war declaration | 90 MPs (three fifths of 150) |

Electoral law

- A crucial field with impact on the political system
- Constitution:
 - *„Deputies are elected by secret ballot in general, equal, and direct elections. (..) **Details** concerning the election of deputies will be set out in a law.“*
- How many MPs (at minimum) are needed to change the electoral system?

Executive power

- Traditional division into two main subjects:
 - Government
 - President
- Government as the most powerful body in Slovak politics
- Weak president with a question mark



Government

- Responsible to NR SR
- A vote of no-confidence may concern:
 - The government as a whole
 - Each individual minister
- Votes of 76 MPs needed
- Very often a symbolic gesture of opposition's dissatisfaction with government's results

Governments in Slovakia

| Term | Government | Members | Months (app.) |
|-------------|-------------|---------|---------------|
| 1990 – 1991 | Mečiar | 3 | 11 |
| 1991 - 1992 | Čarnogurský | 3 | 14 |
| 1992 – 1994 | Mečiar II | 1 (?) | 22 |
| 1994 | Moravčík | 3 | 9 |
| 1994 – 1998 | Mečiar III | 3 | 47 |
| 1998 – 2002 | Dzurinda | 4 | 48 |
| 2002 – 2006 | Dzurinda II | 4 | 46 |
| 2006 – 2010 | Fico | 3 | 48 |
| 2010 – 2012 | Radičová | 4 | 21 |
| 2012 – 2016 | Fico II | 1 | 48 |
| 2016 - | Fico III | 4 → 3 | 12* |

President

- The head of the state
- The highest state official
- Elected for 5 years – vs. 4 years of parliament (and possibly the government)
- De facto not responsible for performing the office

President - elections

- Originally elected by the parliament
- High polarization in 90s → inability to elect new president
- Result - for more than one year Slovakia had no head of state (1998 – 1999)
- Solution – direct elections since 1999 based on two-round system

President - elections

- „Majority of **valid votes** of the **eligible citizens**“
- What sort of majority is that?

- Eligible citizens: 4 409 793
- Voted: 1 914 021

- How many votes does a candidate need for victory?

President - powers

- Belongs to weaker presidents
- Numerous powers not only of symbolic meaning
- Adoption of direct elections in 1999 was **not accompanied** by strengthening of his position
- Some powers were even weakened (countersignature)

President - powers

- **President and government:**
 - Appoints and recalls Prime Minister
 - Appoints and recalls ministers based on the proposal of the Prime Minister
 - Since 1999 the proposal of Prime Minister is **imperative**
- **President and parliament (NR SR):**
 - No right of legislative initiative
 - Dissolution of NR SR (very limited)
 - Veto
 - NR SR may call for a plebiscite about president's revocation

Slovak presidents

- 1993 – 1998 – Michal Kováč
- 1999 – 2004 – Rudolf Schuster
- 2004 - 2014 – Ivan Gašparovič
- Since 2014 – Andrej Kiska



| President | | Government | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1993 – 1998 | Michal Kováč | – 1994 | V. Mečiar |
| | | 1994 | J. Moravčík (interim) |
| | | 1994 - 1998 | V. Mečiar |
| | | | |
| 1999 - 2004 | Rudolf Schuster | 1998 - 2002 | M. Dzurinda |
| | | 2002 - 2006 | M. Dzurinda |
| 2004 - 2009 | Ivan Gašparovič | 2006 - 2010 | R. Fico |
| | | 2009 - 2014 | I. Radičová |
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President in Slovak politics –
decisive factor or a weak
symbol?

Michal Kováč



- Economist, member of VPN and later HZDS
- Elected by parliament as nominee of HZDS
- In office during two Mečiar's governments
- Expected loyalty to HZDS
- Reality:
 - Increasing independence from his party
 - Raising conflicts with Mečiar
 - Finally became the arch-enemy of HZDS and its chairman

Michal Kováč



- 1993 – 1994 – „*the separation*“:
 - Presidential report in NR SR in spring 1994
 - Impact → end of Mečiar’s government
- 1994 – 1998 – „*the open war*“:
 - Mostly one-sided conflict
 - Aim of Mečiar to weaken, delegitimize and humiliate the president

Michal Kováč



- Revocation of president's powers not backed by constitution
- NR SR called a no-confidence vote even without any legal impact
- Verbal accusation of high treason
- Installment of digital clocks showing the remaining days of Kováč's term

Michal Kováč



- Kidnapping of Kováč's son to Austria
- Organized by Slovak secret service under leadership of HZDS nominee (never officially confirmed by court)
- Later events:
 - Violent death of direct witness
 - Mečiar's amnesty on the whole case
- 2012 – court ordered Kováč to apologize to that time director of the secret service

Rudolf Schuster



- First directly elected president
- **Career:**
 - High communist official before 1989
 - After 1989 – chairman of Slovak parliament, diplomat, mayor of Košice
- **Presidential election in 1999:**
 - Nominee of his party SOP with support of the majority of Dzurinda's government
 - Beat Mečiar in 2nd round with 57,2 : 42,8 %

Rudolf Schuster



- Aware of his own stronger legitimacy
- Prepared to be a more active head of state
- Aim to create an **alternative power arena** under his supervision
 - Round tables for political parties
 - Supplementary arena for dialogue between parties
 - Political parties strictly refused such arrangement

Rudolf Schuster



- Gradually rising discontent with Dzurinda's government
- 2000 – Schuster's serious illness
- 2002 – Dzurinda's centre-right government and its liberal economic reforms
- Veto:
 - 1999 – used three times
 - Later years – higher intensity
 - Together used for more than 100 times

Tactics failure



- 2004 – trade unions backed by party SMER announced the idea of referendum for early elections
- Public opinion strictly opposed to governmental economic reforms
- Trade unions asked the president for help
- Schuster joined the referendum with presidential elections

Tactics failure



- **Logic of the plan:**

- Higher chance for referendum to be valid (turnout)
- Easier situation for SMER as it could mobilize for both presidential elections and referendum
- Support of trade unions and SMER for Schuster

- **Result:**

- No support from SMER
- Trade unions asked people only to take part on elections

Ivan Gašparovič



- **Career:**

- Since 1989 – general attorney, MP, chairman of NR SR, vice-chairman of HZDS
- 2002 – left HZDS and created his own marginal party

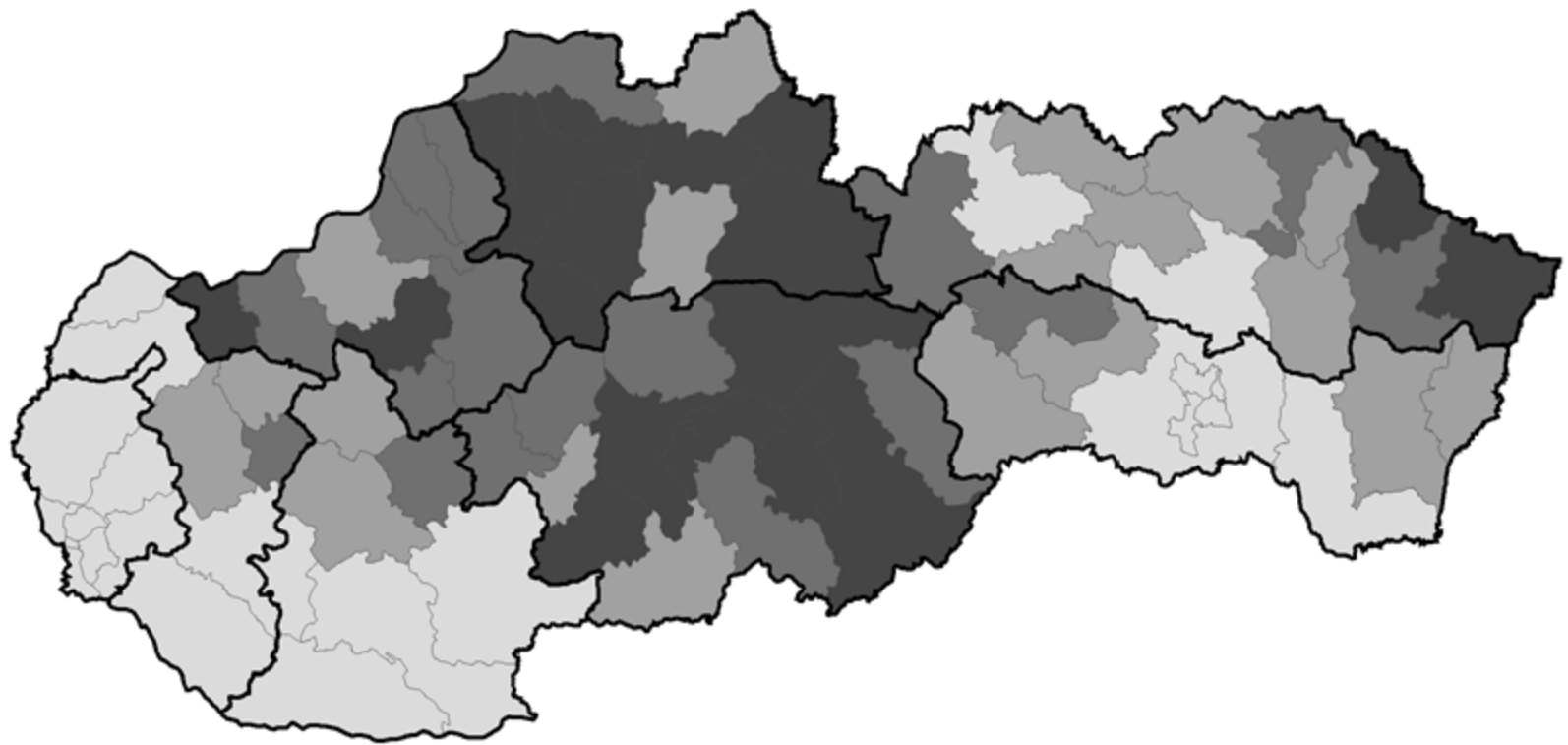
- **Presidential elections 2004 and 2009:**

- Nominee of nationalist parties and later SMER
- Beat V. Mečiar in 2004 and I. Radičová in 2009

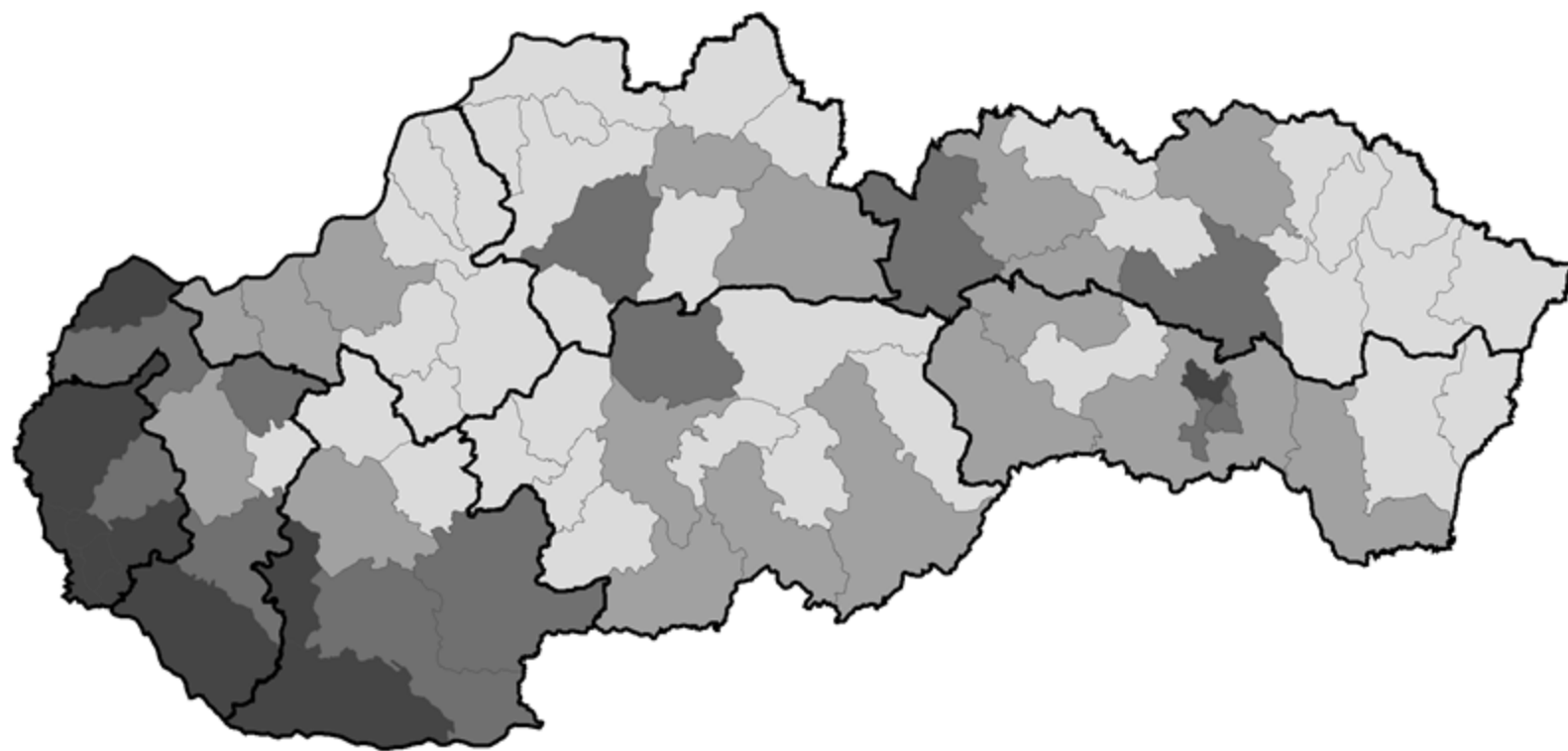
- First reelected president so far

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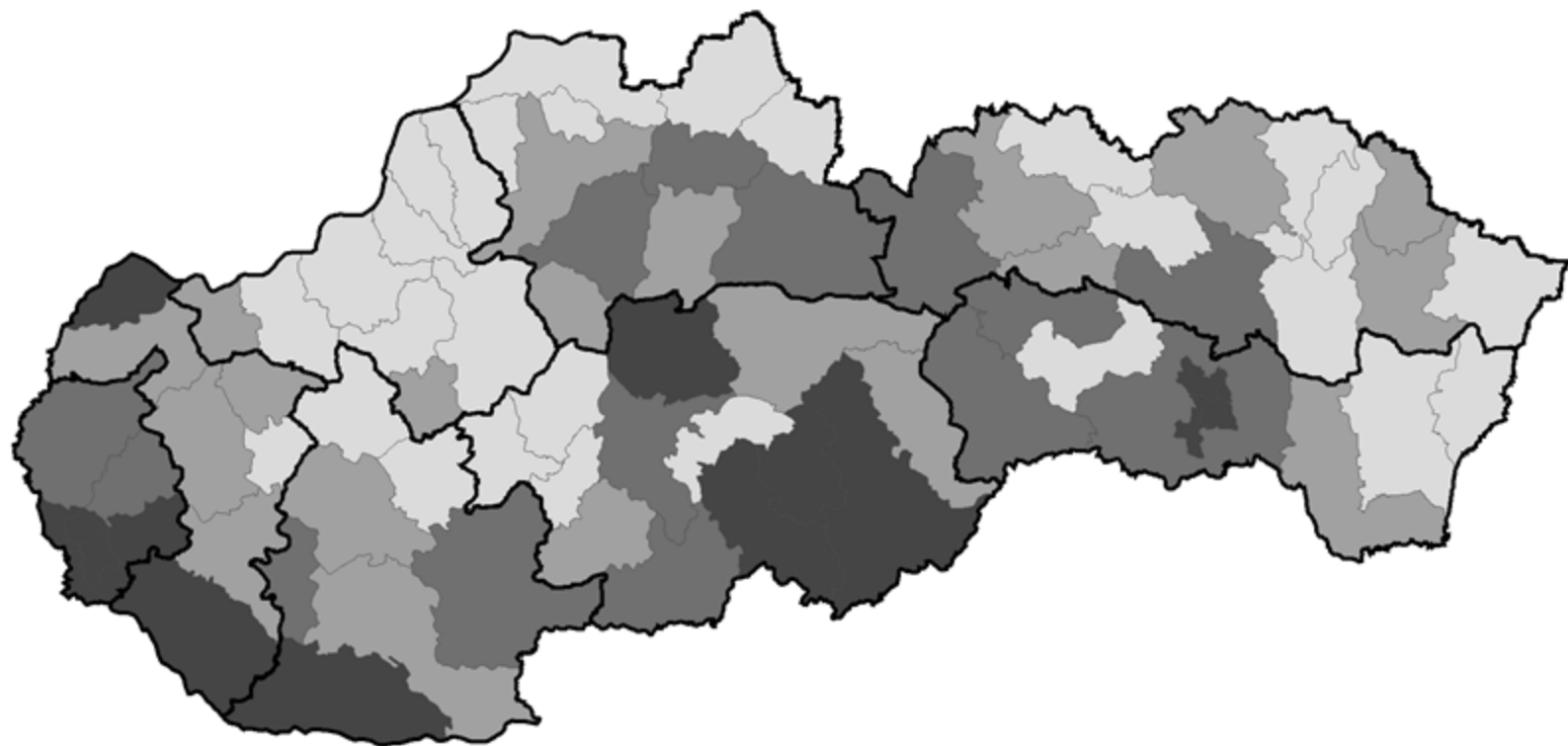
I. Gašparovič, elections 2004, first round



E. Kukan, elections 2004, first round



I. Gašparovič, elections 2004, second round



Ivan Gašparovič



- Two models of behavior

1. Loyalty and passivity

- During governments of R. Fico
- Helped Gašparovič to gain reelection

2. Criticism and activity

- During government of I. Radičová
- Usage of formal powers to block or delay governmental decisions

Ivan Gašparovič



- Main differing tool – veto

| Government | Term | Appointed laws | Veto used | Veto used (in %) |
|------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| Fico | 2006 - 2010 | 530 | 28 | 5,28 |
| Radičová | 2010 - 2012 | 208 | 29 | 13,94 |
| Fico | 2012 - 2014 | 228 | 12 | 5,26 |

Elections 2014



40,6 %



59,4 %

Andrej Kiska



- First non-partisan president
- Businessman, chairman of charity organization
- His `accompanying` Prime Minister is his main rival from presidential election
- Plans of a new party for general election 2020?

Real position of president

- Not the leading factor of Slovak politics
- Indicators:
 - Weak party and political background
 - Position „in between“ the parties and not „above“ them
 - No alternative power arena
- Will this status quo last for the future?