



Populism in Slovakia

General conditions

- Post 1989 Slovakia provided a solid base for populism
- **Factors:**
 - Negative economic impact after 1989
 - Problematic realization of privatization of public property
 - Negative public image of domestic politics
 - Polarization of the party system (and the society) – peak in the 2nd half of the 90s

Waves of populism in Slovakia

- **1. wave** (emerged after 1989):
 - HZDS (Movement for Democratic Slovakia)
 - ZRS (Association of Slovak Workers)
- **2. wave** (1998-2002)
 - SOP (Party of Civic Understanding)
 - SMER (Direction)
 - ANO (Alliance of New Citizen)
- **3. wave** (around 2010)
 - OĽaNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities)

1st wave (HZDS)

- Separated from the main Slovak dissent movement
- Leader – Vladimír Mečiar (in lead until 2013)
- Dominating Slovak party in the 90s
- Usage of populism even after becoming part of the establishment

1st wave (ZRS)

- Separated from the transformed communists
- Radical left party with extensive use of populism
- Complex attacks on all ruling (and existing) parties
- Situated in a role of the defender of the betrayed masses
- Presented as the only „clean“ alternative

2nd wave

- Specific situation of the 2nd half of the 90s
- Extensive polarization of the party system
- Growing number of citizens and voters seeking for a „middle way“
- These trends lead to emergence of different type of populist parties

2nd wave (SOP)

- Created in 1998 by a popular mayor Rudolf Schuster who later became the Slovak president
- Centre / centre-left party with an aim to stay neutral
- Pressure of the culminating polarization of politics and society → SOP had to choose its bloc position
- Connection with anti-Mečiar parties resulted in decline of support
- Entering government 1998 started the end of the party

2nd wave (SMER and ANO)

- Created after elections 1998 – still a strong polarization
- Main features:
 - Professional PR and communication
 - Party structure only as a secondary aim
 - Criticism of the establishment
 - Call for a new generation of Slovak politicians
- Differences:
 - SMER – denial of any ideological stance
 - ANO – openly centre-right liberal status

Evaluation of V. Mečiar and M. Dzurinda by supporters (2001)

	Both positive	VM positive MD negative	MD positive VM negative	Both negative	Do not know (at least one)
HZDS	5,2	88,1	0	2,2	4,5
SNS	1	57,3	6,3	20,8	14,6
KSS	0	44,9	6,1	42,9	6,1
SDKÚ	4	3	81,2	3	8,9
SMK	1,4	2,1	59,3	20,7	16,4
KDH	7,4	5,6	29,6	29,6	27,8
ANO	0	15,3	20,8	55,6	8,3
SMER	1,9	24,1	17,5	42,9	26,5
non-voters	1,2	14,7	13,5	44,1	13,7
undecided	1,5	14,2	16,1	38,7	29,5

3rd wave (O'LaNO)

- Created before elections 2012
- Structure:
 - Not a classical party (4 members)
 - Basis for independent candidates
- „Ideology“:
 - Strong criticism of parties and party system
 - Main topics – corruption, partitocracy
- The „Gorilla“ scandal as the main theme for the campaign



	HZDS	ZRS	SOP	SMER	ANO	OLaNO
Created	1991	1994	1998	1999	2001	2011
Ideology	Denial / mix of nat., pop. rad., soc.	Radical left	Vague, later centre-left	Denial, later social demoratic	Centre-right liberal	Vague, independents
Social groups	Post 1989 losers	Post 1989 losers	Dissapointed	Dissapointed	Dissapointed	Dissapointed
Membership priority	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Non existing
Special features	Populist even after being main part of the system					No party at all

Success rate of populist parties

Party	1st elections	Entered government?	2nd elections
HZDS	37,26	yes	34,96
ZRS	7,34	yes	1,3
SOP	8,01	yes	1,36
SMER	13,46	no	29,14
ANO	8,01	yes	1,42
OĽaNO	8,55	no	-