

The Development of Slovak Political Elite

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... the governing elite is always in a state of slow and continuous transformation. It flows on like a river, never being today what it was yesterday. From time to time sudden and violent disturbances occur. There is a flood – the river overflows its banks. Afterwards, the new governing elite again resumes its slow transformation. The flood has subsided; the river is again flowing normally in its wonted bed.¹

The continuous transformation of the elite has been aptly described by one of the classics of elite-research, Vilfredo Pareto. He tried to describe the changes of ordinary days and special events by taking an example from nature. This survey will take the reader back to events of considerable importance in the past and will arrive at the point where the *river overflowed its banks* and finally will follow how *events took a normal course again*. This work will attempt to discover in the case of Slovakia what course the river took after the flood, and which has ultimately become the typical course of the country's everyday events.

In the 19th century the political elite was identical to the national elite, just as it is in the case of current day Slovakia and as it was observed in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy of the time². Later, by the broadening of universal suffrage and the emancipation of social strata, an individual group was formed, which was recruited in a different way. Earlier, it was the prerogative of the privileged social strata to get into the political elite, while nowadays any social group can take part in the forming of politics. Despite this, the broadening of opportunities did not mean that the composition of the political elite mirrored the composition of society, but it brought about the professionalization of the political elite, where the politician protects the interests of several social groups. Thus, it became difficult to define the composition of ideal political representation since different democratic representations possess different features. When observing the political representation of some countries one could conclude that for example university education is a typical feature of today's politicians. However, looking at Norway, a country with an exemplary democracy, less than one third of its MPs received a

¹ Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Governing Élite in Present-Day Democracy*, in *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization* (ed. Eva Etzioni-Halévy), Garland, New York, 1997, pp. 47-52.

² Ilonszki, Gabriella, *Belated Professionalization of Parliamentary Elites: Hungary 1848-1999*, in *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment and careers in Eleven European Countries* (Maurizio Cotta, Heinrich Best ed.), OUP, 2000.

university education in the past 50 years. Concerning the equal representation of women one also has to conclude that the majority of developed democracies lag well behind in the number of female MPs compared to women's social proportion in those countries³. In spite of all this, some tendencies are about to take place, which will be used as a basis for comparative analysis of Slovakia. With an awareness of these impending changes, this work will attempt to analyze some cases of deviancy, as well.

While researching the change and *circulation* of the elite one has to face uncertain factors. While new MPs prevent the parliament from *fossilization*, frequent changes hinder the work-efficiency of the parliament and the professional development of parliamentary representation.⁴ Continuity on a certain level is also needed for the development of the rules of the game inside parliament as well as to maintain cooperation among certain groups and the development of policies within some frameworks.⁵ The balance between circulation and *reproduction* is a prerequisite for the consolidation of a democracy and for the development of the consensual elite. This balance keeps the activity of the political elite within certain norms.⁶

The aim of this study is to research the group of representatives who got into the parliament since the change of regime in 1989, when a new era began in Slovakia's life. We will try to analyse the historical roots of the post-transition Slovak political elite and the influence of these roots on the present political events.

In spite of the fact that democratic political systems lie on multiple pillars, the parliamentary representations are the ones which receive the most publicity. The decisions which influence the voters are not made in the parliament; nevertheless, it was the parliament that became the place for political battles. This is particularly true for post-transition East-Central Europe, where a certain degree of overparliamentarization can be observed due to the lack of

³ Cotta, Maurizio, Best, Heinrich, *Between Professionalization: Synoptic View on Making of the European Representative*, in *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries* (Maurizio Cotta, Heinrich Best ed.), OUP, 2000.

⁴ Shabad, Goldie and Kazimierz M. Slomczynski (2002) 'The Emergence of Career Politicians in Post-Communist Democracies: Poland and the Czech Republic'. In: *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 27, 333-360.

⁵ Linz, Juan, Pilar Gangas, and Miguel Jerez Mir. 2000. "Spanish Diputados: From the 1876 Restoration to Consolidated Democracy." In *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000: Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, eds. Heinrich Best and Maurizio Cotta. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Linz, Juan, Pilar Gangas, and Miguel Jerez Mir. 2000. "Spanish Diputados: From the 1876 Restoration to Consolidated Democracy." In *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000: Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, eds. Heinrich Best and Maurizio Cotta. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

stable political parties and settled balance of power.⁷ The same process can be observed in Slovakia, a fact which highlights the importance of this study.

The analysis of MPs is an exciting intellectual adventure since "... by studying the nature of the elite one learns a lot about the nature of the society itself..."⁸ In addition to getting to know the society we have an opportunity to follow the development of the political system paying special attention to the main actors, the political elite. The aim of the quantitative and qualitative analyses presented in this study is to present how the composition of the political elite changed over the course of political developments in Slovakia. In order to get an overall picture of parliamentary representation in the years past this survey will attempt not only to only analyze numbers and data but also to outline the circumstances of elite development.

A typical feature of the Slovak party system is what is referred to as *political tourism*, where the so called *institutional nomads*⁹ frequently change parties, or in some cases become independent. As a result, some parties split up, merged, or their leaders resigned from the party forming a new one. However, in many cases the MPs/representatives just became members of another party. There were some cases in which the number of renegade independent MPs had increased so much that their role in legislation became of key importance. Sometimes this mobility of MPs took place due to individual or party purposes, but in all cases it influenced further development of the elite. Detailed circumstances of the MPs movements will not be outlined in this study. On the other hand, the description of main trends is essential in the understanding of the development of the elite.

1. Development of the Slovak Political Elite - Historical Background

Problems related to the development of Slovakia and the Slovak nation and the definition of national identity have all influenced the development of the Slovak national elite to a great extent. Before 1993 Slovakia as an independent country existed only for a short time: during World War II. On other occasions the history of the country, and similarly the history of its

⁷ Agh, Attila. 1995. "The Experiences of the First Democratic Parliaments in East Central Europe." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 28, 203-14.

⁸ Laswell, Harold D., Daniel Lerner C., Easton Rothwell, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, Stanford University Press, 1952.

⁹ Shabad, Goldie and Kazimierz M. Slomczynski (2004) 'Inter-party Mobility Among Parliamentary Candidates in Post-Communist East-Central Europe'. In: *Party Politics*, 157-176.

political elite, was related to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and later to Czechoslovakia. In connection with Czechoslovakia it is stated many times that Czech dominance primarily influenced the development of Slovakia. Due to similarities in the history of the three countries the elite in Slovakia developed later than in its two neighbouring countries, which were related to Slovakia in many ways. What is more, its development was influenced by different factors than the elite of the two other countries¹⁰.

Due to its geographical position and history Slovakia has been influenced mainly by the Hungarian and Czech cultures. The deliberate isolation and the strengthening of rural tendencies played a vital role in the formation and later in the development of Slovak national identity. Being isolated from each other but more or less identical in their language and culture, the local communities developed and reinforced only their own local elite at the beginning. The members of these elite groups were mainly local intellectuals: teachers and priests. Considering that in the 19th century only a very small proportion of the proprietary were Slovaks, there was not a real chance for the formation of a wealthy national elite belonging to the aristocracy¹¹.

At the same time, the specific social structure of the Slovak nation determined the aims of the developing national elite to a great extent. Due to the lack of an independent state and unified national identity the primary aim of the early national elite was the development of national unity. One of the reasons for this was the War of Independence in Hungary between 1848 and 1849: the majority of Slovaks, as the only national minority, fought alongside the Hungarians, since their ties with Hungary proved to be stronger than their national identity. This happened against the wishes of the first consciously Slovak political generation.^{12 13} In contrast with the surrounding nations the development of the Slovak national identity took place a lot later. That is perhaps why it happened that after the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Slovakia did not become an independent state, but as Upper Hungary it was annexed to Czechoslovakia along with Sub-Carpathia. Slovakia's status and questions related to the Slovak nation were much debated within the framework of the new formation. The fact that the political elite of the new state was comprised mainly of Czech representatives and the representatives of the

¹⁰ Zemko, Milan: Mýty a stereotypy v našich dejinách, In: História, 2004/1

¹¹ Škvarna, D. a kol.: Lexikón Slovenských dejín, SPN Bratislava, 1997, pp. 115.

¹² The first generation primarily refers to those who wanted to wake up national identity in the Slovak nation. Such politicians and intellectuals were for example Ľudovít Štúr, Hurban and Hodža.

¹³ While there were only a few hundred people in the Slovak free forces, there were several regiments of Slovak nationality on the side of Hungarians.

Moravian minority caused further conflicts, despite the other fact that the number of Slovak representatives was much higher than earlier. The strengthening of Czechoslovakism, which began simultaneously with the publication of the daily paper *Hlas* in 1898, made the problems of the unified Slovak elite even worse, since this trend foreshadowed Czech and Slovak cooperation and the elimination of purely Slovak interests. The spread of the ideas of Czechoslovakism caused a further break in the Slovak elite.

Paradoxically, the question arising from national identity still remained as one of the most debated among the Slovak elite even after the formation of Czechoslovakia. At the beginning the rather radical parties were not supported by the other parties, except for a few minor factions that supported some more or less separatist tendencies. They were not supported by the majority of the voters either, who did not take up the cudgels for independence.¹⁴

In the second half of the thirties along with major changes in international politics the political field in Slovakia was rearranged, too. However, the foundation of the autonomous and later independent Slovak Republic could be seen as a quick adaptation to the events and an attempt to avoid being annexed again, not as a result of consistent work aimed at the foundation of a state.¹⁵

After a six-year intermezzo of independence, during communism a new state was formed with the Czechs, which brought about a more moderate indignation in Slovak society. Later, in conjunction with normalization, the structure of Czechoslovakia was rearranged, giving a real opportunity for the formation of a purely national elite. Unfortunately, this happened under a political system, the nature of which precluded the possibility of healthy elite development. It might have been the case that after the change of regime when the Slovak state was founded, in a state nationalist euphoria, the majority of its elite entered politics without any experience and political affiliations, or with a communist past. One might ponder to what extent the lack of previous affiliations or their lack of clarity influenced the structure and the nature of the Slovak elite.

2. The heritage of political lines

¹⁴ The statistics show that only the Slovak National Party and Hlinka's Slovak People's Party called openly for autonomy.

¹⁵ Kováč, Dušan, *Dejiny Slovenska, Lidové noviny, Praha 1998, pp. 159.*

Most of the political parties like to refer to the past when they attempt to justify their ideologies. Similarly, the Slovak parties have also tried to link themselves with the heritage of one or another politician or party. However we cannot talk of historic parties in the proper sense of the word.

The present Slovak National Party has the same name as its predecessor, the oldest Slovak party, thus elite members like to emphasize the similarity between the two parties. It can be claimed that the differences in the two formations' values seem to be much larger than the similarities between them. At the beginning of its existence the Slovak National Party absorbed some members of the political elite on a national basis. Despite the differences in their ideologies, nationality became the basis for their cooperation. The ideology of the present Slovak National Party leans largely on this element; however, this formation is quite dissimilar to its predecessor in its elite's statements and in matters of detail. Various other parties including socialists and Christian Conservatives attempt to claim famous members of the Slovak National Party as their own, though not always on the level of official ideology.¹⁶ Consequently, the party's historical and symbolic importance is unquestionable; however it has not achieved considerable ideological influence in the present.

The ideologies of the two main Slovak parties are different from each other: While the Democratic Party unified the right wing, the HSLŠ compromised itself in World War II with its role in the Slovak satellite state. Similar to the national party the Democratic Party became a catch-all party and served as a source of ideology despite the fact that there were some efforts to renew their activity.¹⁷ In the case of the HSLŠ a sort of legacy can be observed in the field of electoral preferences since several studies have shown that the party's popularity was high in the same regions where it was high during the nineties in the case of the HZDS and SNS, when these parties got the highest support.¹⁸

Alexander Dubček is another symbolic personality, though he cannot be associated with any party. He became a sort of icon in Slovakia as the messenger of humane socialism. He

¹⁶ The 2006/27 issue of the *Týždeň* weekly paper for example published a series of investigative articles on this issue with a title: Who does SNS belong to?

¹⁷ Democratic Party, later Democratic Union, merged with SDKÚ, after a certain time it became independent again. Their ties with the present Democratic Party are now only symbolic; what is more, this formation has not belonged to the group of relevant parties for a decade. The members of the former party, however, now are active in the SDKÚ.

¹⁸ Slovensko a jeho regióny. Sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania. (Slovakia and its regions. Social-cultural relations of the voters' behaviour), V. Krivý-V. Feglová-D. Balko, Nadácia Médiá, Bratislava, 1996.

became actively involved in politics after the fall of communism. Dubček died in a car crash, and the circumstances of the accident are still not completely clarified. With his death the ties between the former and current non-communist elite have been broken, at least in the symbolic sense. Such ties can still be observed in most of the post –communist countries.

The Velvet Revolution in 1989 found the Slovak elite in a rather unprepared state for several reasons. After 40 years of communism the members of the elite did not have direct political experience, and due to constant changes in the world and the traditional weakness of the Slovak democracy and elite they could not even look for an example in history. Independent Slovakia could name only two states as its predecessors: the clerical fascist satellite state in World War II and to some extent, the federal Slovak Republic could be considered to be one as well. Both states were founded on the basis of some totalitarian ideology and they were created as by-products in the course of history. Thus the Slovak elite, along with the democratic system and the population, had to go through the Newcomer difficulties often experienced by young states, including the fight against extremism and those who lived off the development of nation building. Remainder of this paper, we will attempt to shed some light upon the tendencies which were observed in the composition of the Slovak elite from the very beginnings of its existence up to the time of the latest elections.

3. Power relations after 1989

Due to the circumstances described previously, the democratic transition in Slovakia was different from those that took place in neighbouring countries. Due to the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the unbalanced Czech-Slovak relation and because of one-sided Soviet industrialization¹⁹ Slovakia took a different course. As a consequence of communism's different intensity the Slovak elite were in an elementary state, a relatively small number of opposition activists started the organization of the anti-communist forces. The Slovak elite, which lagged behind that of the Czech to a considerable degree, was comprised mainly of artists, scientists and catholic activists. These intellectuals established the Public Against Violence (VPN) movement, which became the winning transitional force in the first elections.

¹⁹ Szomolányi, Soňa: The Slovak Path to Democracy: From Deviant Case to a Standard New Democracy, in [Slovakia: Ten Years of Independence and a Year of Reforms](#) (Mesežnikov, Grigorij, Gyárfášová, Oľga editors), IVO, Bratislava, 2004.

The most important political issues after 1989 were not only the creation and strengthening of a market economy or the establishment of pluralism, but also the rearrangement and reconsideration of Czech-Slovak relations. Representatives of the national line including Vítázoslav Mórica, Ján Čarnogurský also representing the same ideas at that time, as well as Vladimír Mečiar took extensive roles in keeping the issue on the agenda and in the mobilization of the society. The economic reforms discussed and planned in Prague were not favorable for Slovakia in many cases; they primarily focussed on Czech interests.²⁰ Mečiar who identified the demands of the Slovak economic elite soon became the leader in matters concerning this issue. By doing this he managed to bring a majority of the Slovak economic elite over to his side. This group of CEOs became influential supporters of Mečiar, a fact which largely contributed to his party's good results in the following elections.

Another key point of Mečiar's strategy was his standpoint regarding the passing of an anti-communist law. While Czech politicians supported the elimination of communists, Mečiar took a stand against the law. Since the events of 1968 did not provoke such bad feelings in Slovaks as they did in Czechs, Mečiar managed to bring back representatives of the communist nomenclature to the lines of the new political elite without the indignation of society. Though earlier only 12% of the population had been members of the Communist Party, 40.1% of the *new elite* were ex-communists, out of which 16% had been in high political position in 1988. In contrast with this on the Czech side ex-communists represented only 22.64% and only 1.2% had been in a political position.²¹ In 1992, 99 seats out of 150 belonged to ex-communists in the parliament²², which translated into considerable reproductions of the old nomenclature.²³ The second-line communists had a very significantly role. They emerged from those technocrats who had gained experience during communist times. By supporting the old nomenclature Mečiar built up the second pillar of his power. Because of this some ex-communist politicians found

²⁰ Miklos, Ivan, Economic Transition and the Emergence of Clientelist Structures in Slovakia, in Slovakia: Problems of Democratic Consolidation and the Struggle for Rules of the Game, ed. Sona Szomolányi and John Gould, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Bratislava 1997.

²¹ Róna-Tas, Ákos, Bunčák, Ján, Harmadyová Valériay, Post-Communist Transformation and the New Elite in Slovakia, 1999, kézirat.

²² This number includes some communists taking an active role in the events of 1968 such as Miroslav Kusý and Milan Šimečka, who later opposed the party.

²³ Szomolányi, Sona, Political Elite and Institution Building in Slovakia, in Institution Building in New Democracies (Hans-Georg Heinrich ed.), Collegium Budapest, 1999.

themselves in such high positions as president of the republic or president of the constitutional court.

Mečiar moved more and more towards economic and political populism and enjoyed increasing support from the public. However, his steps evoked increasing dissatisfaction within his party. Mečiar, whose program included the propagation of a painless economic transition, got thrown out of VPN, and then founded his own party, the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), which became the most dominant party of the following years. When the Presidium of the Slovak Parliament recalled Mečiar from the post of prime minister, he enjoyed the support of 85 % of the population. The ex-prime minister did not lose his popularity because being in opposition his populist economic and social ideas gained even stronger ground. This popularity manifested itself in the results of the 1992 elections, when the HZDS got the opportunity to set up a government. In contrast with this the VPN's popularity had decreased to such an extent that they did not even get into the parliament.

With its reforms, antidemocratic leadership, and its highly strong national policy the new government led by Mečiar greatly divided the political elite as well as the society. Elite disunity was further intensified by the process through which Slovakia was becoming independent. This process was placed under Mečiar's care. As a result of the Klaus-Mečiar pact the independent Slovak Republic was established on January 1st, 1993, and took place without a referendum or support from the public²⁴. The existence of the new republic brought about an increase of political opportunities. When outlining the new rules of game the Mečiar apparatus took advantage of its political power in order to secure long-term leadership.

Conflicts inside the Slovak elite further intensified during discussions on the Slovak Constitution. By emphasising the historical moment and abusing national issues the Mečiar government influenced the Slovak voters with theatrical illusions. The constitution was not only missing contents, it was also drafted and passed in a peculiar way. Those having objections were proclaimed enemies of the state. The Christian Democratic Movement and the Hungarian Coalition were condemned because they voted against the constitution, and were proclaimed

²⁴ Bútorová, Zora. The Separation of Czechoslovakia and the First Decade of Slovakia's Independence Through the Eyes of Its Citizens, Slovakia: Ten Years of Independence and a Year of Reforms, IVO Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 2004.

enemies of Slovak interests. The first sentence of the constitution's preamble²⁵ was discussed at length among Hungarians, for the Hungarian minority found it discriminative.

Due to conflicts inside HZDS Mečiar lost his position as prime minister in March 1994, but in the next elections²⁶ he gained a considerable victory and formed the cabinet again. The Mečiar group and its highly visible group of opponents started became more distinct during the elections. The earlier mentioned economic elite played an important role in Mečiar's victory by supporting his campaign financially. At this time people from smaller villages, the elderly and the less educated created the majority of HZDS's voters.²⁷

After the elections in 1994 Mečiarism became considerably widespread ultimately resulting in a democratic deficit in independent Slovakia and creating an increased division in Slovak society. Thanks to the earlier formed electoral system²⁸ and to the newly found compensation mechanisms, such as the institution of the president and the constitutional court, the government could not unleash all the steps deemed of undemocratic, yet several anti-democratic steps were ultimately carried through. One of the most notable examples of this was a session which lasted a whole night on November 3rd, 1994, when an anti-democratic package was adopted. We should mention a few measures of the new government, which were carried out very soon after the elections such as the elimination of the opposition from the supervisory boards in the institutions of key importance²⁹, the high-handed recalling of the presidents of Slovak Television and Radio, or the reduction of opposition MPs in the parliamentary committees and their method of nomination. These were followed by the Gaulider case³⁰ and the referendum³¹ that was foiled in 1997, just to mention a few. Political life was also discredited by

²⁵ My národ slovenský, i.e We, the Slovak nation ...

²⁶ 1994. September 30.-October 1.

²⁷ Čo prezrádzajú volebné výsledky? (What do the election results show), Parlamentné volby 1992-1998, Vladimír Krivý, IVO, 1999.

²⁸ Mečiar tried to introduce the majority electoral system, but being small parties his coalition partners did not support the idea.

²⁹ Supreme Control Office, General Prosecutor's Office, National Property Fund.

³⁰ František Gaulider was expelled from the parliament after he left HZDS. On the basis of the ruling of the Constitutional Court Gaulider should have returned to the parliament, but HZDS boycotted this decision.

³¹ In 1997 the Mečiar cabinet brought the referendum on direct presidential elections to naught in spite of the fact that the Constitutional Court also said that it was not the competence of the government.

Mečiar's bad relationship with the Slovak president Michal Kováč³², who did not support the government's efforts.

In the period between 1994 and 1998 the government significantly limited the opposition's access to political decision-making, which meant that the HZDS was in a considerably better position regarding the use of political power. Business circles close to HZDS gained a more prominent role in political decision-making, which led to the abuse of their authority during the process of privatization. Due to the transparency of several financial and economic transactions the Slovak economy became indebted and insolvent. Political clientelism and nepotism were a common things and state banks gave loans on the basis of political considerations. The above were manifested in the amount of foreign investments popping up in Slovakia, which was significantly lower than those in the Czech Republic. As a result, Slovakia was not included in the first round of the Euroatlantic integration processes, since Slovakia lagged behind in the adoption of the Copenhagen Criteria, aside from the warnings that the country received from international organizations.

By 1998 the political field had been split into two distinct groups, though the groups themselves were also divided to a great extent. The parties that united in the spirit of anti-Mečiarism came from all parts of the political spectrum. The aim of the anti-Mečiarist group was Slovakia's European integration in contrast with the national-populist policy of HZDS. Paradoxically, by leading an extremist policy the Mečiar cabinet became an enemy of itself, since it made the colorful opposition unite. This was further intensified by the amendment of the election law at the last minute, the aim of which was clearly to weaken the opposition forces; however it made the political subjects and the people join hands against the government.³³

Due to the intense political conflicts 84.2% of the population cast their ballots in the 1998 elections. Though during the campaign³⁴ HZDS influenced the media considerably, 48.5% of the voters supported the opposition led by the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)³⁵. The results of

³² The son of the president of the republic was kidnapped under mysterious circumstances. The secret service controlled by Mečiar and its leader Ivan Lexa are suspected to have committed the kidnapping, though it could not be proved by legal means.

³³ The Slovak Democratic Coalition and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition were founded as a reaction to the law right before the elections. HZDS took SDK to the Supreme Court for founding the coalition, but the motion was dismissed. This attack considerably increased the opposition's popularity.

³⁴ According to the polls 75% percent of the campaign in the state-media was covered by HZDS. The commercial privately owned media was discriminated against during the campaign.

³⁵ In the elections of 1992 30.4% of the voters supported HZDS, in 1994 this number amounted for 35.4%.

the election indicated that the political and social unity against Mečiar was strong. As an example of this the Democratic Round-table Discussion could be mentioned, which took place in June 1998 and was organized by the SDK. The Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK) was also invited, which opened a new era in Slovakia's democracy and in the treatment of minority questions. In addition to the parties several NGOs³⁶ took part in the initiative which was aimed at organizing a large coalition. The participation of these organizations also contributed to the success of the opposition union.

The formation of the Dzurinda cabinet in 1998 meant the beginning of a new era in Slovakia's history. The earlier decisions were revised and the opposition began to play a more prominent role in decision-making again, though it was only the Slovak National Party that practiced this right, while the HZDS ostentatiously did not take up the post appointed to them. The members of the committees could be nominated by the parties again who were regularly accepted by the governing party.³⁷ The factious policy of the HZDS divided the forces within the party and gradually led to break-ups on the inside. When Mečiar appeared on TV after the elections he said goodbye to politics with a song; however, he did not stay away for long, since he ran for president in the next election. In the second round of the first presidential elections he was beaten by Rudolf Schuster who won with 57% of the vote. This defeat significantly weakened Mečiar's role and had a negative influence on his party as well.

It was anti-Mečiarism that held the *rainbow*-coalition of 1989 together, but its member's different political programs foreshadowed future conflicts. There were some debates even at the coalition talks, since the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) did not want to accept politicians of Hungarian nationality to ministerial posts. Pressure from the NGOs messages from the EU settled this conflict but the question of minorities continued to influence the functioning of the coalition. This cleavage within the coalition became most visible during the reform of public administration³⁸, when the MKP pondered over leaving³⁸ the coalition several times. The above reform highlighted the variation within the coalition, as a result of this fact, the draft of the opposition was the one that got passed.

³⁶ Trade Unions, the Union of Towns and Villages, the leadership of the Third Sector (an organization representing independent NGOs) and other youth organizations.

³⁷ Ivan Lexa was an exception, since he was associated with the earlier scandals of HZDS.

³⁸ The fact that during the reorganization of public administration the national composition of the regions was not taken into account and the dissolution of historical regions all prove that the aim was to divide up the regions where there was homogeneous Hungarian population.

The coalition managed to put through numerous laws, which led the country on a new path and helped democratic decision-making get back into balance. The coalition not only restored the role of the opposition, it also encouraged the balance of power, such as the introduction of direct presidential elections, and took steps to decentralize decision-making. The government supported regular communication with EU institutions, a result of which got Slovakia back on the list of accession countries.

It was during this period of time that two political groups started to take shape subsequently becoming the big rivals of the years that followed breaking repairing the rift between Mečiar's and pro-reform policies. The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) was established by politicians belonging to the centre-right of the SDK and was lead by Prime Minister Dzurinda. The other line was lead by Robert Fico, who separated from another coalition party, the SĎP, and founded a new party, the Smer.³⁹ While Dzurinda clearly became the symbol of pro-reform European politics, Fico built his party's policies on the growing social differences. Though in 2001 Fico was still in search of his party's real image, later he wanted to follow social democratic policies.⁴⁰ The social tensions arising from economic reforms provided a good ground for social populism, which soon made Fico one of the most popular politicians in the country. Fico's good relations with trade unions and other groups played a pivotal role in his activities, which those interest groups that earlier backed Mečiar's government began to support.

The elections in 2002 were quite a success for Smer; however, anti- Mečiarism and the pro-reform atmosphere in the country lead to the formation of another Dzurinda cabinet. At first, the new coalition seemed to be balanced, since it offered a unified central-right program for the voters. The coalition had a new member party ANO, lead by Pavol Rusko. Later it turned out that his economic interests were stronger than his political interests⁴¹. The new coalition's unity started to disappear relatively quickly, and there were significant changes inside the SDKÚ as well as in ANO in the following four years. Such disintegration also continued in the opposition HZDS, which lead to a growing number of independent MPs in the parliament and in the end these MPs dominated the political debates. Despite the presence of strong political tourism the coalition managed to succeed during their term, and in four years they not only in reached EU

³⁹ Smer was founded by Fico in 1999 without a clear political orientation. Fico applied for a ministerial post. The party rejected his application. As a result, he left the party.

⁴⁰ Meseznikov, Grigorij, Smer a jeho pokus o „sociáldemokratizáciu“, SME, 2006. 10. 19.

⁴¹ Pavol Rusko was Minister of Economy. Due to his corruption affairs he had to resign and his party separated into two groups.

accession but they also managed to implement reforms that were appreciated in the other EU member states, as well.

An interesting thing happened during the 2002 elections; the Communist Party found its way back into the parliament. This may have been expected due to the increase of social dissatisfaction. The communists did not manage to break through in four years, and because of Fico's increasing popularity they lost a segment of their voters. As a result they became rather unnoticeable until the following elections.

Prior to the elections in 2006 the political sphere became reorganized and the anti-Mečiarist mood completely disappeared. Instead, Fico became the main rival of Prime Minister Dzurinda. The disappearance of Mečiar opened a completely new period in the history of the Slovak party-system, since forming a coalition after the elections became an open question, where due to the disappearance of limited alternatives the political parties started to use political manoeuvres. The HZDS became *presentable* again, and since it seemed increasingly obvious that whether a right or left-wing cabinet would be formed depended on them, more and more parties started to lean towards them.

The result of the elections in 2006 decreased the number of parties in the parliament, which could foreshadow the stabilization of the party system. The communists were followed by the newly unified Slovak National Party in the parliament who seemed to be unacceptable for the EU institutions and for most of the Slovak parties, as well. The election results offered the formation of various government-coalitions, thus the decision concerning the country's political line in the following years were in Fico's and his party's hands. During the coalition talks the nationalist line lead by Dušan Čaplovič unexpectedly prevailed, and along with the HZDS the SNS became part of the government despite the fact that it was known it would result in conflicts with the EU. The disregard of the former government's parties endangered the success of the reforms launched earlier. Some reform examples include the transparent and successful tax-reform and the pension system reform. In the field of minority rights there was considerable loss of ground since the SNS definitely insisted on leading those ministries and institutions, which had been lead by Hungarians. In this way they managed to eliminate the Hungarian representation of interests, which had been proportionally present in decision-making during the previous government. The fact that the nationalists became a part of the government evoked international and European objections, and significantly worsened Slovak-Hungarian relations,

which had become consolidated in the previous eight years. The fact that Smer made an incorrect decision is clearly proven by the suspension of the party's membership in the Party of European Socialists, which clearly criticized the composition of Fico's government on several occasions.

4. Cleavages in the Slovak party-system

The most visible cleavage in Slovak politics lies between the Hungarian and Slovak population⁴², which has been constantly present in varying degrees since the change of regime. The chasm has a serious historic background and many parties have tried to gain popularity by its abuse. While after the change of regime this cleavage was not so deep, during the Mečiar-government it became rather great due to the elimination of Hungarian votes from the Slovak parties and vice versa. This is exemplified by the fact that immediately after 1989 there were Hungarian representatives in the Slovak parties. Later, in the Mečiar-era, this phenomenon completely disappeared. In the second half of Dzurinda's governing some thought that the rift seemed to have shifted towards the Slovak parties, thus dividing them into two groups: the first was the group of those being against Hungarians and the second group comprised of parties not being against them without any special pro-ethnic policies.⁴³ This was really the result of European integration processes, not the result of a real shift in the cleavage. Nevertheless, the strong anti-Hungarian campaign had a notable influence on the Slovak parties, as well; since a segment of the Hungarian population voted for moderate Slovak parties, helping them take up a position in the government.⁴⁴ During the two Dzurinda-governments the presence of Hungarians in decision-making became accepted and normal and the nomination of Hungarians into ministerial posts ceased to be taboo. The formation of the government in 2006 stirred up strained relations between the government and the opposition parties once again.

Another important area of difficulty in Slovak politics is one that exists between towns and rural areas. If one examines the division in the Slovak political field in the mid-nineties, it can be claimed that the popularity of anti-Mečiarist forces was much higher in towns and cities

⁴² Slovensko a jeho regióny. Sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania. (Slovakia and Its regions. Social-cultural Relations of the Voters' Behaviour), V. Krivý-V. Feglová-D. Balko, Nadácia Médiá, Bratislava, 1996.

⁴³ Deegan Krause, Kevin, Slovakia, in. The handbook of political change in Eastern Europe, ed. by Sten Berglund, Joakim Ekman, Frank H. Aarebrot., Edward Elgar, London, 2004.

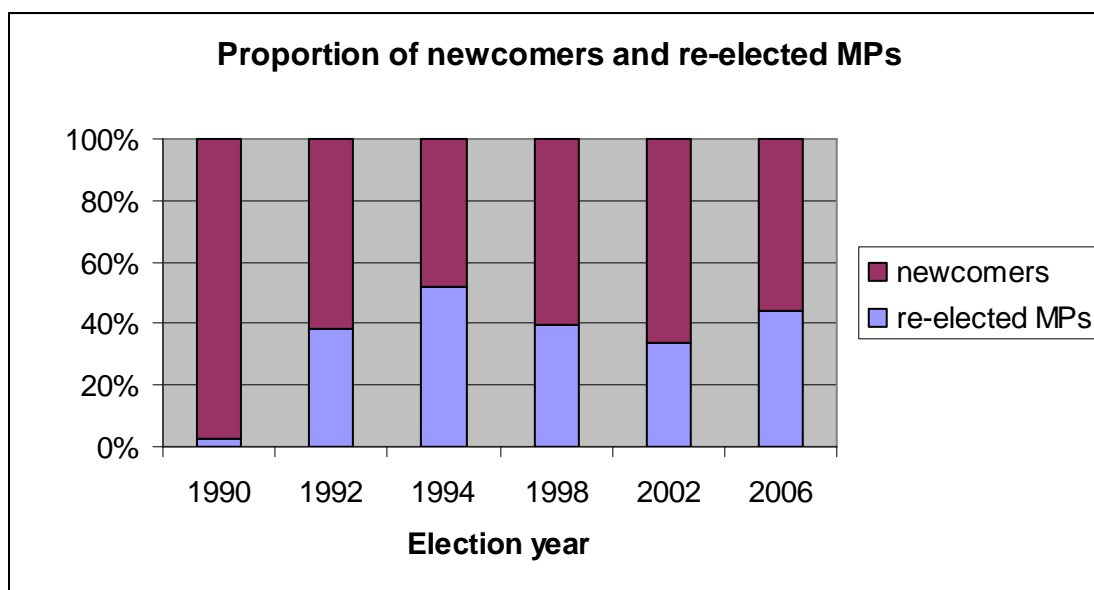
⁴⁴ On the basis of the information of the marketing company organizing SMK's campaign in 1998 the percentage of those Hungarian voters who cast their ballots for the Slovak Democratic Coalition was between 7 and 13 percent in the individual regions.

5. An overview of the development of the Slovak parliamentary elite

It is difficult to trace the movements of the Slovak parties and the political elite in the past 16 years because parliamentary tourism, the movement between political groups, was quite frequent during this period (see appendix). The Slovak parties were often transformed and their representatives appeared again as representatives of similar or completely new parties in the parliament. Another interesting point in the parliament's history is that aside from the elections in 2006⁴⁶ there were always some new parties in the national council. The most stable party is the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), which has been present in each parliament, though in 1998 they entered the legislation as coalition members of the SDK. Another stable political force is the HZDS, which has enjoyed high, though gradually decreasing popularity since 1992. By 2002, though the unity of HZDS broke down and in the years following the elections some groups separated from the party, which foreshadowed the relatively bad elections results for HZDS in 2006. The most stable line is represented by the SMK, a party that tends to follow minority policies. The SMK was favourably influenced by the earlier modifications in the law on elections, since as a result the three predecessor parties had no other alternative than to unite in a coalition.

Analysing the reproduction of the former elite, we can see that in 1990 there were only three MPs in the parliament who had worked in the former communist Slovak National Council of 1986. In 1992 reproduction increased. 29% of the representatives were re-elected to the parliament quite often under the flag of some other party. This group was completed with a group of those earlier having worked in one of the federal representations, who formed 10% of the parliament. When independent Slovakia was founded those who had worked in federal representations headed for the parliament in Bratislava. Therefore, in 1994 the representatives arrived from three places to the national council. Reproduction was the highest among those who had worked in Bratislava earlier, as well; however, looking at the whole representation one can claim that the 52-percent reproduction rate was rather high in this unusual year. In 1998 fifty-nine MPs were re-elected, which amounted for 40% of the parliament. In 2002 reproduction decreased by 6% compared to the previous period, and later in 2006 the proportion of re-elected MPs increased by 10% to 44% of all representatives.

⁴⁶ In 2006 the Slovak National Party got back to the parliament after a four-year break.



Source: Own collection

| | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 |
|---|---------------------------|--|---|--|------------|---------------------------|
| Number of MPs re-elected from the Slovak National Council | 3 | 43 | 53 | 48 | 41 | 52 |
| in percentages | 2,00% | 29% | 35,33% | 32,00% | 27,33% | 34,66% |
| Number of those re-elected from the former federal parliaments into the Slovak National Council | 5 (Chamber of Nations) | 5 (People's Chamber) 9 (Chamber of Nations) | 7 (People's Chamber) 14 (Chamber of Nations) | | | |
| in percentages | 0,66% | 9,33% | 14,00% | | | |
| those having earlier experience* | | 0 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| in percentages | | 0% | 2% | 3,33% | 6% | 9,33% |
| those having earlier federal experience* | | 0 | 1 (People's Chamber) | 1 (People's Chamber) 5 (Chamber of Nations) | 0 | 1 (Chamber of Nations) |
| in percentages | | 0% | 0,66% | 4% | 0,66% | 0% |
| Total (N) | 4 | 57 | 78 | 59 | 51 | 66 |
| in percentages | 2,66% | 38% | 52% | 39,33% | 34% | 44% |

* got re-elected to the Slovak National Council missing out one or more terms

The rate of MPs' reproduction

Source: Own collection

Provided that it is true that a consolidated democracy needs a balanced elite reproduction, then the Slovak parliament is not perfect in this respect. The rate of re-election has fluctuated in individual years, which was often due to the immaturity of the party system. This fluctuation was also caused by the proportional election system and the movements between the parties, which frequently resulted in fusions, cleavages and in the formation of new parties.

At the same time it was becoming more apparent in parliament which people and groups of representatives were producing stable reproduction rates. In 2006 more than a third of re-elected MPs got back to the parliament not only for the first time. They accounted for 16% of all MPs.

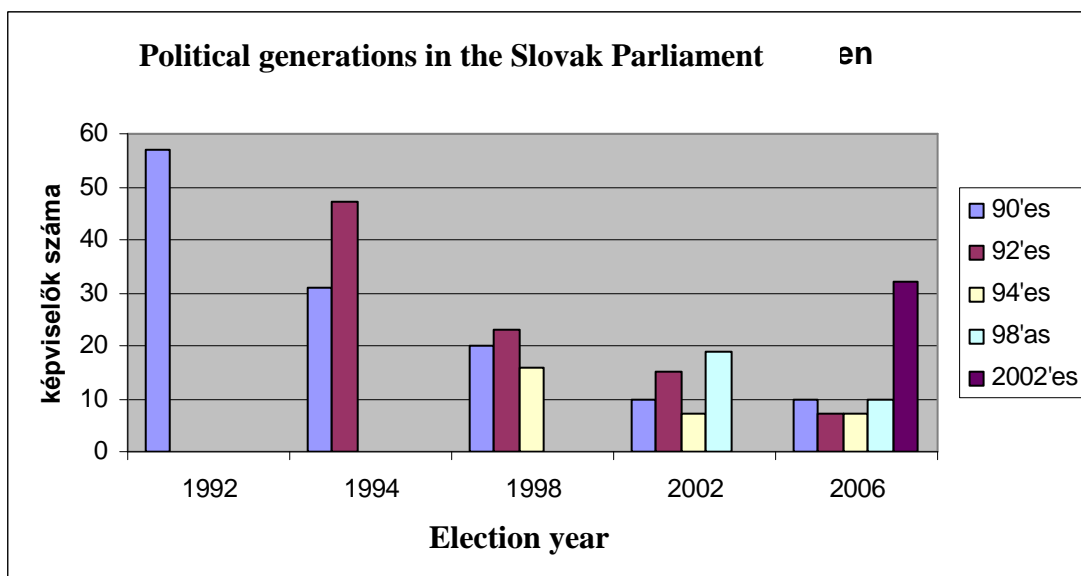
| | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| re-elected | 4 | 57 | 51 | 25 | 23 | 42 |
| elected for the third time | 0 | 0 | 27 | 20 | 13 | 6 |
| elected for the fourth time | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 9 | 9 |
| elected for the fifth time | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 4 |
| elected for the sixth time | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

Re-election of MPs according to the number of terms served

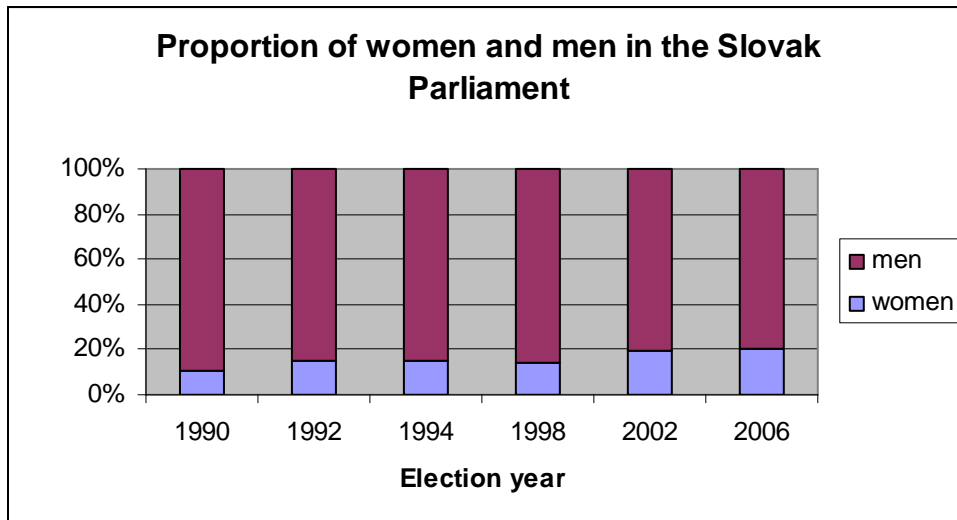
Federal representation is also included in the table, and continuity is not included.

Source: Own collection

While the table above shows only the number of re-elections and does not indicate continuity, the next graph concentrates on the survival of individual political generations. Taking into consideration continuity the graph follows the careers of winning MPs in each election and shows their reproduction rate.

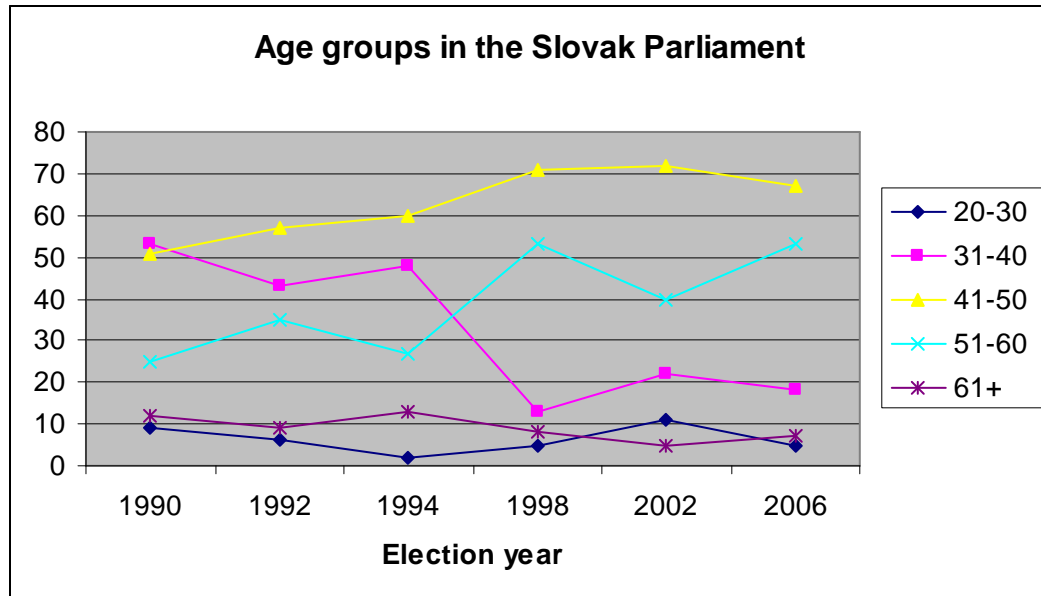


The proportion of women in each parliamentary term was rather low; between ten and 20 percent. It cannot be said that there was a growing tendency in the representation of women since it has been fluctuating in the last five electoral terms. It can be claimed, however that the proportion of women in parties having more than 20 mandates is higher, while in other parties it is very low: frequently there is only one female MP. Perhaps the reason for the low representation of women is that political life was dominated by issues which pushed emancipation and women's proportional representation into background and this issue could not get to the agenda. Under the influence of European integration this tendency changed. A clear sign of this is the appearance of female politicians in the first lines of leading parties after 2002. The appearance of the first party led by a female politician is important.



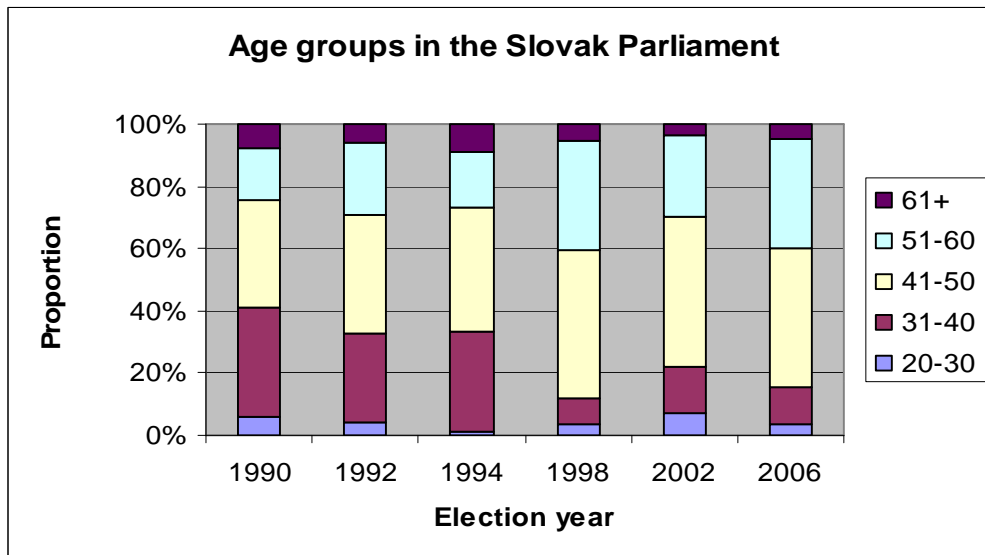
Source: Own collection

Analyzing the average age of representatives one can see that the parties' average age was also fluctuating. While in 1990 the greatest difference between the average ages of individual parties was 17.9 years, in 2002 the same figure was only 7.14 years. In 2006 it was again up at 10.34 years. Observing the parliament as a whole we can see a slight increase in age until 1998, which was turned over in 2002 by the good results of a party led by young politicians.



Source: Own collection

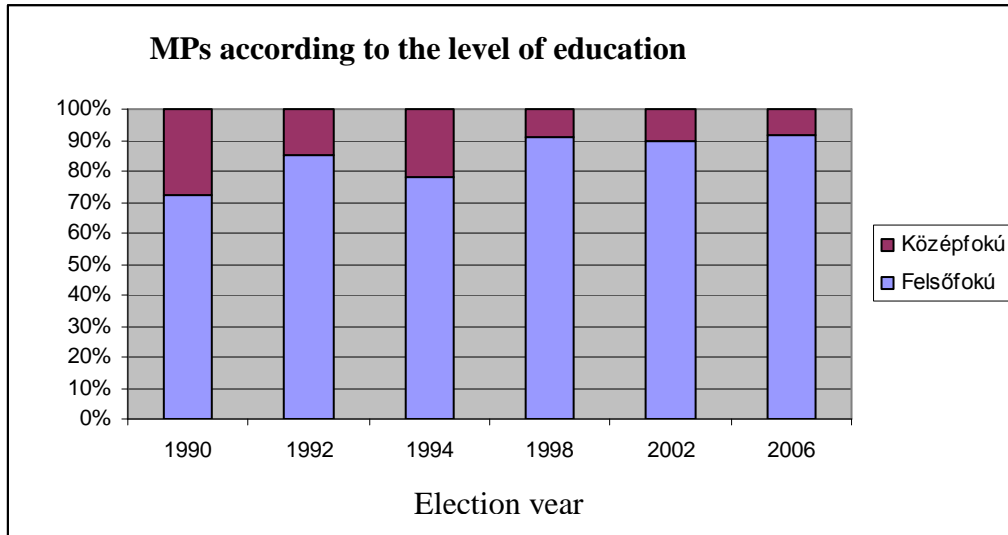
In 2002 there was an overall rejuvenation in all parties, while in 2006 a significant increase in age took place. The youngest party representation in the Slovak parliament was that of the Green Party between 1990 and 1992 with an average age of 36.8 years. The oldest representation was that of HZDS elected in 2006 with an average age of 55.47 years.



Source: Own collection

The proportion of MPs having a university degree was permanently rising from 72% in 1990 until 1998, when it settled at approximately 90%. While in 1990 there were many MPs who

had taken part in the Velvet Revolution of 1989 and did not have university qualification, qualifications became increasingly important later. Though since 1998 the proportion of representatives possessing university qualifications was permanently around 90%, many of those belonging to the remaining ten percent continued their studies or had an earlier-mentioned bachelor's degree. This obviously proves the importance of qualifications in the Slovak political elite, where candidates with secondary qualifications only rarely get into the parliament.



As for the domicile of representatives it can be observed that a considerable group of them come from the capital. During the five electoral terms the smallest proportion of MPs residing in the Bratislava region was at least a third, but in 1998 half of them lived there. Some large regions were frequently underrepresented. As an example the regions of Trenčín, Prešov and Žilina can be noted. The larger and longer-present parties usually have representatives in all of the regions, while newcomers and minority parties are represented in only in certain regions.

| | BA | TN | NI | TR | ZI | BB | PR | KO |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1990 | 53 | 11 | 13 | 7 | 13 | 18 | 11 | 23 |
| 1992 | 47 | 11 | 18 | 11 | 15 | 18 | 16 | 14 |
| 1998 | 65 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 14 |
| 2002 | 47 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 9 | 16 | 14 | 21 |
| 2006 | 43 | 14 | 19 | 12 | 16 | 13 | 17 | 16 |

Distribution of MPs, according to their domicile, in a regional breakdown

Source: Own collection

The representation of minorities has gone through significant changes in the last 16 years. After the change of regime minorities were present in Slovak parties, but following the national atmosphere of the nineties the Hungarian representatives became members only of Hungarian parties. The representatives of other minorities were present in other parties; however, their minority policies did not influence their program so much that they would hinder cooperation with Slovak parties. The political role and activities of other minorities are not systematic, thus at this time their activities has not made a significant political impact yet.

| | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 | 2006 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hungarian | 18 | 17 | 17 | 16 | 20 | 20 |
| Ruthenian | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ukrainian | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Czech | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Russian | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

Representation of minorities in the individual parliaments

Source: Own collection

The Slovak parliament and the parliamentary elite have gone through considerable changes in the last 13 years, with these tendencies likely to continue in the future. The level of qualifications has changed significantly and has stabilized; thus, in the following years there should not be considerable changes. In the next years there could be an increase in the number of female MPs, since this issue has been pushed into the background so far. With the settling of stable parties, perhaps we can expect a more proportional representation of individual regions.