

## FROM HEGEMONY TO FRAGMENTATION: ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR UNDER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE MID-CRISIS IN SLOVAKIA

Vojtěch Przybyla<sup>1</sup>, Slavomír Ondoš<sup>2</sup>, Jaroslav Rusnák<sup>3</sup>, Martin Plešivčák<sup>3</sup>

---

*1 Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, Higher Education, Internationalization and Quality of Higher Education Division, Higher Education Policies Unit, e-mail: vojtech.przybyla@minedu.sk*

*2 Creative Industry Košice, e-mail: slavomir.ondos@cike.sk*

*3 Comenius University in Bratislava, Department of Economic and Social Geography, Demography and Territorial Development, Bratislava, Slovak Republic; e-mail: jaroslav.rusnak@uniba.sk, martin.plesivcak@uniba.sk*

**Abstract:** The electoral behaviour of voters is influenced by a variety of long-term and short-term conditions and events. Temporal trends are observed and quantitatively followed through pre-election polling published regularly in approximate monthly frequency. Our research objective in this study was to crosslink these observations with the basic economic fundamentals. Paper used data on parliamentary election polling in Slovakia systematically throughout two voting cycles, the former complete one starting with the 2012 election with one-party dominance and the later incomplete one starting with the 2016 election and progressing towards the nearest 2020 general election with a bit more fragmentation political parties. We employ the unemployment rate, which has ability to measure movements of the national economy along phases of its business cycle. We finally attempt to verify a hypothesis of a connection between the unemployment and the electoral behaviour. Our findings positively verify the existence of systematic linkages between the national economic context and political dynamics, quantified by regular pre-election polling. The highest dynamics of electoral preferences was recorded by the non-parliamentary party Kotleba-ESNS in various economic situations.

**Keywords:** pre-election polling; Slovak Republic; regional structure; unemployment, Kotleba-ESNS party

### 1 INTRODUCTION

There is an ongoing debate across Europe about the perceived crisis of liberal democratic systems and the political transformations shaping their future. One central concern is the growing disenchantment of citizens with representative democracy, which manifests in declining participation, erosion of trust in public institu-

tions, and rising support for populist and extremist parties. The part of society also feel alienated by the liberal values that brought labour migration and a new cultural pattern of coexistence (Ford and Goodwin, 2014).

From geographical point of view, crisis of liberal democracy has increasingly been interpreted through the lens of regional inequalities. A growing body of literature argues that these political shifts are rooted in the experience of rural, peripheral and declining regions – often referred to as “left-behind” or “lagging” places (MacKinnon et al., 2022) – that face long-term economic stagnation, depopulation, deindustrialization, weak institutional capacity, insufficient political attention, and the erosion of public services and social cohesion (Rodríguez-Pose et al., 2024). This economic vulnerability has become a key driver of political disengagement. These places have become fertile ground for the rise of radical-right, anti-establishment, Eurosceptic and populist narratives, which mobilize national movements and public riots (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018; van Leeuwen and Vega, 2021). This spatial polarization of political attitudes – also described as the geography of EU discontent – reflects not only economic inequalities but also issues of crisis of (national) identity, cultural alienation, and perceived neglect (Dijkstra et al., 2020; de Dominicis et al., 2022).

The Slovak Republic represents a particularly illustrative case of these broader European dynamics. Compared to Western European countries, Slovakia is significantly less urbanized, with a large share of the population living in small towns and rural municipalities. This rural structure, combined with post-socialist transformation including a post-industrial or post-peasant identity and a low institutional quality, has created pace for the rise of anti-system political forces, anti-establishment narratives and Euroscepticism (Buzalka, 2021; Buzalka and Figulová, 2024; Kancelová, 2024). A particularly relevant factor in the Slovak case is the interplay of ethnic and regional cleavages, especially the anti-Roma rhetoric that has been strategically employed by the far right to mobilize voters in socially fragmented and economically depressed rural areas (Štefančík and Stradiotová, 2022). Particularly between 2012 and 2019, the emergence of radical right parties such as the People's Party – Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) was enabled by a combination of territorial marginalization, cultural backlash, and socioeconomic stagnation (Bahna and Zagraban, 2020; Rehák et al., 2021; Kevický, 2024). It assumes that support for the far right occurs in regions with high unemployment rates. Electoral geography thus becomes a crucial tool for understanding not only where these parties succeed but why, as regional context and social anxieties mediate the resonance of radical messages (Plešivčák, 2023).

Taken together, these findings suggest that the Slovak case is emblematic of a broader European trend: in regions where economic decline (high unemployment) intersects with demographic stagnation and perceived cultural marginalization, the space for different strategies of populism grows, corresponding to a movement from non-parliamentary through opposition to coalition parties. Slovakia offers a particularly instructive example due to the speed and intensity with which this political re-

alignment has occurred, and its experience can contribute to the wider understanding of the political geography of discontent across post-socialist Europe.

Primary goal of this research paper is to identify the connection between the electoral preferences of voters and the context of economic conditions in which electoral behaviour evolves. Instead of many possible dimensions, which may be important for voting decisions, we decide to focus on the indicator of unemployment. Our hypothesis about the existence of correlation between the economic well-being and electoral preferences for the political parties is tested on the basis of regular pre-election polling during the time period between 2012 and 2019. It is not only strength and direction of such connection, which is of interest actually. The same hypothesis to a certain extent also aims to falsify a well-established stereotype that political extremes, right-wing or left-wing, dominate economically weaker segments of population instead of political mainstream. In summary, it says that there are reasons to assume that different political parties are preferred among the voters with higher and the voters with lower standard of living. Our research follows general electoral preferences along a seven-year horizon. During the period several elections took place at different scales of multilayered democratic process in Slovakia: two local government elections in 2014 and 2018, two regional government elections in 2013 and 2017, presidential election in 2014, and as the general parliament elections in 2012 and in 2016, to which all following statistical measurements relate to.

## **2 EVOLUTION OF ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL DISENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY**

In recent years, a growing body of interdisciplinary research has documented a profound transformation of political and electoral systems across the European Union. What were once relatively stable and hegemonic party systems are now increasingly marked by fragmentation, volatility, and the rise of populist and nationalist with Eurosceptic sentiments (Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). Particularly in post-socialist contexts, where party systems are historically less institutionalized, electoral behaviour has increasingly oscillated between declining support for hegemonic parties and the periodic emergence of “single issue” or “single-use” formations (Haughton and Deegan-Krause, 2015; Hanley and Sikk, 2016). These formations typically capitalize on protest sentiment, populist momentum, or nationalist revival, often lacking durable organization and territorial roots.

Hegemonic parties are defined as political organizations that sustain repeated electoral success over an extended period and become deeply embedded in the institutional and territorial structure of the state. These parties often develop clientelist networks, maintain stable regional strongholds, and possess the capacity to shape policy and identity discourses across electoral cycles (Sartori, 1976; Pempel, 1990). In contrast, within a fragmented political system, “single issue” or “single use”

parties emerge in reaction to global economic and political crises which affect national traditions and sovereignty. Both political formations are typically organizationally thin, have weak territorial roots, and are heavily reliant on a charismatic figure. Once their symbolic or protest function wanes, they disintegrate or are replaced, contributing to a cycle of political instability (Lucardie, 2000).

Research in recent years has shown that increasing economic inequality has clear political implications, also in terms of electoral preferences (Han, 2016). The long-neglected adverse economic or political situation deepens the regional inequalities, causes economic vulnerability and social tension and allows these parties to consolidate their voter base of these territories. As quoted Rodríguez-Pose et al. (2024) as the longer the period of economic stagnation, the stronger the support for parties opposed to European integration. The classical view of the issue of income inequality suggests that left-wing parties should benefit more from such a situation, guaranteeing a more socially fair redistribution of resources within society (Pontusson and Rueda, 2010). However, several studies of recent years have shown that such a situation plays a significant role in favouring the right-wing, respectively extreme right-wing parties (Andersen and Fetner, 2008; Aggeborn and Persson, 2017).

In the context of turnout, there is a decline in electoral interest mainly among low-income voters, ultimately in favour of political representation related to the wealthier social classes (Gilens, 2005; Solt, 2010). De Dominicis et al. (2022) find that a higher anti-EU vote is associated with growth in unemployment, a low turnout and a higher share of people born outside the EU. These economic and political factors are associated to a higher anti-EU sentiment in rural areas.

In post-communist context many studies converge on the finding that economic stagnation – particularly in regions left behind by national and EU-led development efforts – serves as a catalyst for political radicalization. A growing strand of empirical research from Central and Eastern Europe identifies economic vulnerability and regional inequalities – particularly unemployment – as key drivers of support for anti-system and populist political parties (Jastramskis et al., 2021; Rehák et al., 2021; Kuba et al., 2023). While differing in their national contexts and methodological approaches, both provide strong support for the hypothesis that structural economic grievances translate into a shift away from mainstream parties and toward more radical political alternatives. This trend not only reflects regional developmental imbalances but also signals a broader crisis of political representation in post-socialist democracies. Understanding the dialectic between party system instability, territorial political anchoring, and regional economic disadvantages is thus essential for analysing the emergence of fragmentation political parties in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **3 FROM HEGEMONY TO FRAGMENTATION: THE EVOLUTION OF ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR IN SLOVAKIA**

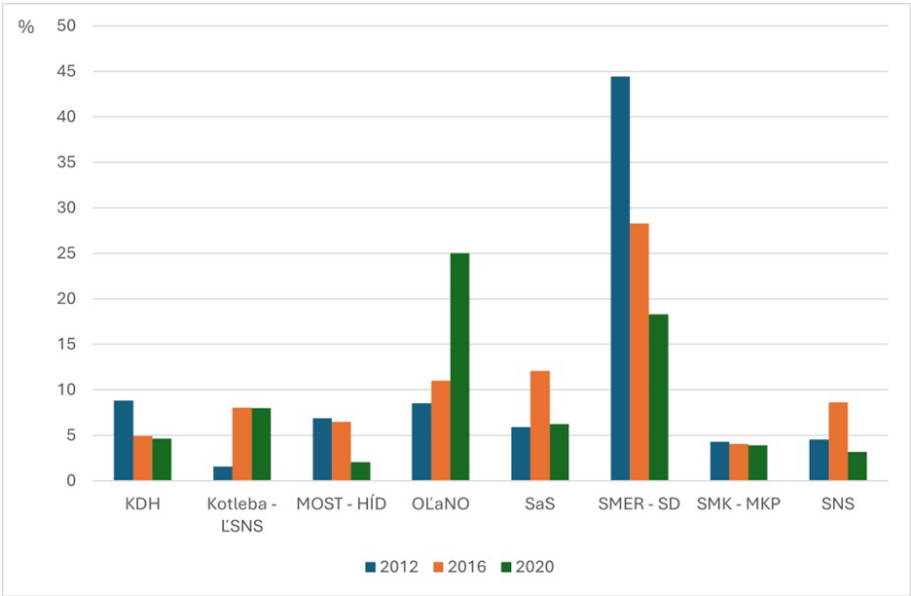
The Slovak political party system is divided by the so-called effect of the predominant party (Sartori, 1976). This factor has been its major feature since the founding of the republic in 1994. The first hegemony of the local political scene was „People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia“, known as HZDS led by then serving Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar. Their successor for the new millennium was „Direction – Social Democracy“, known as SMER-SD (originally as SMER) led by Prime Minister Robert Fico. The elections in 2012 can be seen as the peak of party predominance, when SMER-SD won the public vote enabling them to gather more than one-half majority of the national parliament (83 votes out of 150). It was the first time in the short history of modern Slovak Republic that a national government ruled by a single party could be formed. The post-election situation after the subsequent 2016 election has revealed a new crisis for such “catch-all” political parties. A new tendency among the voters appeared to support new political subjects instead. Some of the already traditional parties, such as “Christian Democratic Movement”, known as KDH didn't qualify to be included in the contemporary parliament. SMER-SD confirmed its success, even at the expense of relatively significant loss. A new coalition government was formed subscribing to a heterogeneous program composition. It is important to note that several of the new political parties were formed in the year 2009. Formation of these new political organizations has continually changed national political landscape, rolling on the wave of populism, and leading to further polarization and radicalization among the public.

Such tendencies were once again verified in 2013 regional election, first time won by the extreme right-wing politicians and their “anti-system” program in Banská Bystrica self-government (Mikuš et al., 2016; Buček and Plešivčák, 2017). Afterwards, the same party succeeded not surprisingly anymore in parliamentary election of 2016 with above 200 thousand votes for Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia known as ĽSNS. Political program was based on elementary slogans and populist solutions corresponding with the Lucardie's theory (2000) that people deeply dissatisfied with current political establishment look for their savior, a diviner or a spokesman.

What a warning about the political direction of the next generation is the result of the support of the ĽSNS party, which mobilized young people (first-time voters) (Korec and Przybyla, 2019; Rehák et al., 2021). However, it's not possible to deduce that significant part of the youngest citizens and future voters also sympathize with neo-fascist ideology (Voda et al., 2022). Interpretations of political scientists and journalists tend much more to relate with dissatisfaction with societal tensions, or declining future perspectives concerning socio-economic conditions among the young people in their twenties or younger. The literature literally mentions a new “lost generation” (Wolbers, 2016). Problems of inequality and poverty emerge especially in the social and geographical periphery, but inequality is opening a wide gap

of opportunities also in the very core of the country, in its biggest cities. A phenomenon of “working poverty” deals with employees working hard full-time despite not being practically able to satisfy the fast-increasing value of their basic needs (Lohmann, 2009; Babos, 2017). Wages grow slower than bills for them.

The period of our empirical observation between 2012 and 2019 is shaped by several influences providing the political system in Slovakia with its characteristic structure. Figure 1 show evolution of behaviour of voters in respect to a sample of eight currently relevant political parties in Slovakia, which have their regional voting history available both in 2012's and in 2020's parliamentary election. Of major significance especially appear effect of the predominant (government) party – SMER-SD, which have durable electoral support in specific post-industrial and rural regions, particularly in the east and south of the country (Haughton and Rybář, 2008). Discontinuity of electoral behaviour is often related to traditional conservation parties (KDH and SNS) and ethnic-based parties (MOST-HÍD, SMK-MKP). Their election results are unstable below the 5% threshold that guarantees a seat in parliament, except for MOST-HÍD. New liberal parties in economic issues (SAS) and new conservative political movement which gained a voter base on the fight against corruption and queerness with elements of populism (OLANO-NOVA) become regular participants in parliament. Finally, the political extremism narratives against queerness, minorities, migration and elites (Kotleba-ĽSNS) as non-parliamentary party in 2012, but as part parliamentary in opposition parties next years.



**Figure 1** Currently relevant political parties having historical records on regional voting from the previous election cycle in Slovakia. Source: SOSR (2012-2020), Elections and referenda

An important political swing in Slovakia occurred during the spring 2018, after journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová were killed. Kuciak's work indicated deeply worrying possibility of networking between crime, business and politics. In consequence of their murder largest protests in Slovakia filled squares of its cities since 1989 when previous generation protested against the communist dictatorship. Strong public pressure culminated in the Prime Minister's Fico resignation and in government reconstruction. Public dissatisfaction with the state of politics at the national level, and also at the various regional cases of corruption, which surfaced subsequently, caused that trust of people in government dropped dramatically. Even though political stability was significantly lower after spring 2018, some new "catch-all" (populistic) parties mobilized a significant portion of voters by pointing out the corrupt and illegal behaviour of SMER-SD political representatives (Haughton et al., 2022).

The last decade of political development (especially between 2012 and 2019) can be characterized by a volatile multiparty system, which repeatedly accommodates new political projects with short life cycles. This structural instability is exacerbated by low public trust in democratic institutions, widespread political skepticism, and the discontinuity of the political map, which is frequently redrawn by electoral volatility. The political landscape in Slovakia over the past decade has become pace from hegemonic to fragmented political system with high volatility of political parties, including the rise of populist political parties based on single-issue or single-use strategy, and increasing synchronization of political, business, and even criminal interests. As observed, the Slovak party system is simultaneously shaped by the effect of a predominant party, the rise of political extremism, and a growing entanglement between politics, business, and organized crime.

## **4 DATA AND METHODS**

Described connections between socio-economic environment and electoral behaviour in specific geographical context are projected in the spatial voting behaviour and problem of the electorate orientation. The pre-election polling has ability to indicate state of political opinions and tendencies of change in society. The political preferences also help politicians to measure what is meaningful in their continuous work and communication through media, increasingly through digital social media. Preference up- and down-swings offer a feedback providing information on the society's reactions to their actions. The pre-election polling is also highly followed and closely monitored by various public opinion stakeholders (Chábová, 2013). It is necessary to take into account their true value, but also not to overestimate them as the single and fully reliable quantitative measure of political support in general public.

We collect data on parliamentary election polling in Slovakia systematically throughout two voting cycles, the former complete one starting with the 2012 election and the later incomplete one starting with the 2016 election and progressing towards the nearest 2020 general election. Data on voting preferences are published on

strict monthly regular basis by three polling houses (AKO, FOCUS, MEDIAN) employing a national representative set of respondents stratified by age, gender, and place of residence. Slovakia suffers a substantial socio-economic disparity among its regional units, as well as between so called “urban” and “rural” voting behaviour pattern, to some extent corresponding with the liberal-conservative polarity. Another dimension of importance is ethnic structure, which differentiates between areas with dominating majority and areas with more pronounced minorities, namely Hungarian and Roma in the Southern and Eastern regions of the country. The sample is usually sized at or slightly above one thousand threshold enabling to measure the preference with around  $\pm 2.5$  per cent. Frequency of polling increases near the election date and additional polling houses become active, as the demand for measurement in political and journalistic fields also increases. We keep as much information as possible to be gathered from the existing archives of press, broadcasting and online media. This analysis will focus on the hypothesis of economic voting. Namely we will attempt to measure how voting intentions vary over the election cycle's duration, on how this trend correlates with the business cycle approximated by the national unemployment rate; and how these two depend on the latest election result. In Table 1 we see a general trend of decline in the average unemployment rate in Slovakia, with lagging regions in the eastern part of the country recording the highest decline, which is in line with the catching-up theory (see Ženka et al., 2024).

**Table 1** Unemployment rate in regions of Slovakia (NUTS III) (in %)

Region (NUTS III)	2011	2015	2019	Difference 2019-2011
Bratislava region	5.41	5.34	2.83	-2.58
Trnava region	8.88	6.71	2.63	-6.25
Trenčín region	9.95	7.71	3.2	-6.75
Nitra region	13.27	9.71	2.93	-10.34
Žilina region	11.91	8.86	3.96	-7.95
Banská Bystrica region	19.83	14.94	6.69	-13.14
Prešov region	18.95	15.5	8.19	-10.76
Košice region	18.76	14.39	7.57	-11.19

Source of data: SOSR (2011-2019). Data on unemployment rate.

Regression models include full period 2012-2019 seen through the polling data towards scheduled 2020 election. Differentiating among individual political parties, grouped by their parliamentary status, participation on the national government, or parliamentary opposition, we believe a concise pattern will arise about connection between economies and national politics, in the end always stretched between previous and next voting. The electorate, as a set of economically active agents, necessarily reacts to changing economic conditions, progressively depending less on the



factors enclosed within the national boundaries and influenced by forces originating in global chain of economic linkages. However, the nation-state arena and political representation are in contrast to that objective setting still seen, and remain dominantly portrayed so by the mainstream media, as if local politics had still the main word in shaping of this crucially multinational, open and borderless reality. Another element of crucial importance stepping into the concept affecting our research here is the international migration, one of the fundamental dimensions in construction of common market within the EU, but not only because multinational companies in current world operate practically across the globe and connected individuals in consequence loose a part of their identification, and in the effect of responsibility, to participate on the national democratic process. Therefore, methodologically, our research will be limited by the consequences of these practical complications, but we argue despite understanding them that knowledge of the systematic forces, their orientation and strength, can bring useful insight into how the local political multi-party system evolves, and especially, that it evolves in a less random fashion than it might seem to if one abstracts from the political-economic realities crossing conceptual barriers between the two too often.

The key methodological tool used in the following analysis is regression model connecting three variables: polling election preference for specific party; the same political party's election result; delay in number of days since the latest general elections to which polling is linked as the midday representing data collection by the specific polling house; and finally the explanatory variable of interest – the registered unemployment rate corresponding to that date. Additionally, we also employ three fixed effects variables, constructed as dummy variables identifying specific month and year; specific polling house; and also importantly specific political party. First set of fixed effects is believed to gather information on various continuous and disruptive trends, or shocks influencing the national political-economic system besides business cycle and progressing time themselves, in other words capturing all unobserved chronological dimension possibly affecting voting preferences. Second set of effects captures similar unobserved factors hidden in varying background and methodological specificities of individual polling houses, which despite their maximum efforts to reach objectivity and representativeness may include certain amount of bias in the pooled information. Third set of fixed effects corrects our approach for all unobserved effects arising from political content communicated and experienced by various political forces, and their leading figures present in media and affecting citizen's evolving support towards them or their competitors, especially given the status of participating on parliament and national government or opposition, basically providing fundamentals for democratic process and ongoing control of the political forces in power at the time. Three explanatory variables will in each version of the model also interacted to capture possibly changing nature of relationship to polling ( $p$ ), depending on the superposition of the two – delay from the election and party's magnitude ( $d*v$ ), delay from the election and economic conditions ( $d*u$ ), and party's magnitude and economic conditions again ( $v*u$ ), in presence of fixed effects (*f. e.*):

$$\log(p) \sim \log(d) + \log(v) + \log(u) + \log(d)*\log(v) + \log(d)*\log(u) + \log(v)*\log(u) + f. e.$$

It is expected that slow economy, less jobs and more unemployed citizens will lead systematically to less political support to existing parties and intensive openness towards new, alternative political forces. It is also expected that this effect will be more pronounced to the more visible political parties in terms of support magnitude in latest elections, or in the rate of their participation in the central institutions of the state – the parliament and the national government. Parties in opposition are expected to indicate the effects systematically having opposite direction to those affecting preferences for parties in government. Economic arena is actually the only viable space for political clash in stable liberal democracies in stable geopolitical framework, which has been the case in Slovakia over these election cycles without doubts. Moreover, Slovakia as the member of the economical periphery within the integrated European Union (so called New Member State) used to have typical problems of economies in post-transition phase of development, which was more less the case of practically all neighbouring and nearby economies as well, with the exception of Austria. Economy has always been the issue in political agenda, and remained so until the latest period which starts increasingly to turn towards other dimensions of development as well. We believe that this is the sign of development progress, and public debate freed from basic existential threats with slow but steady increase of life quality, despite opening gaps between socio-economic strata. Significant and systematic patterns of effects found between voting intentions of citizens, and changing conditions of economy will signal that the democratic process actually works in Slovakia as anticipated, and in some sense, our research aims to support the crucial question if the political system as portrayed by a long series of polling indicates signs of evolutionary change, offering hope to the progressive, improving state of socio-economic conditions of the country as such. In case that these connections will not be found, we may hypothesize about limited functionalities inherited from more distant past, from the turbulent transition period, or perhaps from the influences from the globalized context to which Slovakia is and becomes even more economically linked than ever before (Rusnák et al., 2023b).

## 5 RESULTS

Tables 2 to 5 summarize multiple regression models, which systematically test for existence of economic voting hypothesis as it appears from the variation in general election polling in Slovakia throughout two election cycles between the elections of 2012 and 2020, while the late cycle is still in progress in our study, entering its last year. The models are presented in sequences of four versions, adding dummy variables, which are meant to capture: (1) unobserved variation in polling due to specific chronological shocks, correlated with politically relevant internal and external events, season of the year, or similar factors which are uncorrelated with changing condition of national economy and its ability to create sufficient quantities and quality of jobs; (2) unobserved variation in source of data, meaning the specific

polling house potentially adding certain bias due to methodological procedures, network of field workers responsible for interviews; (3) unobserved variation in political content of specific parties, different than just the magnitude of support among the eventual future voters. Three variables of interest – days after election (d), latest vote (v), and unemployment (u) are included as individual explanatory variables, and mutually interacted in three pairs, in order to capture possible, and actually highly probable way of complexity in the relationships of interest, where the effect of economy on voting changes along the voting cycle, and along the magnitude spectrum.

Table 2 includes effect estimates for four regression model versions testing economic voting hypothesis on a full sample of all political parties having a previous election result, effectively excluding all new political projects before their first election participation. It can be seen that in general, moving in time after the election in general leads to increase in preferences, and that this effect is lost once the fixed effects for specific months and years are included. Latest voting support is a significant, robust predictor of polls, and remains so irrespective of any kind of fixed effects' inclusion. Unemployment, in general appears significant and positive, but similar to time after election, loses significance with chronological fixed effects. Moreover, latest voting support is robustly negatively interacted with time since election, as well as unemployment conditions, which in total supports our hypothesis of truly existing pattern of linkages between the dynamics in political scene and national economy, even though their pattern is far from linear and straightforward. Following four tables document how the same system of effects varies across the subsamples, first only selecting non-parliamentary parties, than switching to their parliamentary competition, and finally differentiating between the government and the opposition.

It worth noting to describe a result of subsample of non-parliamentary (Kotleba-LSNS), opposition parties (OLANO and SAS) and government parties (SMER-SD). In Table 3, we can see that the support of the non-parliamentary Kotleba-LSNS during periods of higher unemployment enabled the party to convert even a low voter base into above-average preferences in the polls. Conversely, as the economic situation improves, support becomes more tied to previous electoral performance. In Table 5, the interaction effect between the latest vote and the unemployment rate shows that for opposition parliamentary parties such as OLANO and SAS, at a time of low unemployment, their support was less predictable from their previous election results, which was related to the dynamically changing social situation (the murder of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová) and the growth of fragmentation on the part of voters. Conversely, the (decreasing) preferences of the SMER-SD party is not related to the improved economic situation. Their election result is “saved” by their previously strong electoral base (Table 4).

In order to allow for non-linearity in hypothetical relationships, we construct these models in log-log form. Various combinations of conditions are illustrated on simulations in Figure 2. Political parties are differentiated between the parties participating on national parliament, and non-parliamentary parties. Slovakia's constitu-

**Table 2** Estimates of the effects (OLS) of latest voting and business cycle on polling in Slovakia between 2012 and 2019 controlled by three kinds of fixed effects (f. e.). SEs are in parentheses \*P<0.1; \*\*P<0.05; \*\*\*P<0.01. All political parties in full sample

Independent variables	Parliamentary election polls			
	1	2	3	4
Days after election (d)	0.368*** (0.127)	-0.069 (3.406)	0.400 (3.439)	-0.474 (2.205)
Latest vote (v)	2.035*** (0.153)	2.020*** (0.155)	2.026*** (0.155)	1.471*** (0.113)
Unemployment (u)	1.034*** (0.344)	-0.327 (9.270)	1.048 (9.359)	-1.514 (6.002)
d*v	-0.085*** (0.013)	-0.084*** (0.013)	-0.084*** (0.013)	-0.048*** (0.009)
d*u	-0.077 (0.052)	0.113 (1.429)	-0.108 (1.442)	0.238 (0.925)
v*u	-0.215*** (0.048)	-0.209*** (0.049)	-0.212*** (0.049)	-0.033 (0.034)
Month & Year f. e.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Polling house f. e.	No	No	Yes	Yes
Polit. party f. e.	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,104	2,104	2,104	2,104
R <sup>2</sup>	0.774	0.778	0.780	0.910
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.773	0.769	0.770	0.905
F statistic	1,197.0***	85.2***	77.4***	200.0***
df	6	83	92	101

Source of data: SOSR (2011-2019), AKO (2012-2020), FOCUS (2012-2020) and MEDIAN (2012-2020)

**Table 3** Estimates of the effects (OLS) of latest voting and business cycle on polling in Slovakia between 2012 and 2019 controlled by three kinds of fixed effects (f. e.). SEs are in parentheses \*P<0.1; \*\*P<0.05; \*\*\*P<0.01. Non-parliamentary parties in a subsample

Independent variables	Parliamentary election polls			
	1	2	3	4
Days after election (d)	-0.038 (0.220)	-4.596 (5.001)	-5.358 (4.893)	-5.803 (4.784)
Latest vote (v)	4.695*** (0.830)	6.263*** (0.877)	6.242*** (0.850)	4.642*** (0.910)
Unemployment (u)	1.486** (0.668)	-10.205 (13.472)	-11.934 (13.188)	-13.572 (12.910)
d*v	-0.033 (0.045)	-0.054 (0.045)	-0.055 (0.044)	-0.009 (0.051)
d*u	0.078 (0.080)	2.013 (2.058)	2.222 (2.015)	2.389 (1.970)
v*u	-1.350*** (0.252)	-1.918*** (0.271)	-1.907*** (0.262)	-1.521*** (0.343)
Month & Year f. e.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Polling house f. e.	No	No	Yes	Yes
Polit. party f. e.	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	632	632	632	632
R <sup>2</sup>	0.710	0.755	0.774	0.785
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.707	0.718	0.735	0.748
F statistic	255.3***	20.3***	20.1***	20.9***
df	6	83	92	94

Source of data: SOSR (2011-2019), AKO (2012-2020), FOCUS (2012-2020) and MEDIAN (2012-2020)

**Table 4** Estimates of the effects (OLS) of latest voting and business cycle on polling in Slovakia between 2012 and 2019 controlled by three kinds of fixed effects (f. e.). SEs are in parentheses \*P<0.1; \*\*P<0.05; \*\*\*P<0.01. Government parties in a subsample

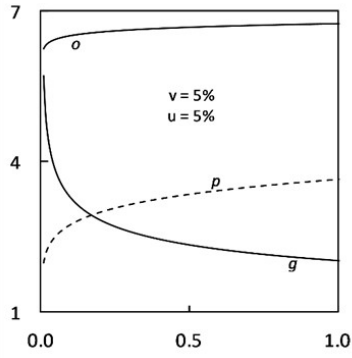
Independent variables	Parliamentary election polls			
	1	2	3	4
Days after election ( <i>d</i> )	-0.450 (0.564)	3.063 (12.080)	5.090 (12.274)	3.069 (4.849)
Latest vote ( <i>v</i> )	2.242*** (0.615)	-0.002 (1.420)	-0.017 (1.429)	2.229*** (0.583)
Unemployment ( <i>u</i> )	-0.771 (2.030)	7.306 (33.516)	12.882 (34.032)	9.818 (13.445)
<i>d*v</i>	-0.049 (0.046)	0.098 (0.102)	0.098 (0.103)	0.060 (0.041)
<i>d*u</i>	0.198 (0.240)	-1.479 (5.236)	-2.358 (5.317)	-1.412 (2.100)
<i>v*u</i>	-0.266 (0.218)	0.442 (0.451)	0.449 (0.454)	-0.328* (0.180)
Month & Year f. e.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Polling house f. e.	No	No	Yes	Yes
Polit. party f. e.	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	459	459	459	459
R <sup>2</sup>	0.770	0.783	0.786	0.967
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.767	0.735	0.732	0.958
F statistic	253.3***	16.3***	14.6***	112.7***
Df	6	83	92	94

Source of data: SOSR (2011-2019), AKO (2012-2020), FOCUS (2012-2020) and MEDIAN (2012-2020)

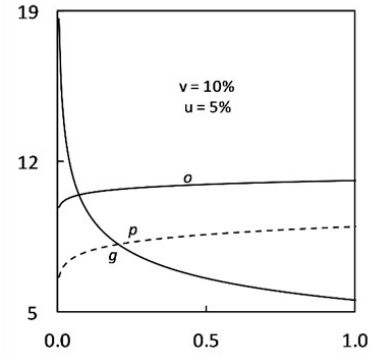
**Table 5** Estimates of the effects (OLS) of latest voting and business cycle on polling in Slovakia between 2012 and 2019 controlled by three kinds of fixed effects (f. e.). SEs are in parentheses \*P<0.1; \*\*P<0.05; \*\*\*P<0.01. Parliamentary opposition parties in a subsample

Independent variables	Parliamentary election polls			
	1	2	3	4
Days after election ( <i>d</i> )	0.133 (0.147)	0.945 (2.579)	1.273 (2.578)	0.565 (2.149)
Latest vote ( <i>v</i> )	-0.066 (0.344)	-0.045 (0.341)	-0.044 (0.337)	-3.636*** (0.825)
Unemployment ( <i>u</i> )	-0.609* (0.341)	0.903 (6.976)	1.670 (6.974)	-1.606 (5.838)
<i>d*v</i>	0.010 (0.035)	-0.049 (0.035)	-0.049 (0.035)	0.157*** (0.047)
<i>d*u</i>	-0.083* (0.044)	-0.344 (1.070)	-0.436 (1.070)	-0.323 (0.891)
<i>v*u</i>	0.440*** (0.107)	0.584*** (0.107)	0.584*** (0.106)	1.831*** (0.239)
Month & Year f. e.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Polling house f. e.	No	No	Yes	Yes
Polit. party f. e.	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	1,011	1,011	1,011	1,011
R <sup>2</sup>	0.586	0.634	0.646	0.757
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.583	0.602	0.611	0.731
F statistic	236.9***	19.4***	18.3***	29.3***
Df	6	83	92	97

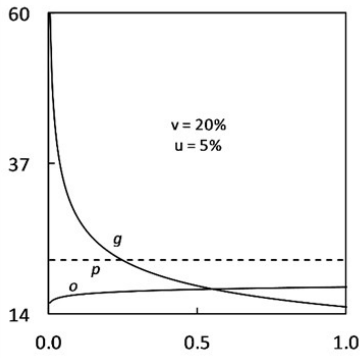
Source of data: SOSR (2011-2019), AKO (2012-2020), FOCUS (2012-2020) and MEDIAN (2012-2020)



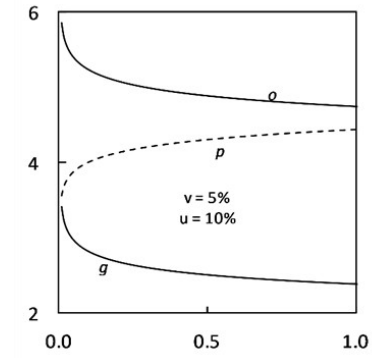
2a



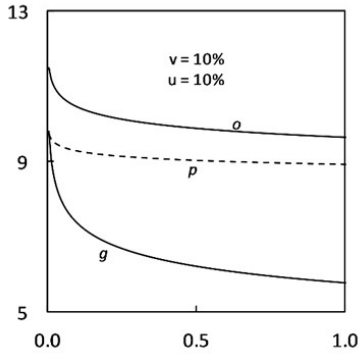
2b



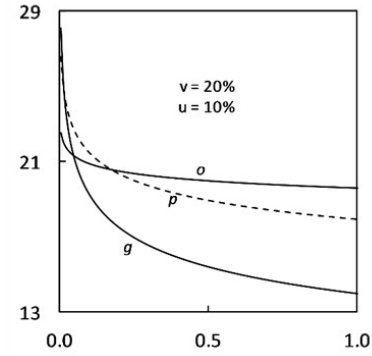
2c



2d

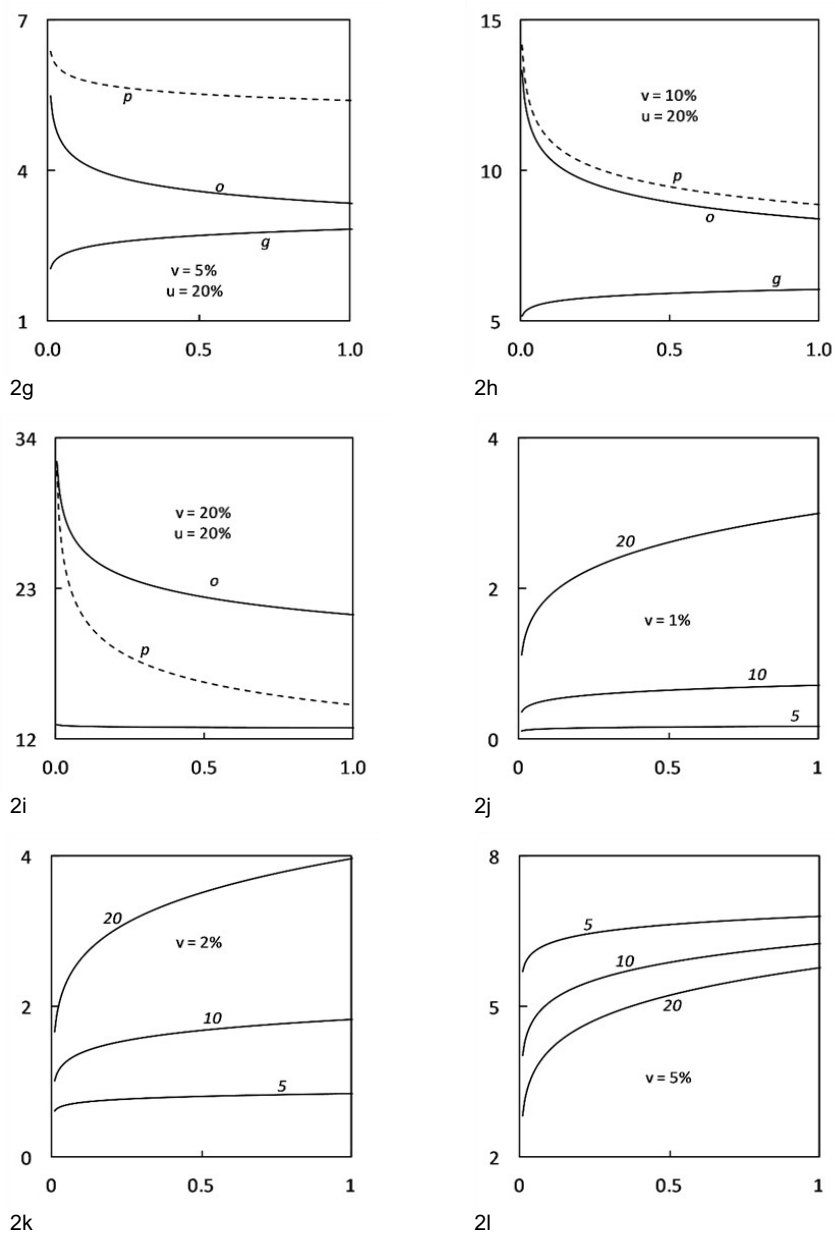


2e



2f

Note: Parliamentary political parties ( $p$ ) are differentiated between government parties ( $g$ ), opposition parties ( $o$ ) in panels 2a to 2i. Panels 2j to 2l summarize simulations for non-parliamentary political parties using different latest vote magnitudes at the levels of 1%, 2% and 5%, cut by the threshold for entering parliament in Slovakia.



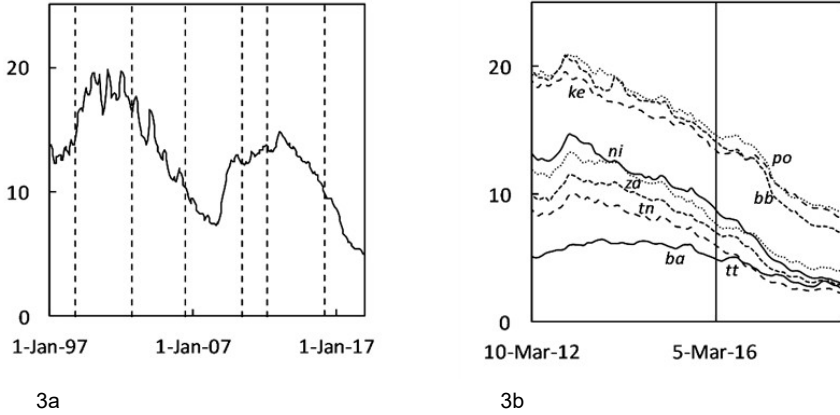
**Figure 2** Parliamentary election polling evolving across the typical election cycle for various combinations of latest vote ( $v$ ) and conditions of national economy indicated by the unemployment rate ( $u$ ) held constant in simulation at the levels of 5%, 10%, or 20%. Source of data: SOSR (2011-2019), AKO (2012-2020), FOCUS (2012-2020) and MEDIAN (2012-2020)

tion law sets a firm 5.0% threshold for entering the parliament, therefore non-parliamentary parties are only summarized for three example sizes – 1%, 2% and 5% voting outcome from latest election in the panels 2j, 2k and 2l. Parliament parties are in the second step differentiated between the parties participating on the national government, taking part on so called coalition, and the parties included in parliament but not in government, taking part on so called opposition. The parliamentary parties summarized for three example sizes – 5%, 10% and 20%. Figure 2 is simulated based on the relationships estimated without fixed effects, describing behaviour of a typical polling, averaged over specific months, polling houses and political parties. The curves indicate a non-trivial mixture of non-linear increase or decrease of voting support appearing especially shortly after the election date and stabilizing along the progress of the election period. Certain types of parties in certain economic conditions indicate on contrary a linear behaviour without disruptions typical for others. Government parties are easiest to spot in all of the panels of this figure. Their curves are falling fast and very deep relative to the latest voting outcome. A different story can be on contrary seen in the panels 2g to 2i, which is showing how the situation unfolds in very problematic scenario of national unemployment level of 20%. In this case, superposition of all individual and interaction effects generates a slightly increasing or perfectly stable curve, without any sign of a typical government party decline, present in all the preceding simulated scenario cases. It is not surprising that we also observe a contrasting regularity if simulation runs for opposition parliamentary parties. The curves summarizing their behaviour indicate nearly universal decline in support over the election cycle, except the best economic conditions, when opposition parties tend to slightly grow in support from their potential future voters. Government and opposition behave according to perfectly contrasting rules linked with economic conditions and labour market in Slovakia. Third element to this interpretation can be found in three last panels of the Figure 2. Non-parliamentary parties, irrespective of their support, increase in polling along the election cycle universally. There is however variation in the changing nature of increase, including speed and way of trend stabilization, but the increase is never switched for decline. Non-parliamentary political parties, even if small in latest vote magnitude, tend to collect relative support, in any economic conditions in Slovakia, systematically increasing their chances of election success.

The findings of regression models can be indirectly verified using the variation in labour market performance among the eight regions of Slovakia, which create conditions in which regional election behaviour varies and changes throughout the latest election cycle. Figure 3 is summarizing monthly time series showing national business cycle, composed of eight regional segments over the latest two election periods, since 2012 and 2016. Figure 3a clearly shows cyclical nature of national economic conditions, in which regular 10-years long waves systematically phases of recession and recovery switch between each other, while an indication of a downward trend also appears. Some of the election periods chronologically appear in coincidence with economic peaks, others with troughs. Some governments face the challenges of worsening situation, while others enjoy seeming stability of booming



economy. Figure 3b decomposes the latest cycle's recovery phase according to regional variation, in which two convergence clubs appear in consequence of spatial disparities in Slovakia between the Western and the Eastern part of the country. Regional economic polarity in Slovakia is a very typical feature of modern market economies, in which enormous efforts of public development to support lagging regions remain mostly useless, facing organic forces of economic clustering near the metropolitan regions, or well connected with metropolitan area by infrastructure.



**Figure 3** National economic cycle (express by unemployment level) in Slovakia between 1997 and 2019 (panel 2a), and seven election periods, including incomplete first and last one. Regional unemployment levels (panel 2b) evolving across the two election cycles in current history of Slovakia's economy. Source of data: Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (2019)

## 6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Our findings positively verify the existence of systematic linkages between the national economic context expressed by unemployment rate and political dynamics, quantified by regular pre-election polling. High unemployment, in case of non-parliamentary parties (Kotleba-ĽSNS) appears significant and positive, but similar to time after election, loses significance with chronological fixed effects. Conversely, as the economic situation improves, support becomes more tied to previous electoral result. This is not the case for the opposition parties (OĽANO and SAS), which gain electoral support in times of low unemployment. In the case of the SMER-SD party, the improved economic situation is reflected in a decline in electoral results. However, the simulation showed that stable electoral results would be ensured by a scenario of national unemployment level of 20%.

Although the regional inequalities in Slovakia in socio-economic indicators have gradually stabilized after 2016 (Rusnák et al., 2023b), the dominant position of Bratislava as a metropolitan centre in the regional structure is the subject of dissatisfaction and resistance. The electoral behaviour of citizens is affected by another

factors (Rusnák et al., 2023a). One of the most important among them is the economic situation in which voters observe themselves, and the socio-cultural background in which voters live their everyday lives. The level and distribution of living standard of household, amenities available across various regions of the country, regional traditions in gender division of labour, nature of family life in relation to religion, ethnicity and other inherited patterns of behaviour are changing dramatically since the end of socialism and influence how they decide concerning democratic acts. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, citizens of countries in the Central Europe experienced dramatic social experiments, consequences of which are still present, perhaps sometimes only latent in the way of expression. Studies have emerged pointing out that post-socialism nostalgia embodied in various forms of nostalgic industry seeks to exploit at niche market for certain political capital. Bužalka (2022) claim that the post-peasant populism rise. Often, the element of sentiment, nostalgia becomes involved in voting behaviour. In fact, socialism nostalgia is a utopian desire for a perfect world that never existed (Velikonja, 2009). These differences in the perception of economic prosperity, justice and freedom in citizens' society converge in two antagonistic streams of ideologies, the conservatism and the liberalism. The conservatism prevails in rural territories, peripheral regions, which can be highly specialized in the economic sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, public and basic market services. These parts of country suffer from gaps in their under-developed transport infrastructure (Krivý et al., 1996; Plešivčák and Buček, 2017). Resulting local economies are thin. Jobs created locally are not sufficient in quality and quantity to attract talent – lack of vibrant urbanity of big cities, non-presence of unique or different lifestyles, and a sense of local community mostly in virtual space. New world order of constructed by alternative social media (Kuba and Meričková, 2023) is the platform for new rural community building with extremist narratives (Buzalka, 2021). Other possibility of socializing is often only available in conservative religious communities (Tížik, 2021; Nemčiková et al., 2023). But still, signs of newly born citizens' society can be traced even in peripheral areas, small towns and countryside, in form of developing non-government sector, developing unique projects in social entrepreneurship and innovation, organically constructing new bottom-up forms of local social capital. On contrary, the liberalism is represented typically in metropolitan areas of regional urban centres, where we observe a more diversified economic structure at the labour market, a closer interaction among different social communities (Rusnák et al., 2023a). From this perspective, there are truly different opinions about the political direction of the development in the country between its various parts. It appears that this kind of cross-ideological mixing change the electoral map from traditional hegemonic political parties toward fragmenting multiple small political parties of a single issue or a single use.

### **Acknowledgements**

*This paper was prepared with support from research grant VEGA No. 1/0252/23 – “Spatial systems resilience – Its factors, differentiation and consequences”.*

## References

- AGGEBORN, L., PERSSON, L. 2017. *Public finance and right-wing populism*. IFN Working Paper 1182.
- ANDERSEN, R., FETNER, T. 2008. Economic inequality and intolerance: attitudes toward homosexuality in 35 democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52, 942-958.
- AKO. 2012-2020. *Surveys on electoral preferences of political parties*. Bratislava, AKO agency.
- BABOS, P. 2017. The Working Poor in Post-Communist EU: What can Social Policy Change? *Ekonomický časopis*, 65, 876-895.
- BAHNA, M., ZAGRAPAN, J. 2020. The electoral success of the extreme right. *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review*, 56, 291-314.
- BUČEK, J., PLEŠIVČÁK, M. 2017. Self-government, development and political extremism at the regional level: A case study from the Banská Bystrica region in Slovakia. *Sociológia*, 49, 599-635.
- BUZALKA, J. 2021. Village fascists and progressive populists: Two faces of the counter-movement in Slovakia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 73, 1658-1682.
- BUZALKA, J. 2022. The post-peasant populism of Eastern Europe: on resilience and the mobilisation of an economic base. *Ethnologia Polona*, 43, 41-61.
- BUZALKA, J., FIGULOVÁ, A. 2024. Post-peasant progressivism as a kind of populism. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 32, 978-993.
- CENTRAL OFFICE OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND FAMILY. 2019. *Data on monthly unemployment rates*. Bratislava, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.
- DE DOMINICIS, L., DIJKSTRA, L., PONTAROLLO, N. 2022. Why are cities less opposed to European integration than rural areas? *Cities*, 130, 103937.
- DIJKSTRA, L., POELMAN, H., RODRÍGUEZ-POSE, A. 2020. The geography of EU discontent. *Regional Studies*, 54, 737-753.
- FOCUS. 2012-2020. *Surveys on electoral preferences of political parties*. Bratislava, FOCUS agency.
- FORD, R., GOODWIN, M. 2014. Understanding UKIP: Identity, social change and the left behind. *The Political Quarterly*, 85, 277-284.
- GILENS, M. 2005. Inequality and democratic responsiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 69, 778-796.
- GOODWIN, M., HEATH, O. 2016. The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left Behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result. *The Political Quarterly*, 87, 323-332.
- HAN, K. J. 2016. Income inequality and voting for radical right-wing parties. *Electoral Studies*, 42, 54-64.
- HANLEY, S., SIKK, A. 2016. Economy, corruption or floating voters? Explaining the breakthroughs of anti-establishment reform parties in eastern Europe. *Party Politics*, 22, 522-533.
- HAUGHTON, T., DEEGAN-KRAUSE, K. 2015. Hurricane Season: Systems of Instability in Central and East European Party Politics. *East European Politics and Societies*, 29, 61-80.
- HAUGHTON, T., RYBÁŘ, M. 2008. A change of direction: The 2006 parliamentary elections and party politics in Slovakia. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 24, 232-255.
- HAUGHTON, T., RYBÁŘ, M., DEEGAN-KRAUSE, K. 2022. Corruption, campaigning, and novelty: The 2020 parliamentary elections and the evolving patterns of party politics in Slovakia. *East European Politics and Societies*, 36, 728-752.
- HOBOLT, S. B., TILLEY, J. 2016. Fleeing the centre: the rise of challenger parties in the aftermath of the euro crisis. *West European Politics*, 39, 971-991.

- CHÁBOVÁ, K. 2013. Komparace metodických postupů předvolebních průzkumů agentur CVVM, ppm factum, Median a STEM. *Naše společnost*, 1, 25-35.
- JASTRAMSKIS, M., KUOKŠTIS, V., BALTRUKIČIUS, M. 2021. Retrospective Voting in Central and Eastern Europe: Hyper-Accountability, Corruption or Socio-Economic Inequality? *Party Politics*, 27, 667-679.
- KANCELOVÁ, N. V. 2024. Radical voters in rural areas of Slovakia and their role in the rise (and fall) of the ĽSNS party. *Studia Politica Slovaca*, 17, 5-19.
- KEVICKÝ, D. 2024. Where is the populist radical right successful? *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 65, 605-626.
- KOREC, P., PRZYBYLA, V. 2019. Kríza kapitalizmu, globalizácia a post-industriálny vývoj spoločnosti a ich vplyv na politický vývoj na Slovensku. *Acta Geographica Universitatis Comenianae*, 63, 69-102.
- KRIVÝ, V., FEGLOVÁ, V., BALKO, D. 1996. *Slovensko a jeho regióny - sociokultúrne súvislosti volebného správania*. Bratislava, Nadácia Média.
- KUBA, O., HUDEC, O., STEJSKAL, J. 2023. Economic Discontent and Anti-System Political Parties in the Czech Republic. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 70, 606-617.
- KUBA, O., MERÍKOVÁ, B. M. 2023. Political Engagement, Media, or Satisfaction? Finding Determinants of Voter Turnout in the Czech Republic. *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice. Series D, Faculty of Economics & Administration*, 31, 1746.
- LOHMANN, H. 2009. Welfare states, labour market institutions and the working poor: A comparative analysis of 20 European countries. *European Sociological Review*, 25, 489-504.
- LUCARDIE, P. 2000. Prophets, Purifiers and Prolocutors: Towards a Theory on the Emergence of New Parties. *Party Politics*, 6, 175-185.
- MACKINNON, D., KEMPTON, L., O'BRIEN, P., ORMEROD, E., PIKE, A., TOMANEY, J. 2022. Reframing urban and regional 'development' for 'left behind' places. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 15, 39-56.
- MEDIAN. 2012-2020. *Surveys on electoral preferences of political parties*. Bratislava, MEDIAN agency.
- MIKUŠ, R., GURŇÁK, D., MÁRIÁSSYOVÁ, A. 2016. Analýza volebnej podpory Mariána Kotlebu ako reprezentanta krajnej pravice v krajských voľbách 2013. *Sociológia*, 48, 48-70.
- NEMČÍKOVÁ, M., OREMUSOVÁ, D., HAVLÍČEK, T., KROGMANN, A. 2023. Religious affiliation in Czechia and Slovakia: comparison and regional differentiation. *Geografický časopis*, 75, 409-427.
- PEMPEL, T. J. 1990. *Uncommon democracies: The one-party dominant regimes*. New York, Cornell University Press.
- PLEŠIVČÁK, M. 2023. How electoral geography can help in struggle with the far right: Example of Slovakia. *Journal of Comparative Politics*, 16, 110-125.
- PLEŠIVČÁK, M., BUČEK, J. 2017. In the centre, but still on the periphery: Is there any room for development of socio-economically deprived region in Slovakia? *International Journal of Social Economics*, 44, 1539-1558.
- PONTUSSON, J., RUEDA, D. 2010. The politics of Inequality: voter mobilization and left parties in advanced industrial states. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43, 675-705.
- REHÁK, Š., RAFAJ, O., ČERNĚNKO, T. 2021. EU integration, regional development problems and the rise of the new radical right in Slovakia. *Regional Science Policy & Practice*, 13, 303-322.
- RODRÍGUEZ-POSE, A. 2018. The revenge of the places that don't matter. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 11, 189-209.
- RODRÍGUEZ-POSE, A., DIJKSTRA, L., POELMAN, H. 2024. The geography of EU discontent and the regional development trap. *Economic Geography*, 100, 213-245.

- RUSNÁK, J., ĎURČEK, P., KOREC, P., PLEŠIVČÁK, M. 2023a. Questing for contexts in the research of regional inequalities in Slovakia: Application of the concept of critical realism. *Acta Geographica Universitatis Comenianae*, 67, 187-215.
- RUSNÁK, J., KOREC, P., PLEŠIVČÁK, M. 2023b. The trade-off between national growth and interregional inequality: three decades of regional development in Slovakia. *Geografický časopis*, 75, 291-311.
- SARTORI, G. 1976. *Parties and party systems: A framework for analysis*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SOLT, F. 2010. Does economic inequality depress electoral participation? Testing the schattschneider hypothesis. *Political Behavior*, 32, 285-301.
- SOSR. 2011-2019. *Data on unemployment rate*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.
- SOSR. 2011-2019. *Elections and referenda*. Bratislava, Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.
- ŠTEFANČÍK, R., STRADIOTOVÁ, E. 2022. The far-right and the Roma. *Acta Geographica Universitatis Comenianae*, 66, 165-186.
- TÍŽIK, M. 2021. Religious Minority as a Source of National and State Identity: The Case of Slovakia. *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 50, 513-538.
- VAN LEEUWEN, E. S., VEGA, S. H. 2021. Voting and the rise of populism: Spatial perspectives. *Regional Science Policy and Practice*, 13, 209-219.
- VELIKONJA, M. 2009. Lost in transition: Nostalgia for socialism in post-socialist countries. *East European Politics and Societies*, 23, 535-551.
- VODA, P., KLUKNAVSKÁ, A., SPÁČ, P. 2022. From trivialized neo-Nazis to parliament. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 69, 498-513.
- WOLBERS, M. 2016. A generation lost? Prolonged effects of labour market entry in times of high unemployment in the Netherlands. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 46, 51-59.
- ŽENKA, J., RUSNÁK, J., ČERVENKA, A. 2024. Ekonomika základných potrieb a ekonomická odolnosť českých a slovenských regiónů v průběhu čtyř recesí. *Geografie*, 129, 61-90.

## **Od hegemonie k fragmentácii: volebné správanie v kontexte ekonomických podmienok Slovenska v čase medzikrizového obdobia**

### **Súhrn**

Zistenia prezentované v tomto článku potvrdzujú existenciu systematických pozitívnych prepojení medzi národným ekonomickým kontextom vyjadreným mierou nezamestnanosti a politickou dynamikou, reprezentovanou pravidelnými predvolebnými prieskumami. Vysoká nezamestnanosť sa v prípade mimoparlamentných strán (Kotleba-ĽSNS) javí ako významná a pozitívna, ale podobne ako v čase po voľbách stráca na význame s chronologicky fixnými účinkami. Naopak, so zlepšovaním ekonomickej situácie sa podpora tejto strany viac viaže na predchádzajúci volebný výsledok. To neplatí pre opozičné strany (OLANO a SAS), ktoré získavajú volebnú podporu v časoch nízkej nezamestnanosti. V prípade strany SMER-SD sa zlepšená ekonomická situácia odráža v poklese volebných výsledkov. Simulácia však ukázala, že stabilné volebné výsledky by zabezpečil scenár s národnou úrovňou nezamestnanosti 20 %.

Volebné správanie občanov je ovplyvnené rôznymi faktormi. Jedným z najdôležitejších je ekonomická situácia, v ktorej sa voliči nachádzajú, a sociokultúrne pozadie, v ktorom voliči žijú svoj každodenný život. Úroveň a rozdiely v životnej úrovni

domácností, vybavenie dostupné v rôznych regiónoch krajiny, regionálne tradície v rodovej deľbe práce, charakter rodinného života vo vzťahu k náboženstvu, etnickej príslušnosti a ďalšie zdedené vzorce správania sa od konca socializmu dramaticky menia a ovplyvňujú to, ako sa občania rozhodujú v demokratických voľbách. Do volebného správania sa často zapája prvok sentimentu, či nostalgie. Počas druhej polovice 20. storočia obyvatelia krajín strednej Európy zažili dramatické sociálne experimenty, ktorých dôsledky sú stále prítomné. Objavili sa štúdie, ktoré poukazujú na to, že postsocialistická nostalgia, stelesnená v rôznych formách, sa snaží využiť špecifický segment elektorátu v kontexte politického zápasu. V skutočnosti je socialistická nostalgia utopickou túžbou po dokonalom svete, ktorý nikdy neexistoval (Velikonja, 2009). Tieto rozdiely vo vnímaní ekonomickej prosperity, spravodlivosti a slobody v občianskej spoločnosti sa zbiehajú v dvoch antagonistických ideologických prúdoch, konzervativizme a liberalizme. Konzervativizmus prevláda vo vidieckych oblastiach, periférnych regiónoch, ktoré majú predpoklady sa vysoko špecializovať na ekonomické sektory ako poľnohospodárstvo, výroba, verejné a základné trhové služby. Tieto časti krajiny trpia nedostatkami v nedostatočne rozvinutej dopravnej infraštruktúre. Výsledkom je slabá ponuka lokálnych ekonomík. Pracovné miesta vytvorené lokálne nie sú dostatočne kvalitné ani kvantitatívne na to, aby prilákali talenty – chýba pulzujúca urbanizácia veľkých miest, neexistujú odlišné životné štýly a pocit lokálnej komunity vo virtuálnom priestore. Zaujatý svet nedávno vynájdenej sociálnych médií je platformou pre budovanie nových komunít. Ďalšia možnosť socializácie je často dostupná iba v konzervatívnych náboženských komunitách. Napriek tomu možno vysledovať známky novovzniknutej občianskej spoločnosti aj v periférnych oblastiach, malých mestách a na vidieku, a to vo forme rozvíjajúceho sa mimovládneho sektora, rozvíjania jedinečných projektov v oblasti sociálneho podnikania a inovácií, organického budovania nových zdola nahor fungujúcich foriem lokálneho sociálneho kapitálu. Naopak, liberalizmus je typicky zastúpený v metropolitných oblastiach regionálnych mestských centier, kde pozorujeme diverzifikovanejšiu ekonomickú štruktúru na trhu práce a užšiu interakciu medzi rôznymi sociálnymi komunitami. Z tohto pohľadu existujú odlišné názory na politické smerovanie vývoja v krajine medzi jej rôznymi časťami. Zdá sa, že tento druh medziideologického miešania mení volebnú mapu od tradičných hegemonných politických strán smerom k fragmentácii viacerých malých politických strán s jednou témou alebo na jedno použitie.