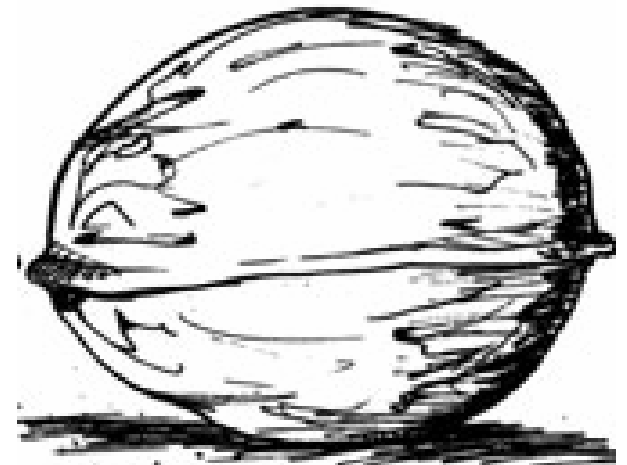


Slovakia's Politics in a Nutshell

*A presentation
with annotations.
The five key topics
are listed below:*

Conflict
Power
Parties
Elections
Coalitions



Conflict>US

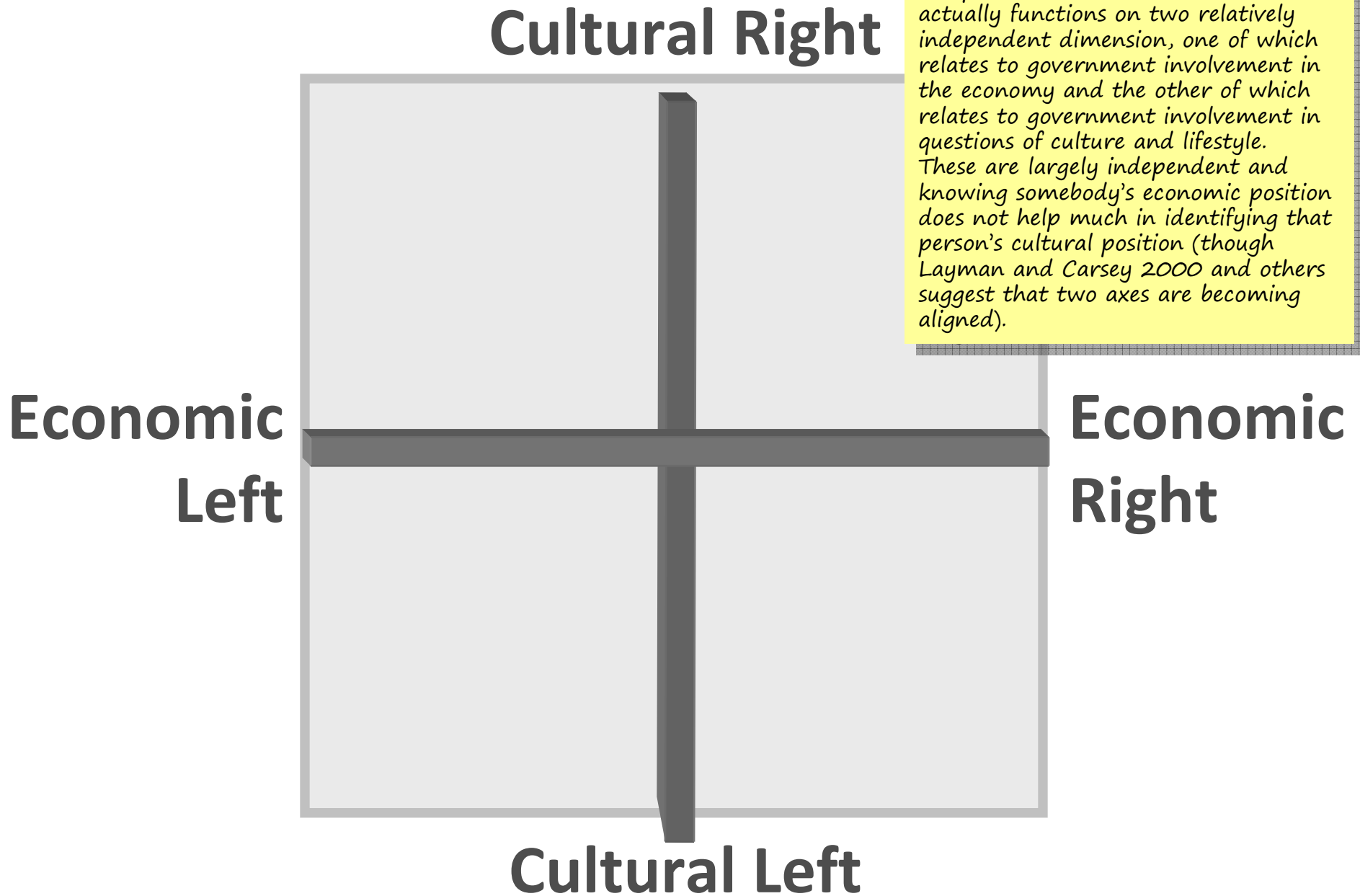
To provide context, I will try where possible to compare findings for Slovakia to those for the United States.

One of the most essential (though most difficult to define) tools for understanding any country is an assessment of the core conflicts, the things that leaders and voters fight about. In the United States this is often portrayed as a one-dimensional conflict between “liberals” and “conservatives.” This is flawed at best because...

Liberal

Conservative

Conflict>US>1980-present



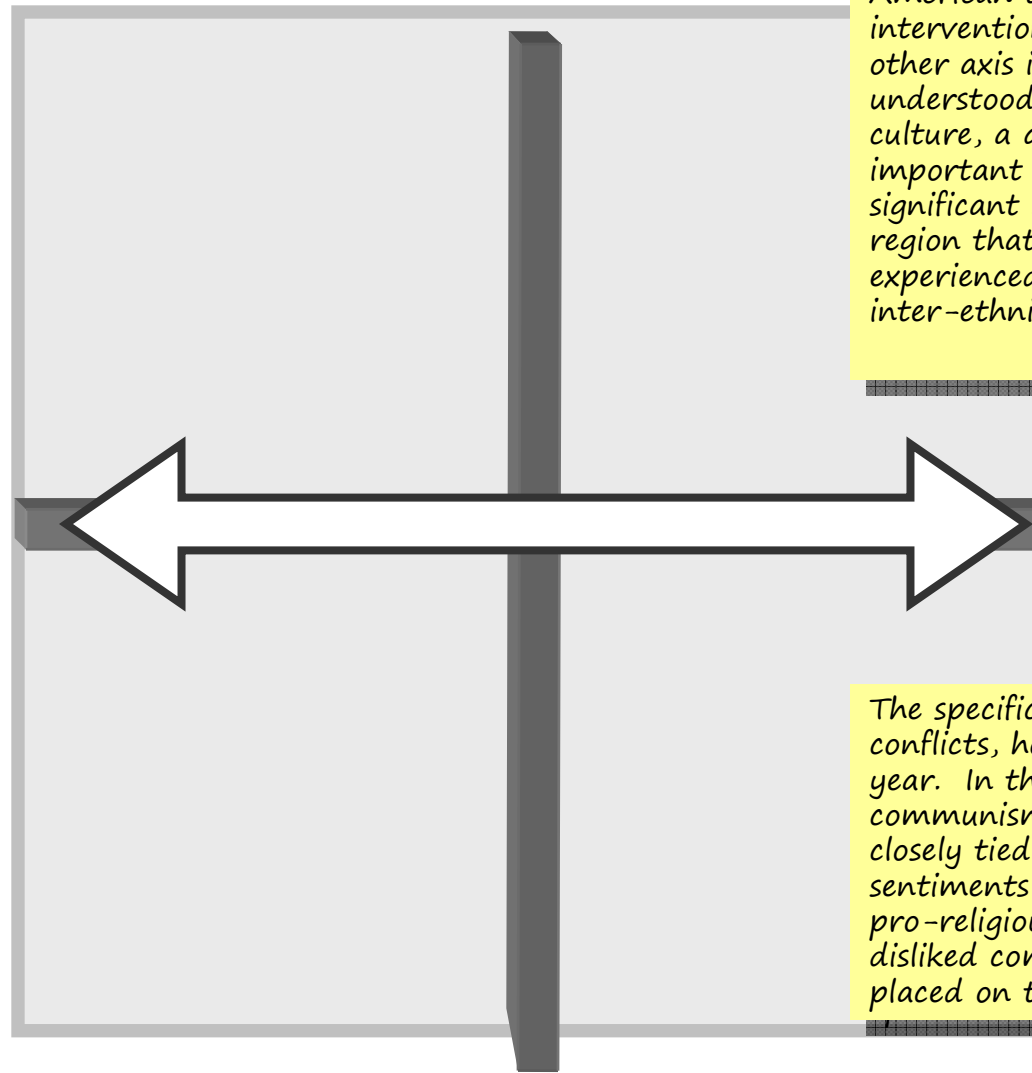
Many key studies (Shafer and Claggett's *The Two Majorities*, 1995, among others) show that political competition in the United States actually functions on two relatively independent dimensions, one of which relates to government involvement in the economy and the other of which relates to government involvement in questions of culture and lifestyle. These are largely independent and knowing somebody's economic position does not help much in identifying that person's cultural position (though Layman and Carsey 2000 and others suggest that two axes are becoming aligned).

Conflict>Slovakia>1990

Independence

Communism
State
Control

Anti-
Communism
Free Markets



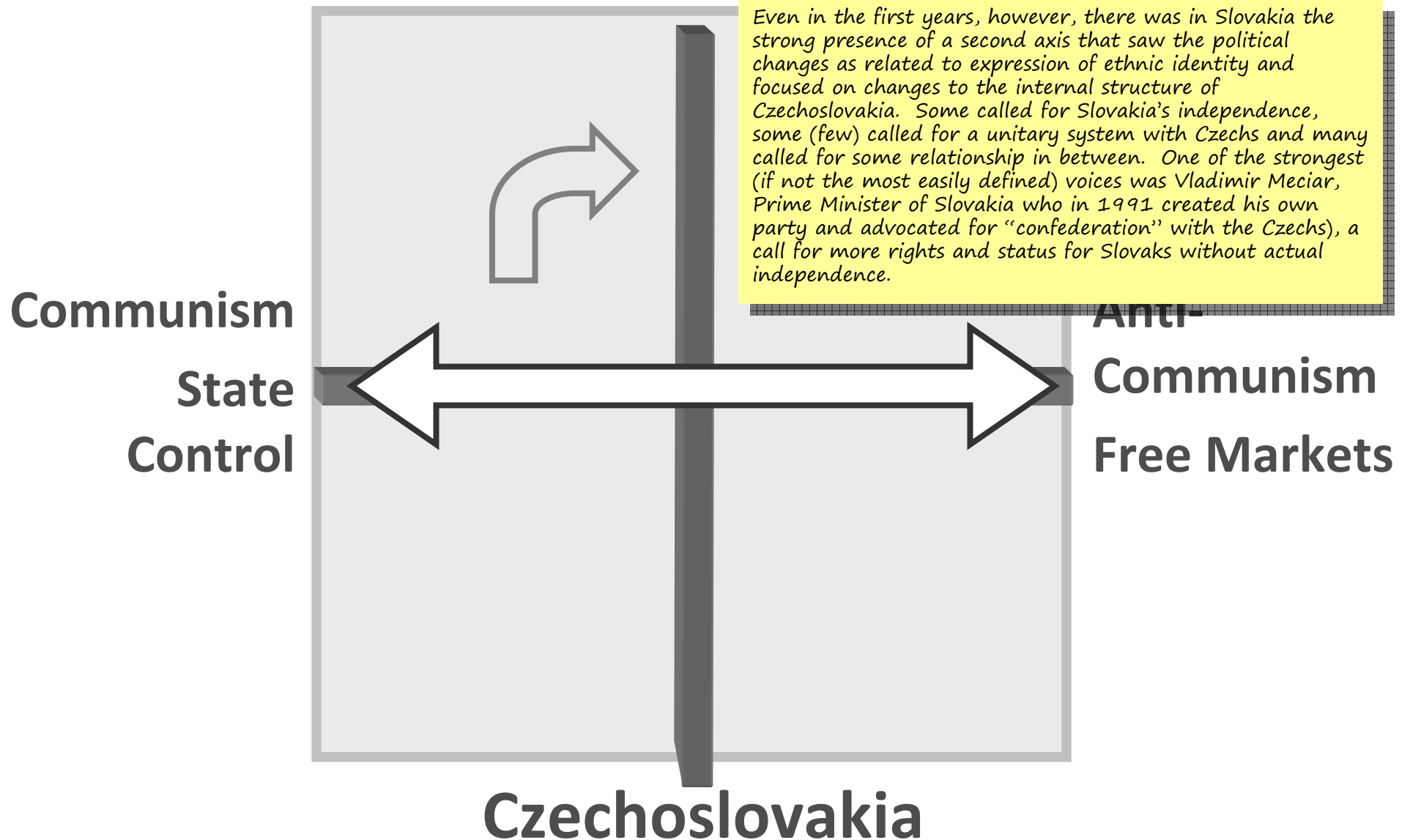
Czechoslovakia

Slovakia is also a country with two major axes. As in the United States, one is economic (though the location of this dimension in absolute terms is different—the average Slovak is far more willing than the average American to accept government intervention in the economy). The other axis is more difficult but can be understood as related to national culture, a question that is extremely important in a small country with significant national minorities in a region that has over the last century experienced significant periods of inter-ethnic conflict.

The specific expression of these conflicts, however, differs from year to year. In the first years after the fall of communism, the economic axis was closely tied to anti-communist sentiments (and therefore in part to pro-religious sentiments of those who disliked communism for the limits it placed on the Roman Catholic Church).

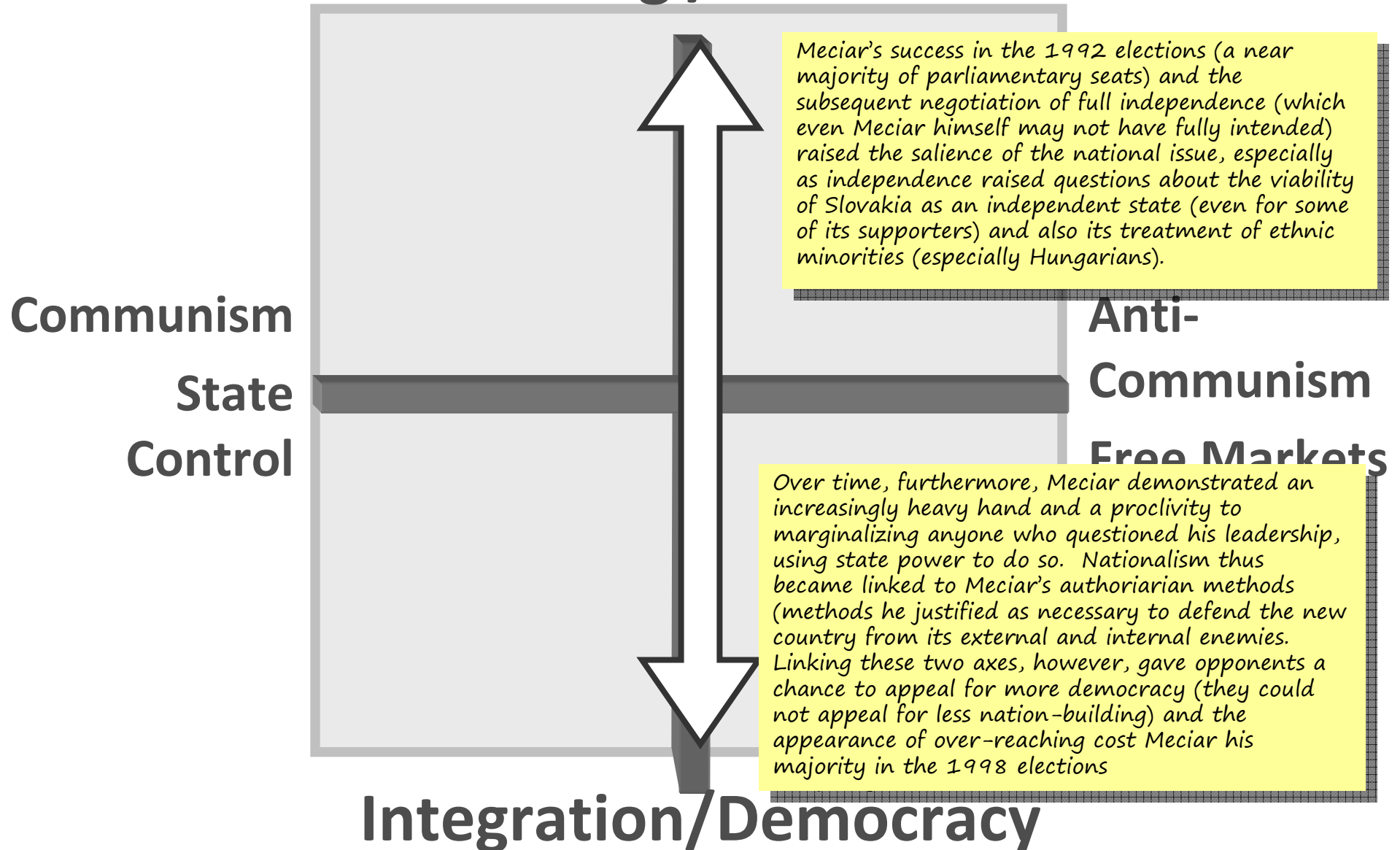
Conflict>Slovakia>1990-1994

Independence



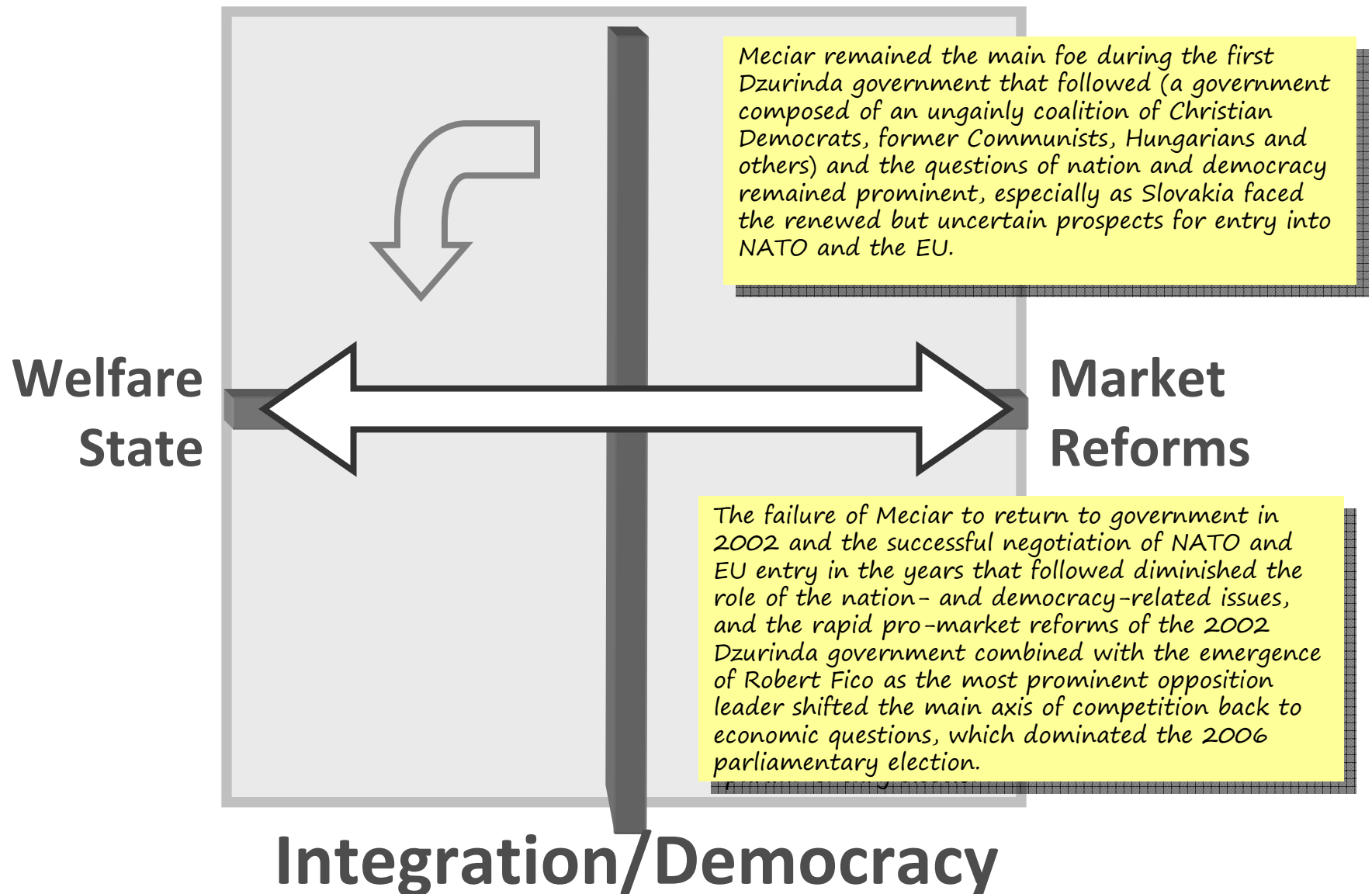
Conflict>Slovakia>1994-1998

Nation-Building / Firm-Hand Rule



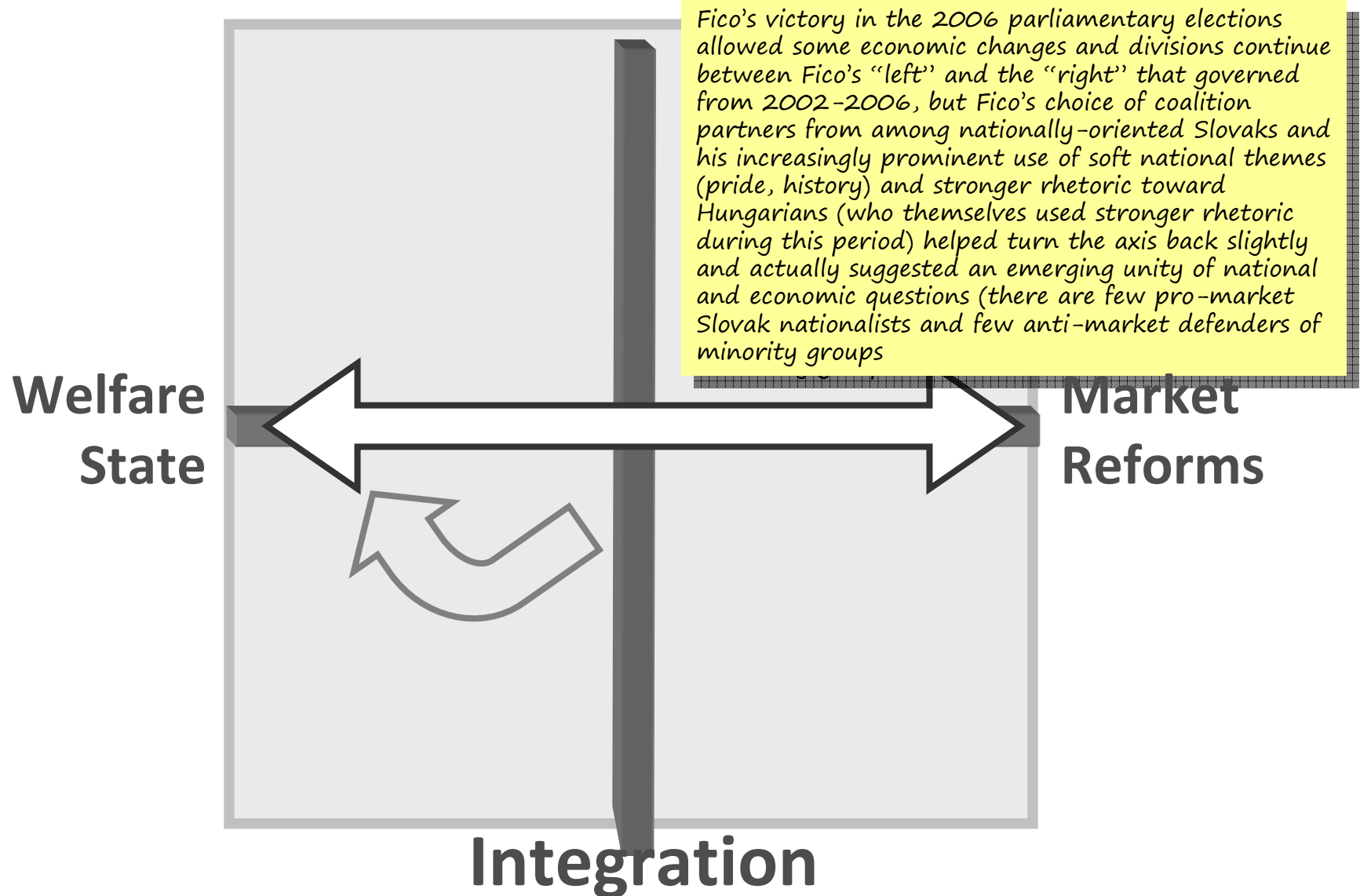
Conflict>Slovakia>1998-2006

Nation-Building / Firm-Hand Rule



Conflict>Slovakia>2006-present

Nation-Defending



Conflict>Slovakia>3rd axis, 2002-2006

Nation-Defending

A third axis which has emerged from time to time (and has been more prominent in Poland and Hungary) is the conflict between a social conservatism associated with Roman Catholic believers and a more classical liberal approach. This conflict asserted itself within Slovakia's governing coalition between 2002 and 2006. It has receded slightly with the strength of the economic and national issues but it remains a potential threat to "right" coalitions and also to Slovakia's current coalition should Fico lose his grip on the internal Smer (where these conflicts have the potential to emerge as well).

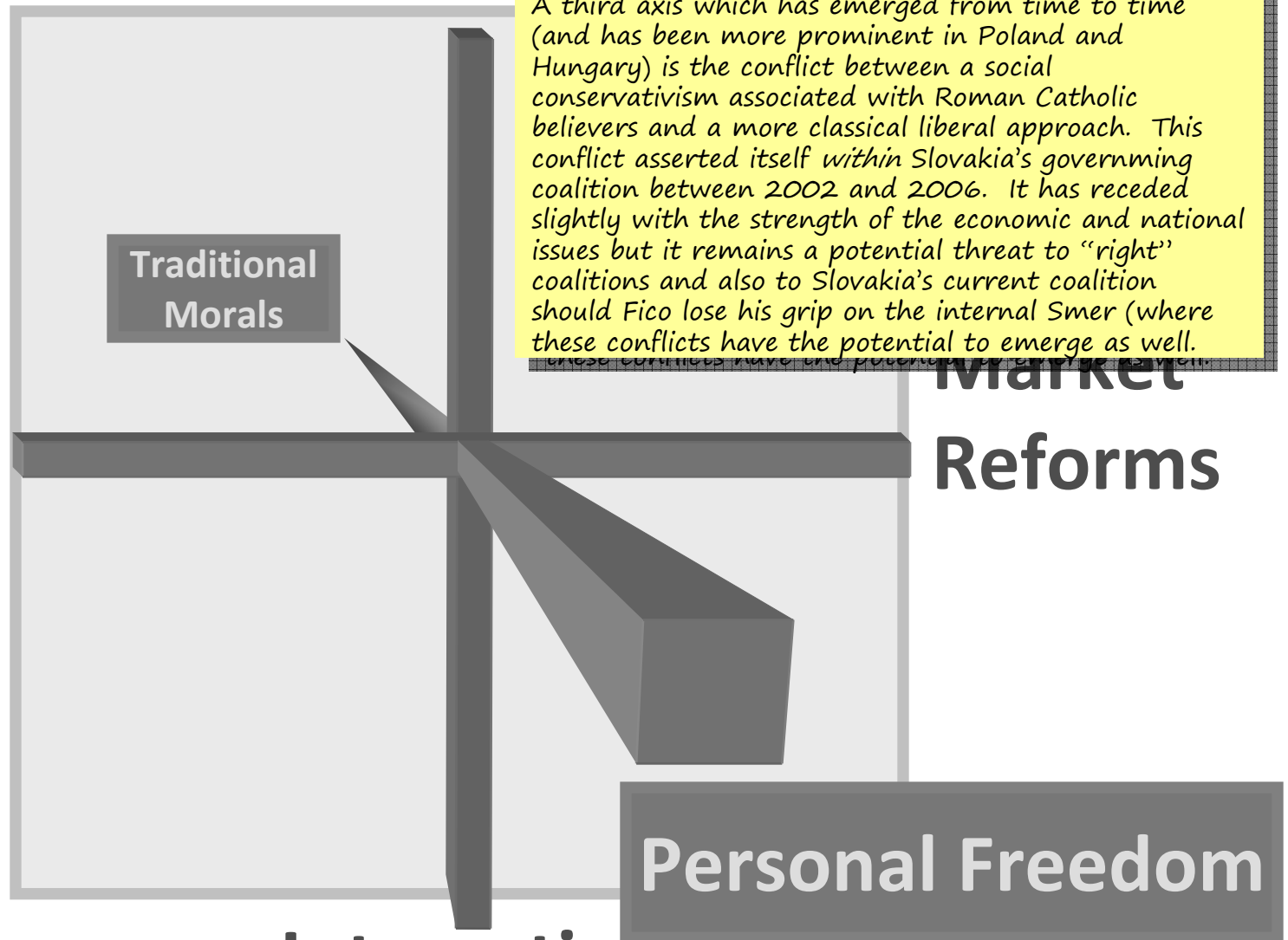
Welfare
State

Traditional
Morals

Market
Reforms

Personal Freedom

Integration



Power>US

Having defined the axes of competition, we need to define the realms in which ideas (and those who hold them) compete for power and look for the locus of political power. In the United States it would be possible to identify quite a few potential sources of political power (and possible to argue about where the power really lies, something that is well beyond the scope of this presentation). It is useful to think about this as a way of understanding the difference between the United States and Slovakia.

President

Congress

Courts

Regions

Media

Firms

Cities

Civil Society

Unions

Power>Slovakia

Slovakia's basic list of power centers is largely the same with two exceptions: government is separated from the presidency and dependent directly on parliament, and the European Union plays a strong independent role. But this is only a roster. We need to assess their importance.

European Union

President

Government

Courts

Parliament

Regions

Media

Firms

Cities

Civil Society

Unions

Power > Slovakia

The role of the European Union is extremely complex, strongest in economic-related regulation. Haughton and Rybar argue that the EU enters indirectly into domestic political competition and provides "tools" for domestic competition rather than imperatives.

The presidency has a few powers of delay and appointment but the office has remained largely subservient, especially with pro-Smer president Ivan Gasparovic and a Smer-led government.

European Union

The highest courts have at times handed down decisions intervening in political affairs but courts seem more dependent than independent

President

Political power in Slovakia continues to lie in the enmeshed complex of government and parliament.

Government

Courts

Parliament

Large firms and foreign investors play a relatively significant role and appear to have some power to discourage major changes affecting their status/business conditions.

Broadcast and print journalists play a significant role and Fico has criticized print journalists for what he sees as their knee-jerk opposition to him.

Regions

Media

Firms

Cities

Civil Society

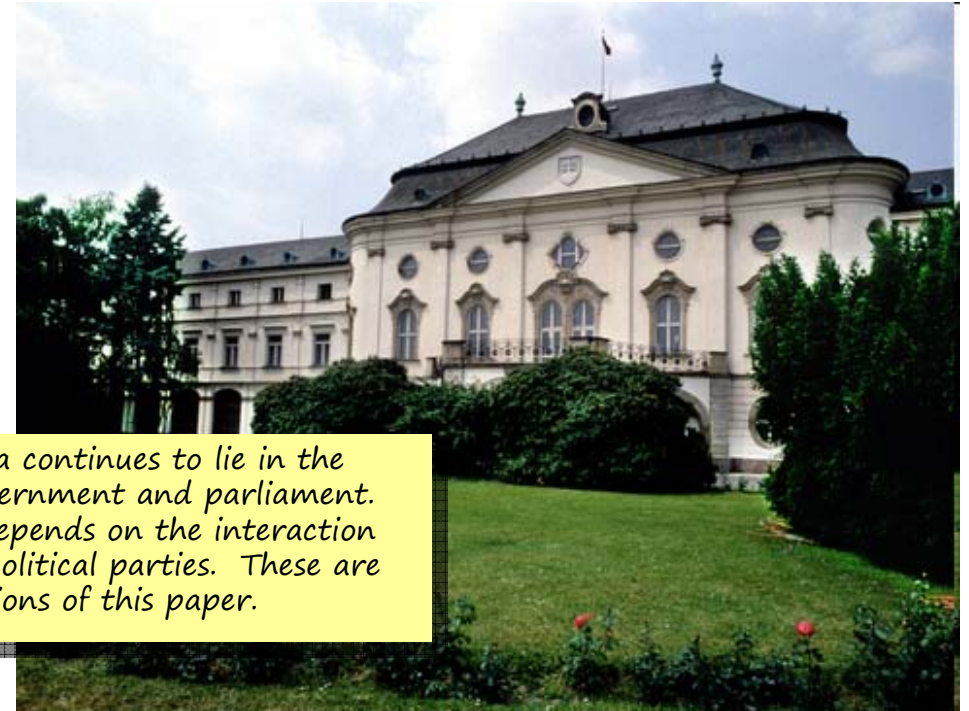
Unions

Regions and cities are largely dependent on central government revenues and exert relatively little independent role. Large cities Bratislava and Kosice have a bit more pull, but not much.

Non-profits and other organizations have in the past proven their ability to organize when situations under Meciar became dire but they are not in general a major force in political life.

The role of unions has risen and fallen. While sometimes prominent, however, they are not a driving force in political debate (and the power seems often to move in the opposite direction).

Power>Slovakia



Political power in Slovakia continues to lie in the enmeshed complex of government and parliament. Activity here, however, depends on the interaction among Slovakia's major political parties. These are the focus of the next sections of this paper.

Parliament

SMK

SDKU

KDH

Most

SaS

Government

HZDS

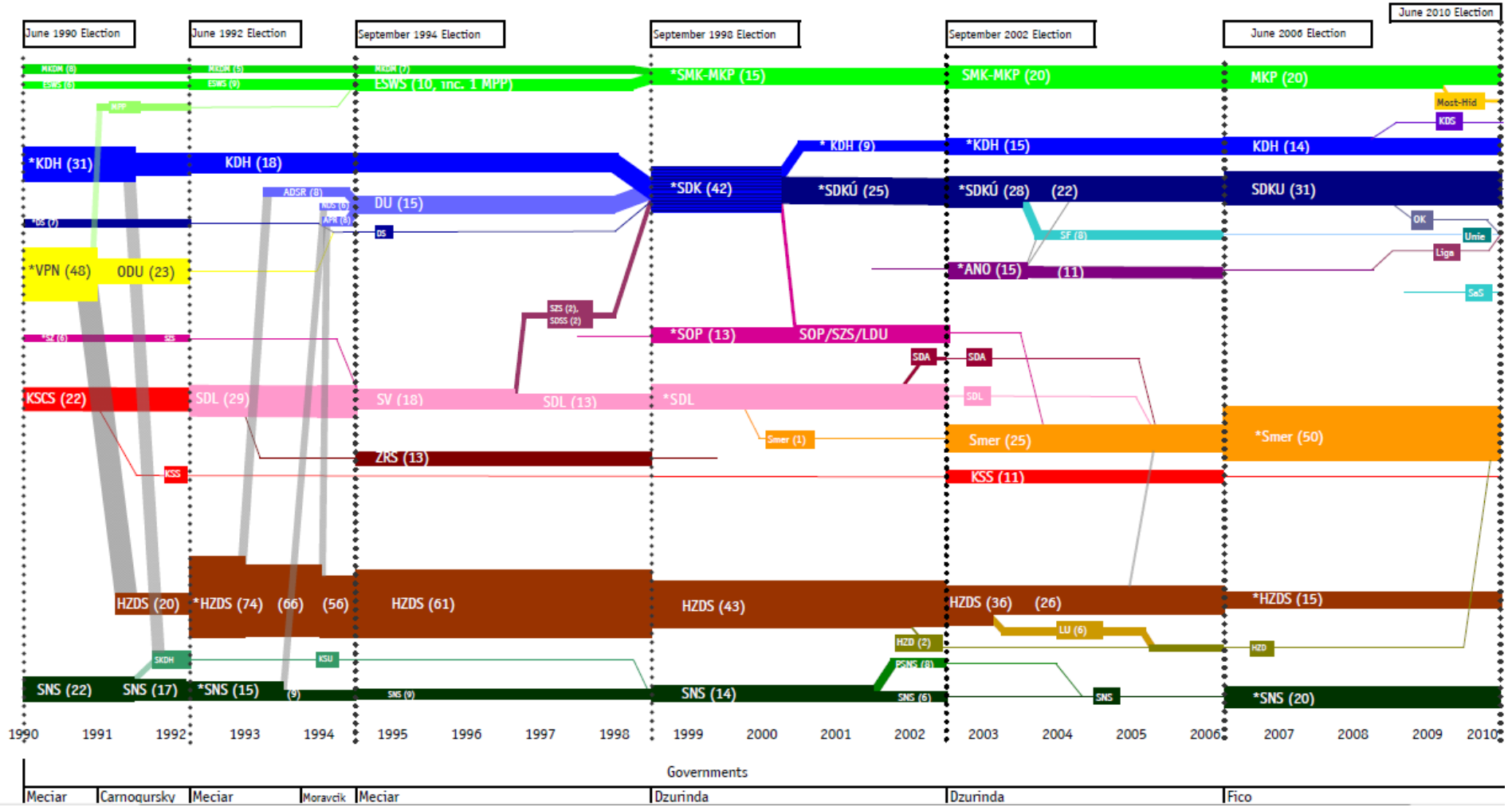
SNS

Smer

Parties

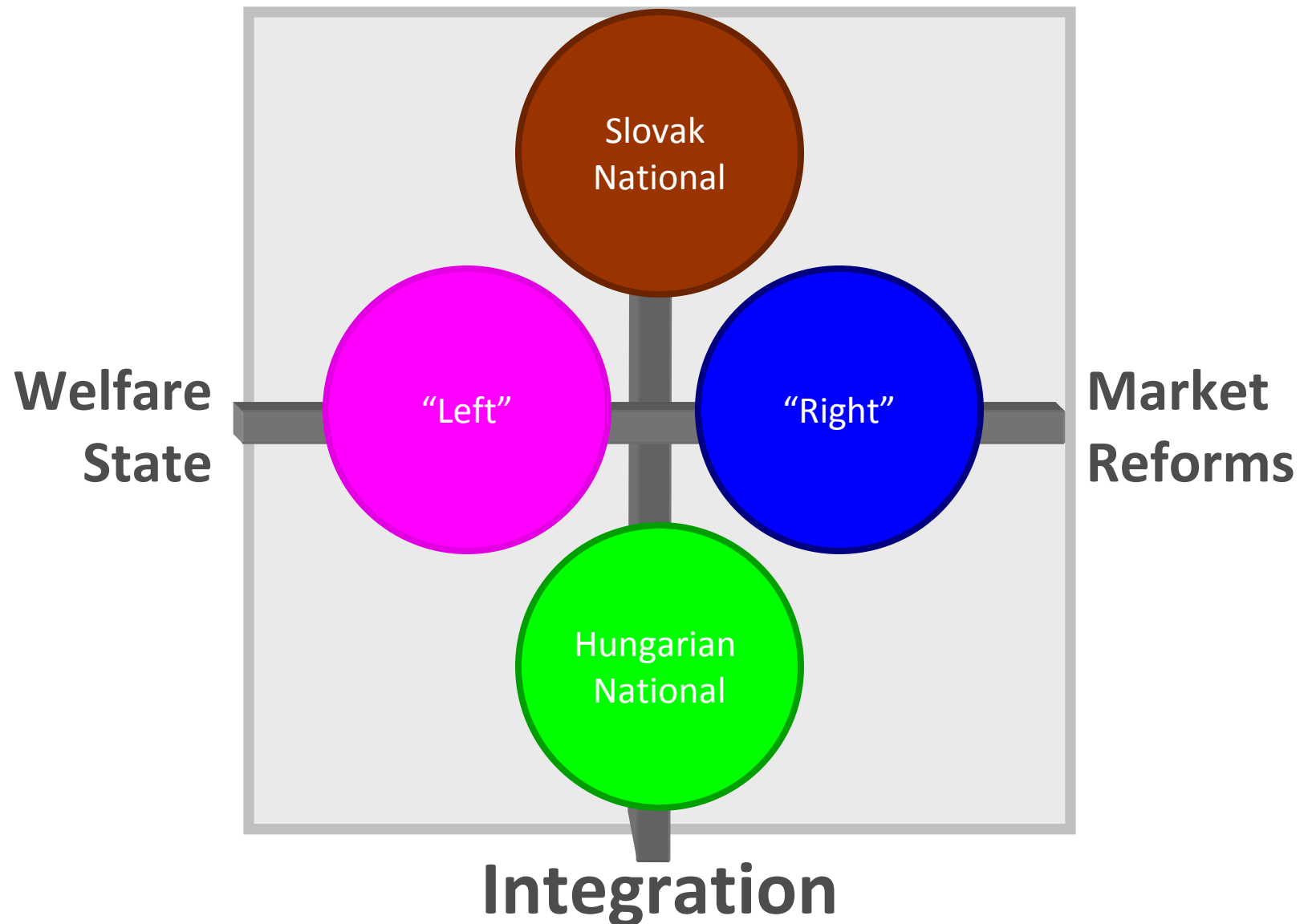
As this chart suggests, Slovakia has a complicated political party system which has changed considerably over time. The system appeared quite stable between about 2005 and about 2009 but since then new parties have emerged within the current opposition.

Family tree of political parties in Slovakia, 1990-2010



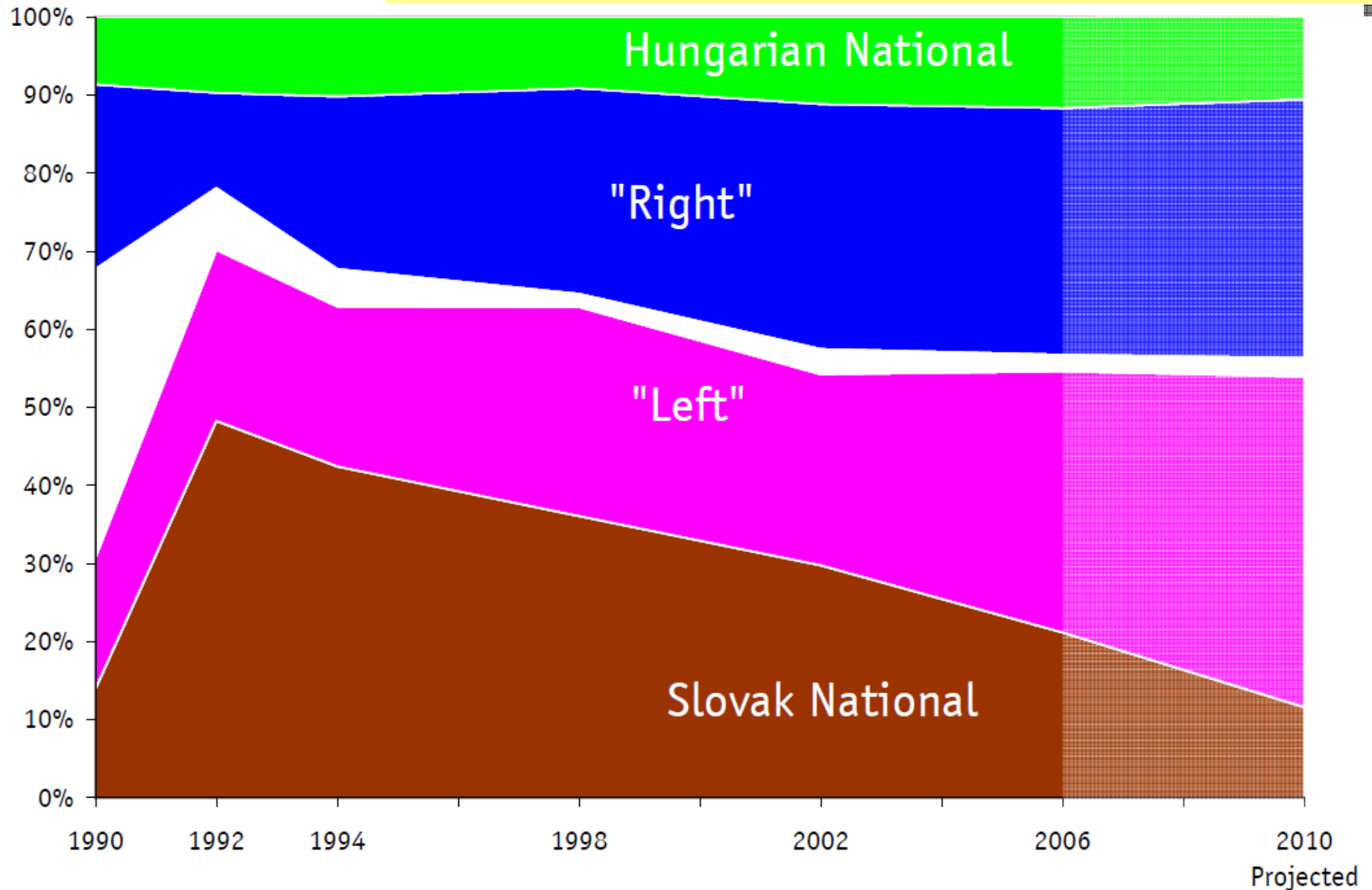
Parties

Yet simultaneous with the institutional complexity, there is an underlying stability. It is possible to group almost all parties into one of four basic positions on the axes discussed above. This helps to simplify the situation and shows a relatively clear pattern on the next slide.



Parties

Grouping parties into these four categories suggests a fairly high stability of underlying preference, with extremely high stability among Hungarian National and "Right" blocs and an almost perfectly linearly tradeoff between "Left" and Slovak National with "Left" gaining the upper hand. The tradeoff is not necessarily in the nature of opinions but in the kind of party that voters opt for. Of course that is obscured by labels. There is, in general, a strong Slovak national-left bloc of voters that has migrated from primarily national parties to primarily left ones (i.e. Smer).



Parties

Since changeable (and changing) party institutions shape the overall expression of political preference in Slovakia, I will describe each major party individually in terms of four main categories listed below.

History

Where did the party come from? Has it remained stable? How has it performed and changed over time?

Issues

What does the party stand for? Where does it fall, in general terms, on the axes that define Slovakia's politics

Leaders

Who runs the party? What is the balance between leaders and party members? Between leader and other elites?

Voters

What kinds of people vote for the party? What are their demographic characteristics?

Parties > Deceased and Minor

A number of once prominent political players in Slovakia have disappeared from the political scene or become politically irrelevant.

On the "Right" this includes

- the Democratic Union (DU) merged into SDKU
- the Democratic Party (DS) merged into SDKU but recently independently revived
- the Alliance of the Free Citizen (ANO) collapsed
- the Free Forum still alive but with support reduced to about 1%-2% and now part of the coalition "Liga"

On the "Left" this includes

- the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)—collapsed before the 2002 elections and merged with Smer but recently revived independently
- the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS)—collapsed before the 1998 elections
- the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)—collapsed before the 2002 elections and merged with Smer
- the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS)—still alive but with support around 2%

In the "Slovak National" bloc this includes

- the Movement for Democracy (HZD)—collapsed and recently merged into Smer.

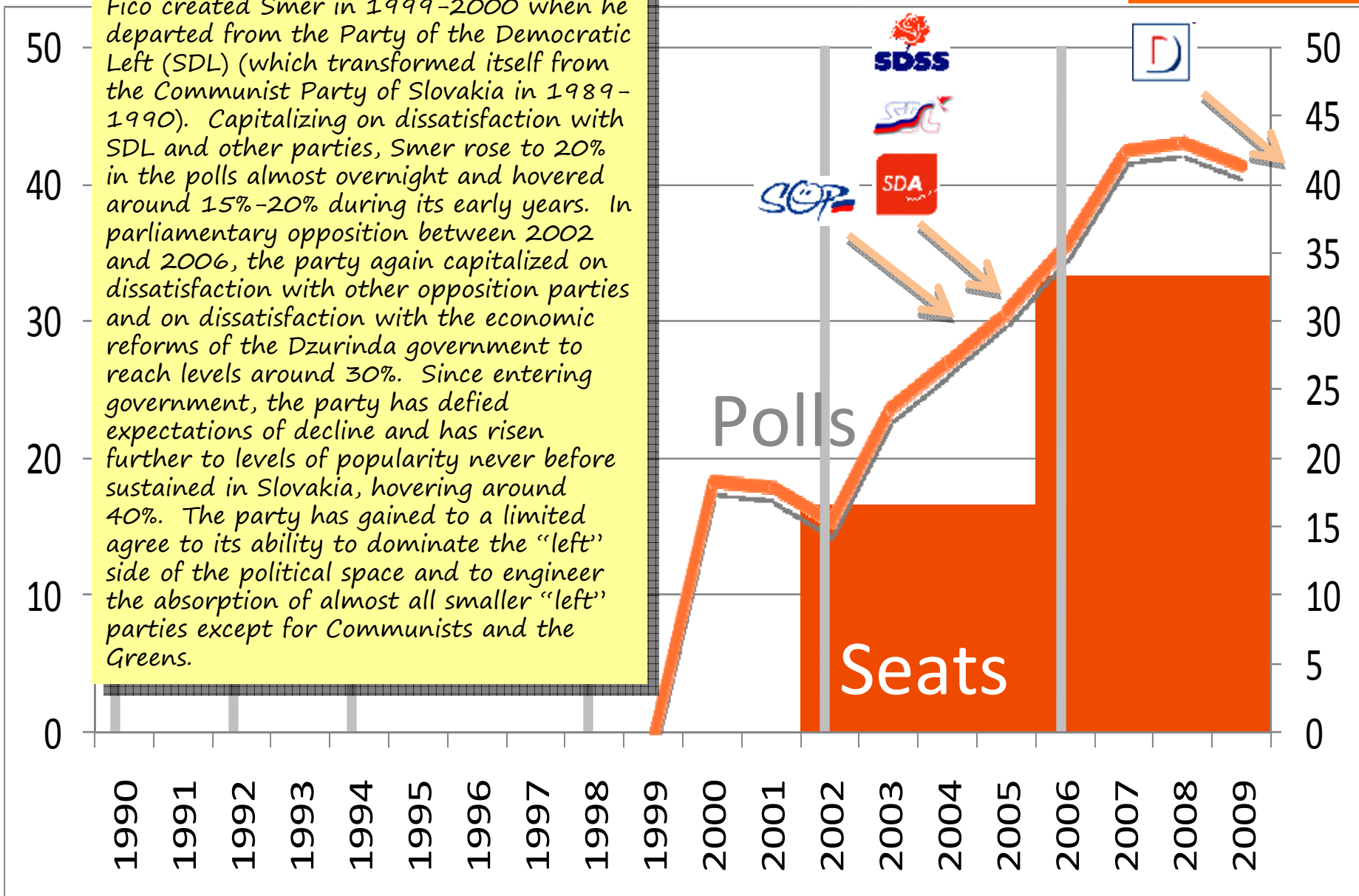
The subsequent pages will focus on the eight parties with significant support.



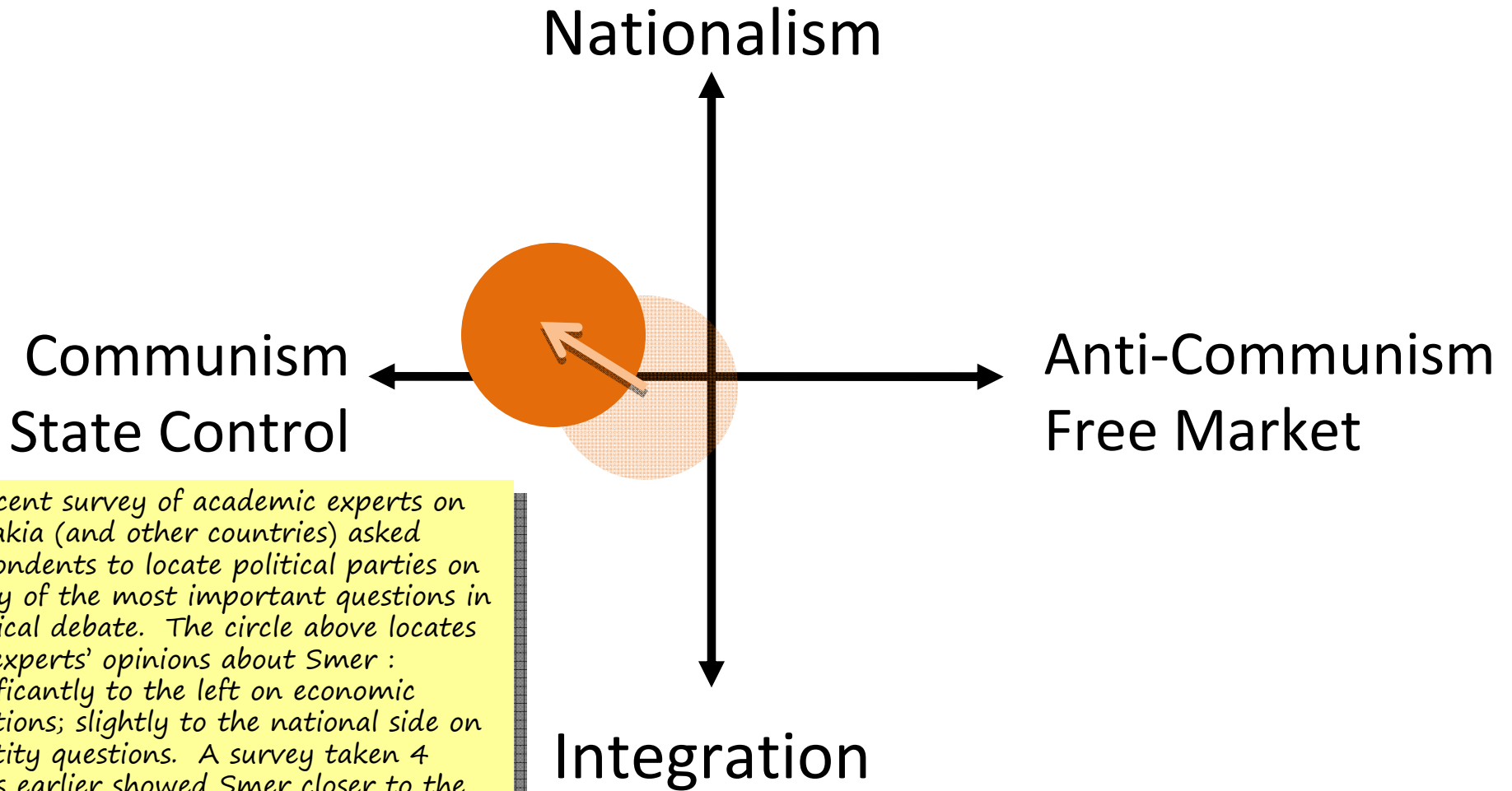
History



Fico created Smer in 1999-2000 when he departed from the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) (which transformed itself from the Communist Party of Slovakia in 1989-1990). Capitalizing on dissatisfaction with SDL and other parties, Smer rose to 20% in the polls almost overnight and hovered around 15%-20% during its early years. In parliamentary opposition between 2002 and 2006, the party again capitalized on dissatisfaction with other opposition parties and on dissatisfaction with the economic reforms of the Dzurinda government to reach levels around 30%. Since entering government, the party has defied expectations of decline and has risen further to levels of popularity never before sustained in Slovakia, hovering around 40%. The party has gained to a limited degree to its ability to dominate the "left" side of the political space and to engineer the absorption of almost all smaller "left" parties except for Communists and the Greens.



Issues



A recent survey of academic experts on Slovakia (and other countries) asked respondents to locate political parties on many of the most important questions in political debate. The circle above locates the experts' opinions about Smer : significantly to the left on economic questions; slightly to the national side on identity questions. A survey taken 4 years earlier showed Smer closer to the center on economic questions (though still to the left of center) and at or slightly below the mean on identity questions.

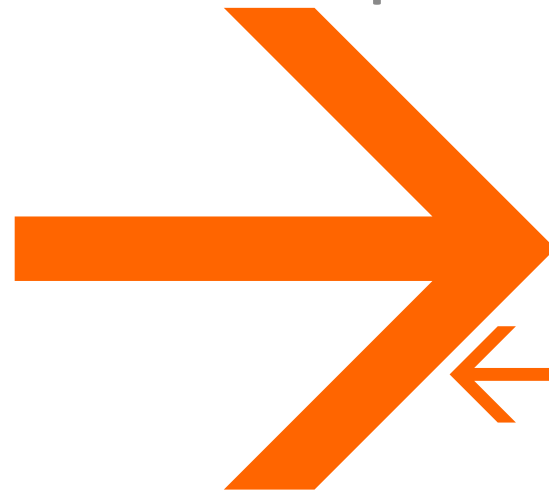
Leaders

Smer

First v. Second Tier



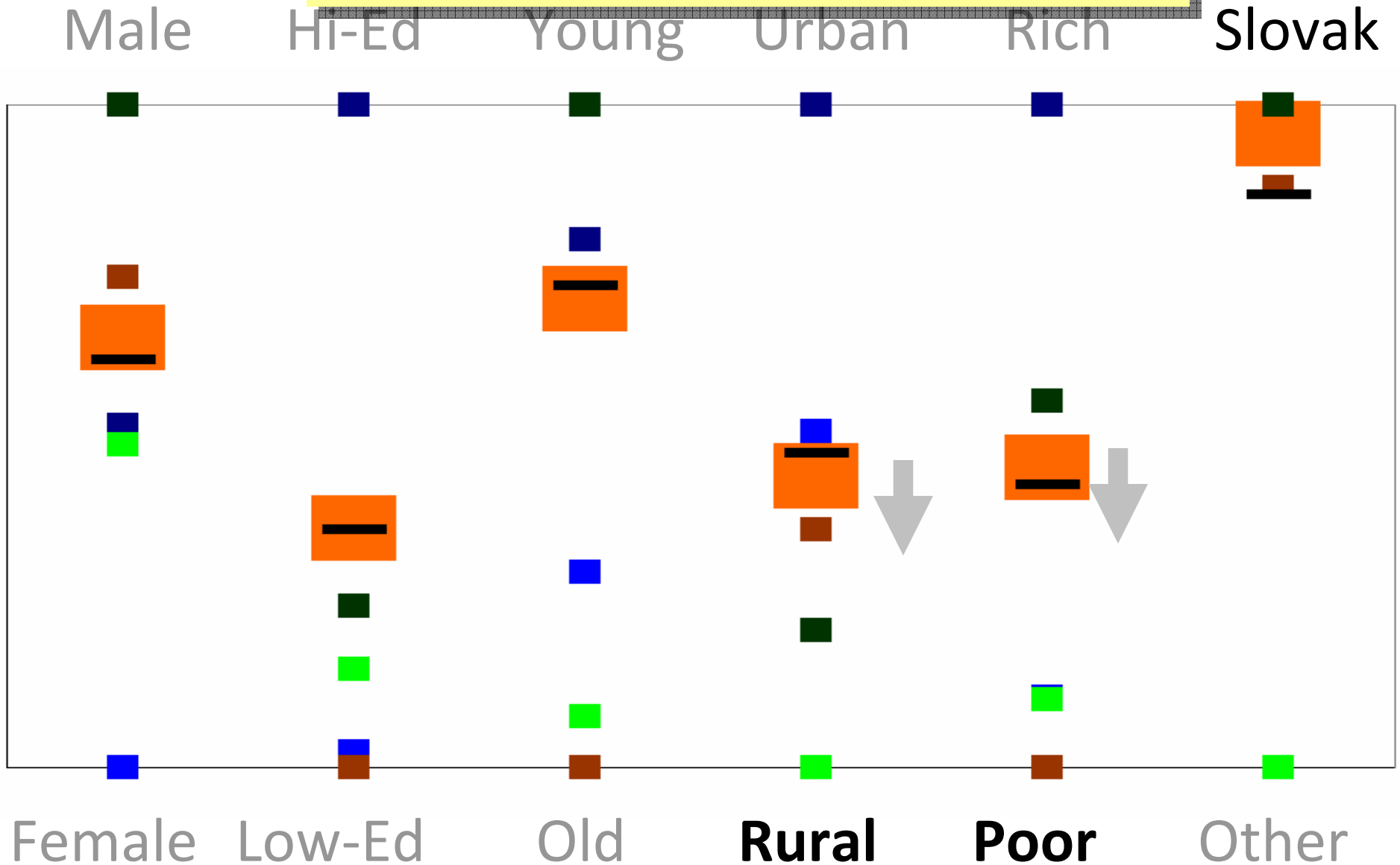
Leadership v. Membership



Smer is an extremely centralized party even by Slovakia's standards. The party leadership plays an extremely strong role vis-à-vis the membership, which plays a largely supportive role and has little direct control over party policy or leadership (and while large in absolute numbers—about 16,000 by recent count, is quite small compared to the party's level of support. HZDS with smaller levels of support had more than twice as many members.) Within the leadership Fico clearly plays a dominant role. Other party leaders play roles in particular realms, but it is hard to imagine other party leaders (even as a group) able to making a significant move of which Fico disapproved.

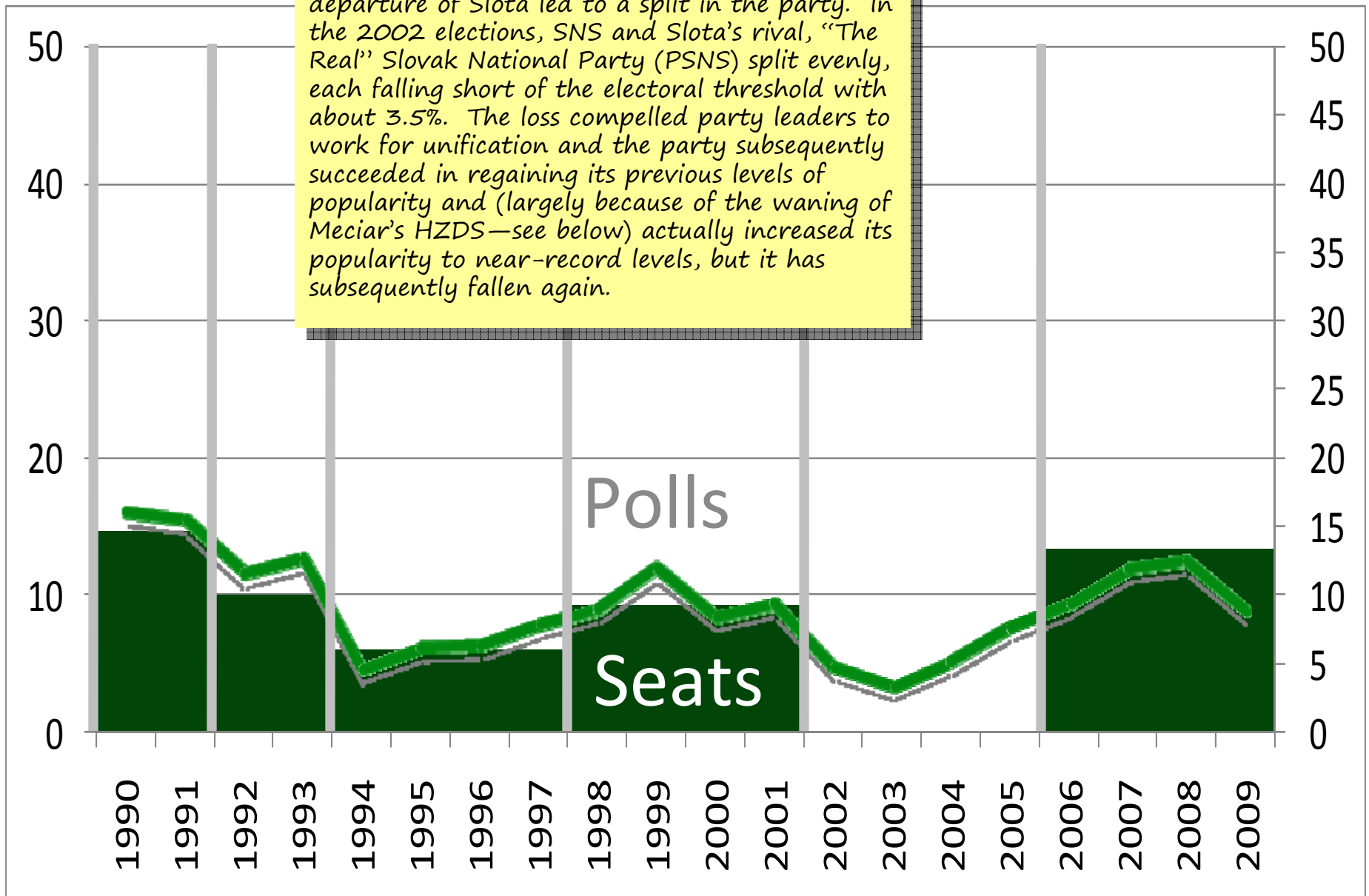
Voters

Smer is remarkable for the “average-ness” of its support. The graph below (based on numbers from 2008) shows the relationship of party voters (in orange) to the average citizen of Slovakia (the black bar). In 2008 Smer was indistinguishable from the average in every category. By late 2009 other surveys indicate the party had become slightly more rural and poor than average, though not by much.

The logo for the Smer party, consisting of the word "mer" in white lowercase letters on an orange rectangular background.

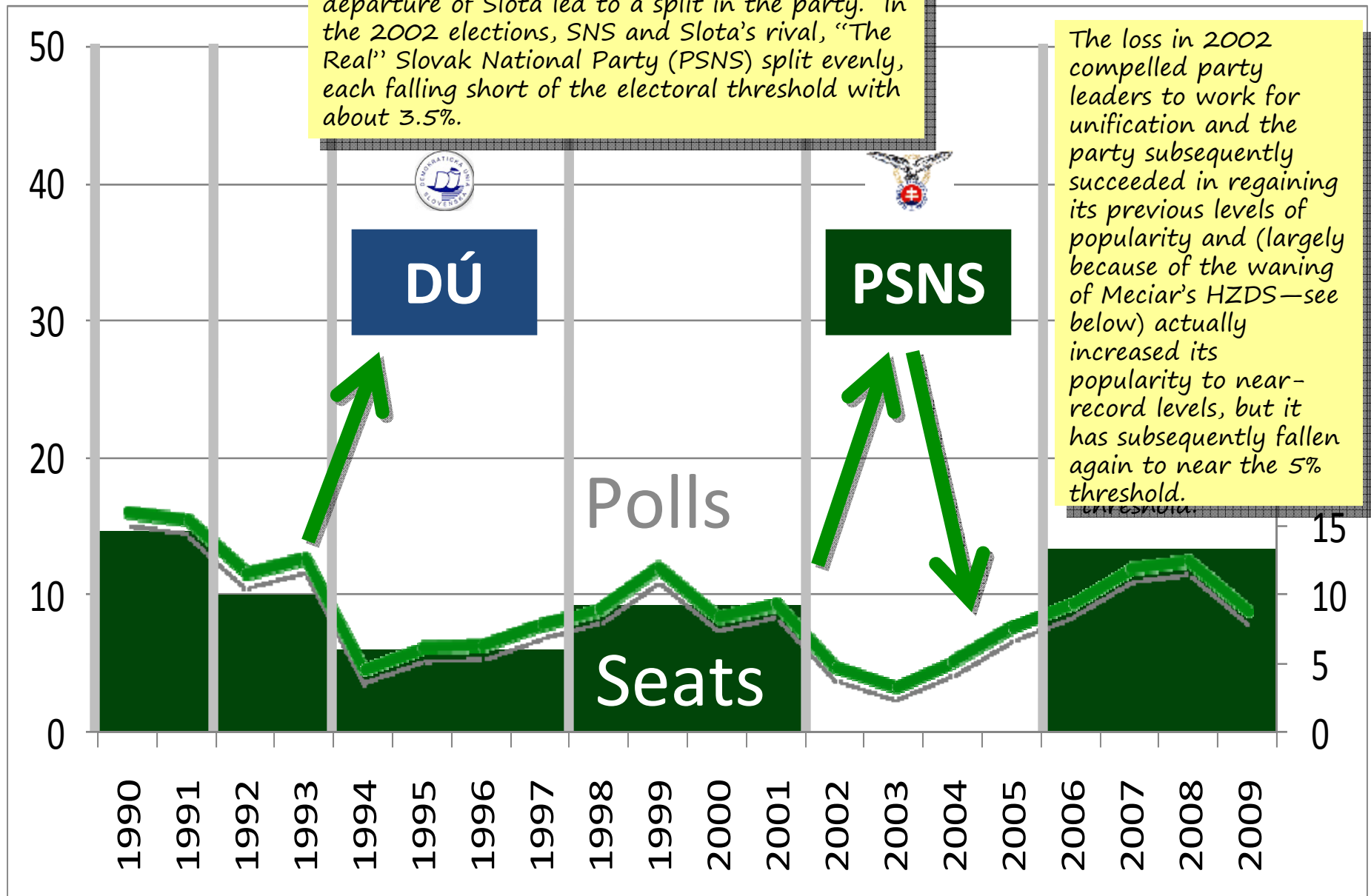
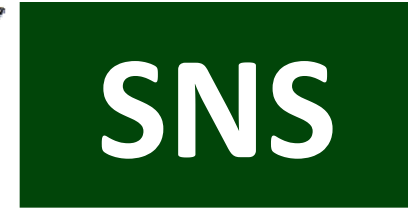
History

Popularity of SNS has varied between 5% and 15% over the past 20 years, averaging around 8%. The party's popularity suffered somewhat during its time in government with Meciar's HZDS (1994-1998) but recovered until the departure of Slota led to a split in the party. In the 2002 elections, SNS and Slota's rival, "The Real" Slovak National Party (PSNS) split evenly, each falling short of the electoral threshold with about 3.5%. The loss compelled party leaders to work for unification and the party subsequently succeeded in regaining its previous levels of popularity and (largely because of the waning of Meciar's HZDS—see below) actually increased its popularity to near-record levels, but it has subsequently fallen again.



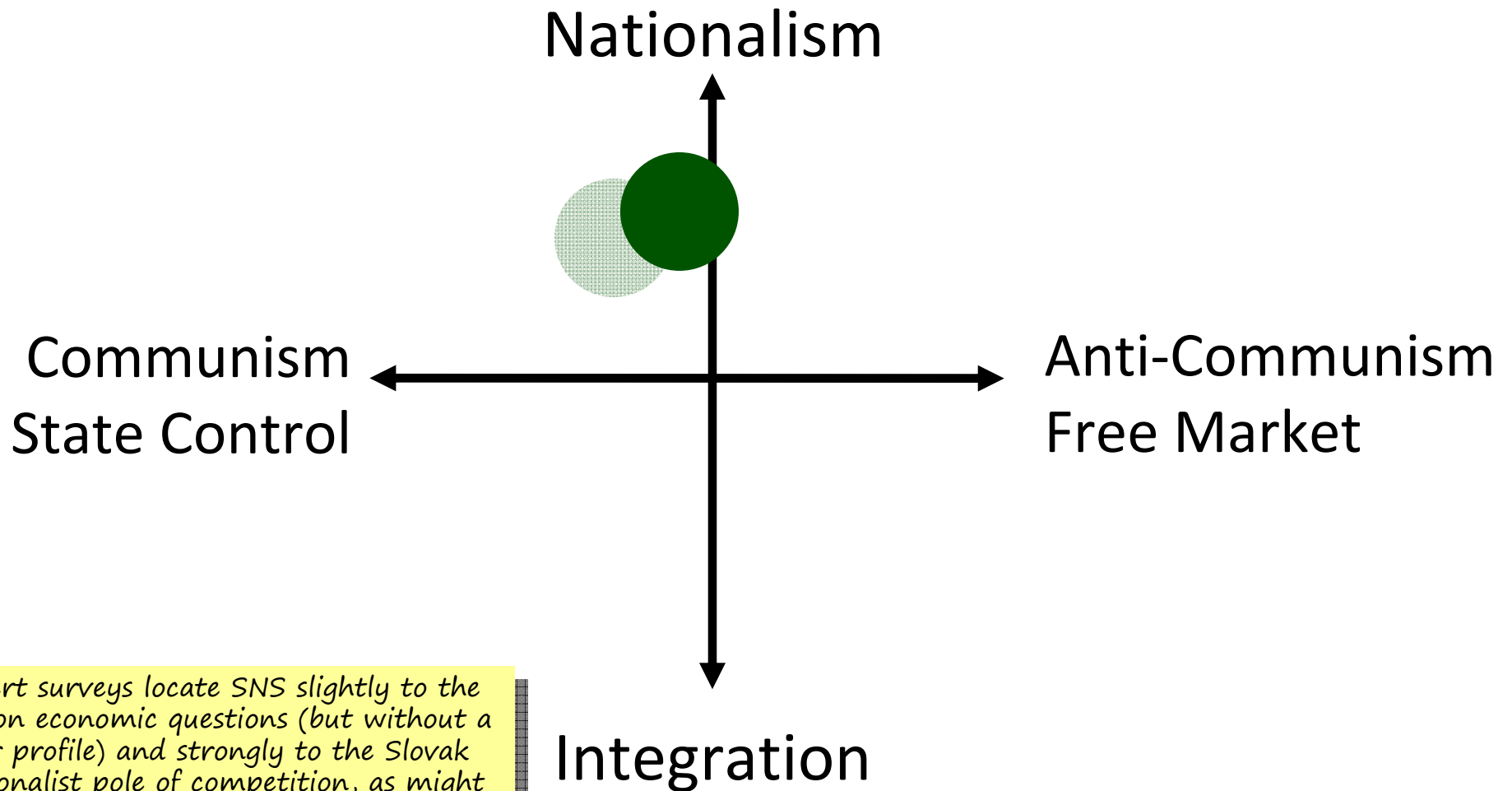
History

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Issues

SNS



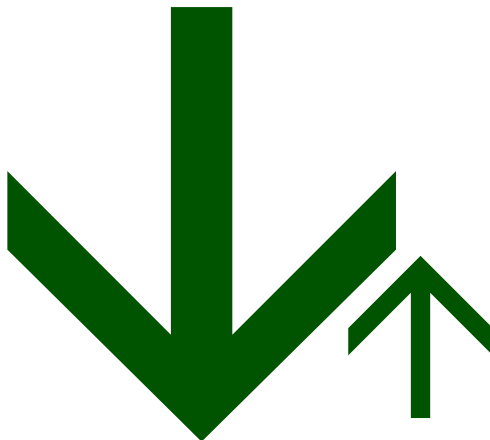
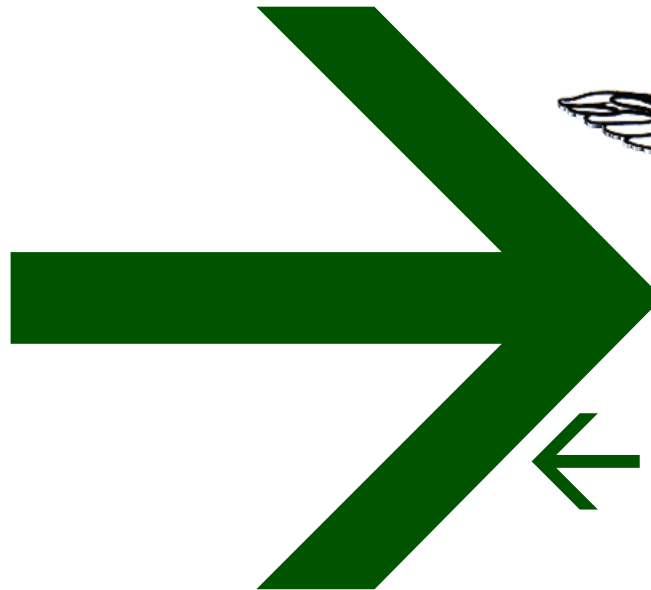
Expert surveys locate SNS slightly to the left on economic questions (but without a clear profile) and strongly to the Slovak Nationalist pole of competition, as might be expected. The party leader has often spoken in strong—even rude and confrontational—ways regarding other ethnic groups.

Leaders

SNS

Leadership v. Membership

First v. Second Tier

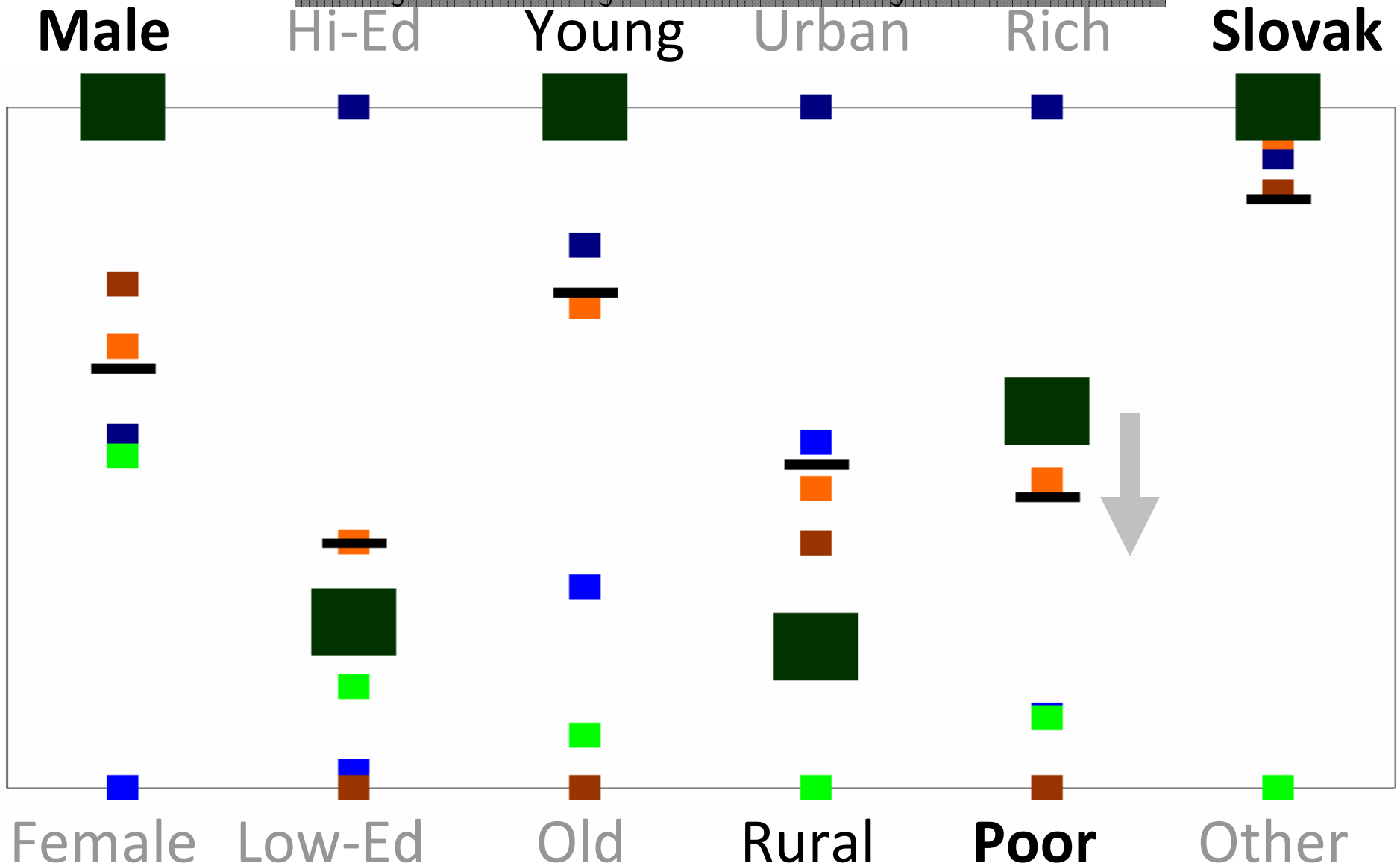


SNS is highly centralized, both with regard to the dominant relationship of the party leadership and its relatively small, weak party base and dominant statutory role of the party leader, Jan Slota vis-à-vis party prominents Anna Belousovova and Rafael Rafaj. It would appear, however, that 2nd tier leaders such as Belousovova and Rafaj may be able to wield practical power during Slota's not infrequent periods of absence and infirmity.

Voters

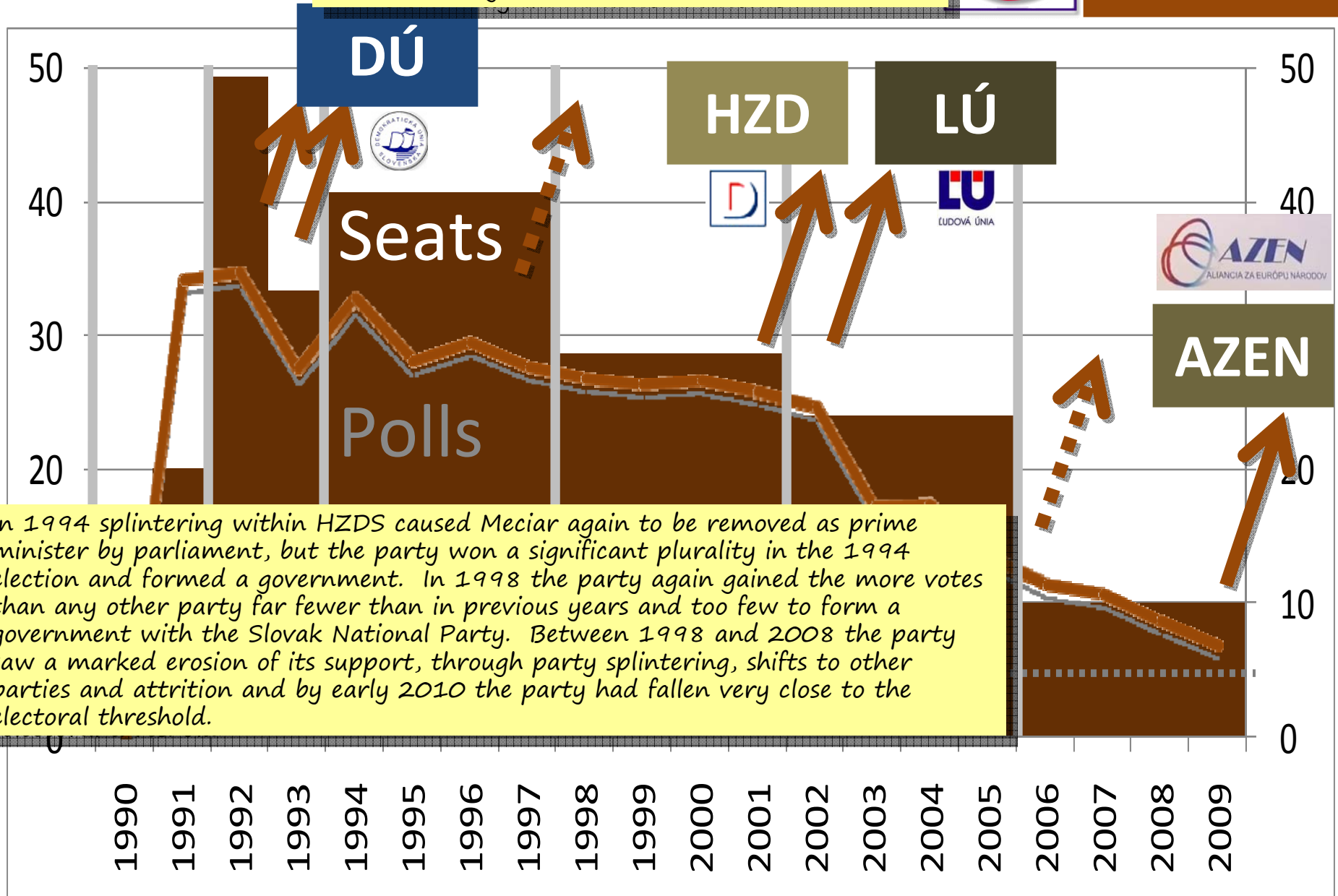
SNS's electorate is the most male and Slovak of any party. The party's voters are slightly younger than average, with average levels of education. The 2008 numbers show them to be slightly above average in income, but 2010 numbers suggest that they are more blue-collar than average. The prototypical voter of SNS is a young, working-class male living in a medium-sized city.

SNS



History

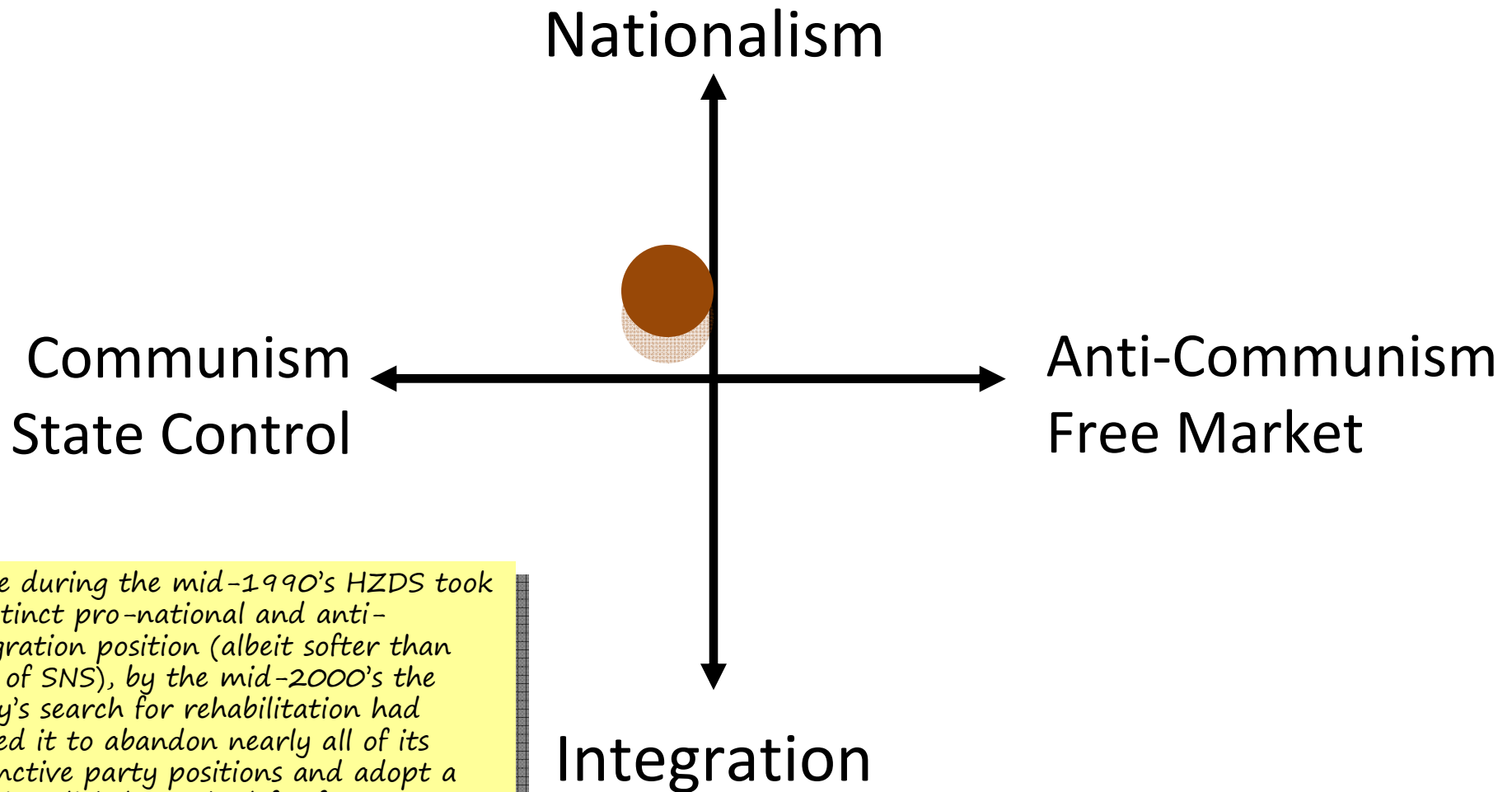
HZDS began as an offshoot of the anticommunist VPN (Public Against Violence) Begun in part to protest Meciar's removal from the prime ministership by the parliamentary presidium, HZDS quickly surpassed VPN and scored a significant electoral victories in 1992.



In 1994 splintering within HZDS caused Meciar again to be removed as prime minister by parliament, but the party won a significant plurality in the 1994 election and formed a government. In 1998 the party again gained the more votes than any other party far fewer than in previous years and too few to form a government with the Slovak National Party. Between 1998 and 2008 the party saw a marked erosion of its support, through party splintering, shifts to other parties and attrition and by early 2010 the party had fallen very close to the electoral threshold.

Issues

HZDS



While during the mid-1990's HZDS took a distinct pro-national and anti-integration position (albeit softer than that of SNS), by the mid-2000's the party's search for rehabilitation had caused it to abandon nearly all of its distinctive party positions and adopt a position slightly to the left of center on economic issues (though its voters were among the most supportive of redistribution) and slightly toward the national pole.

national pole.

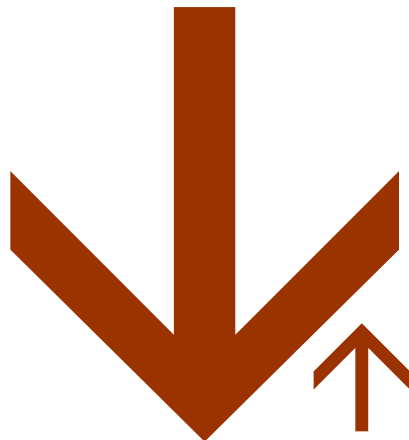
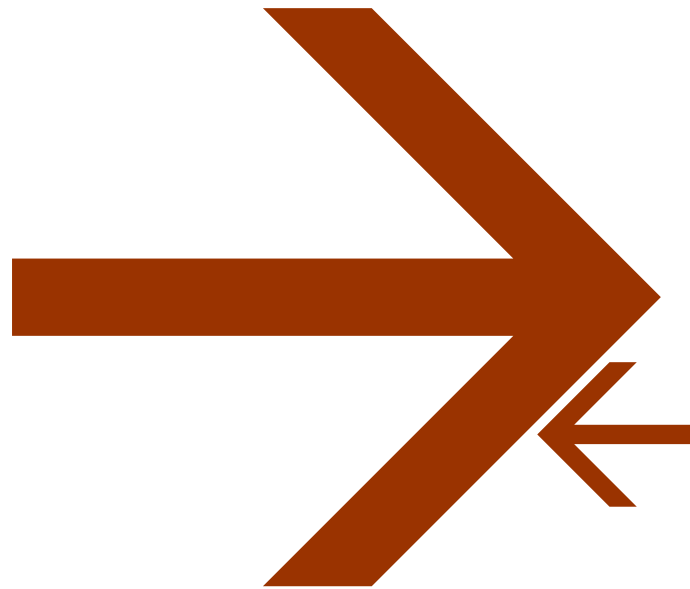
Leaders

HZDS

First v. Second Tier



Leadership v. Membership

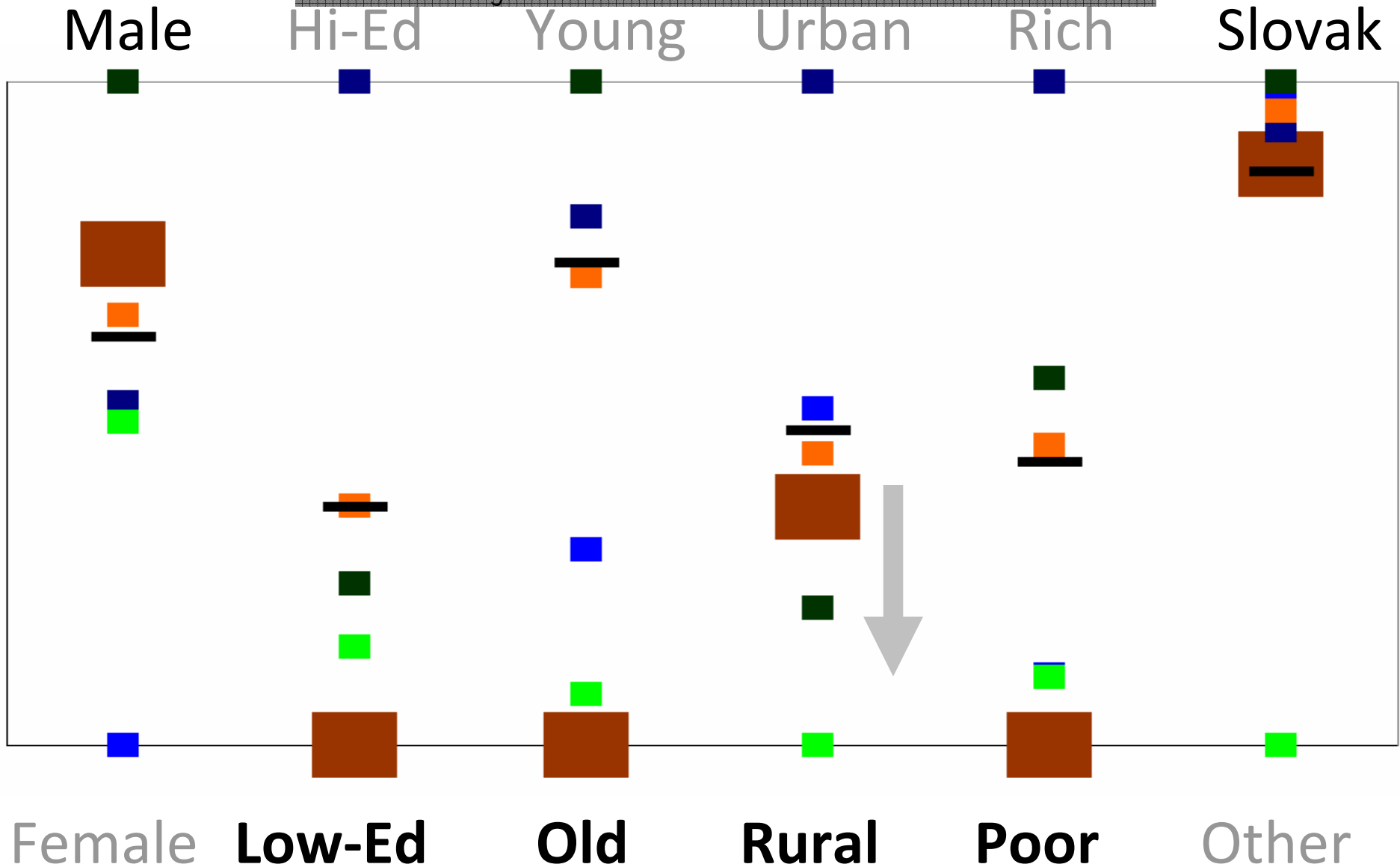


HZDS has always been firmly in control of Meciar and any second-tier leader who emerged to challenge him has been ousted or has chosen to leave. With the departure of Milan Urbani, there is no clear 2nd in command. The party once had a strong, if docile party organization but over time it has weakened in its organizational capacity as well.

Voters

HZDS has maintained an extremely consistent demographic pattern for some time: low-education, older, rural, poorer voters (these things tend to go together in Slovakia as elsewhere) have been its mainstay and this looks likely to continue until the party's demise, something that may happen in the 2010 election, and if not, then almost certainly in 2014.

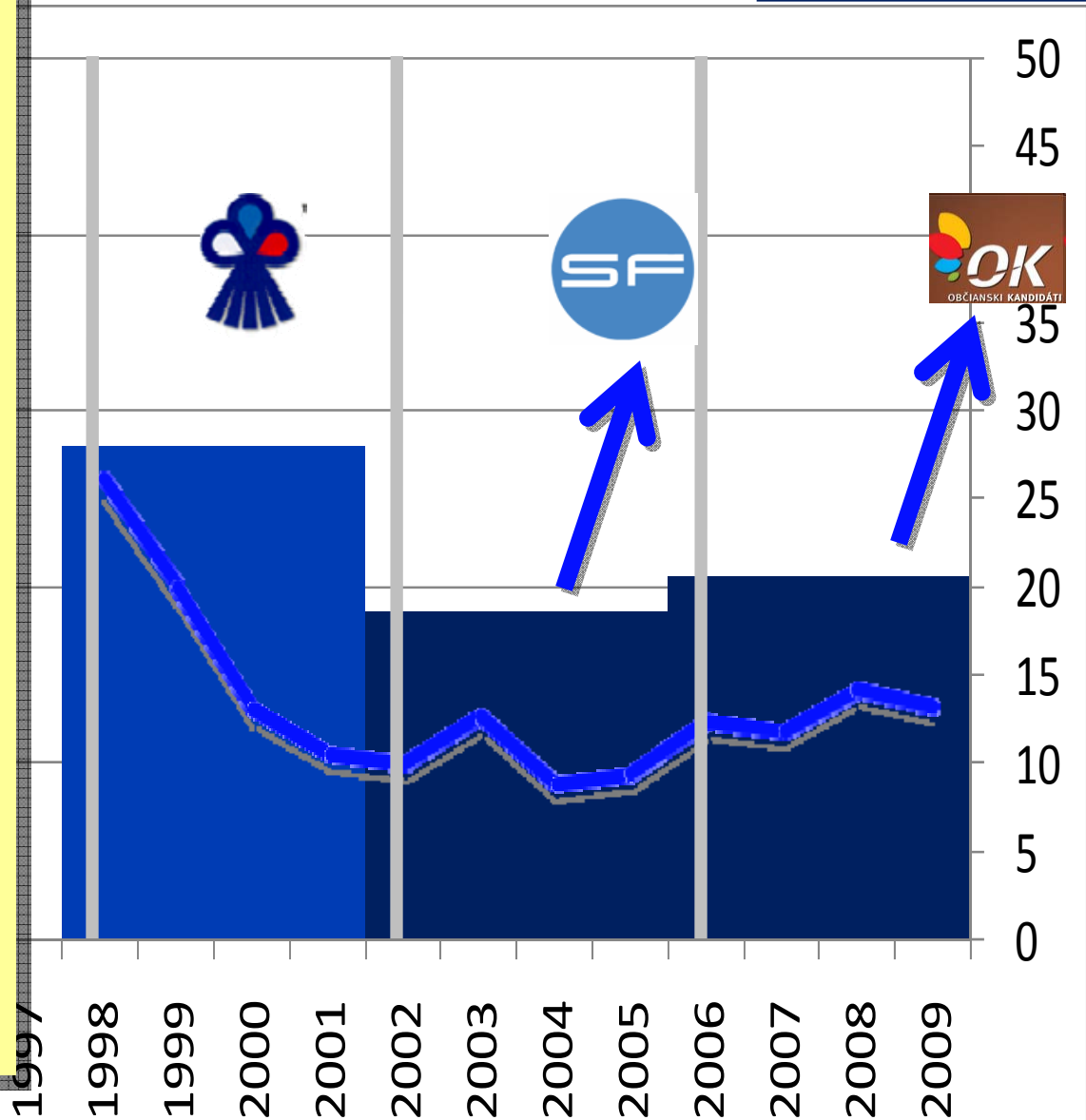
HZDS



History

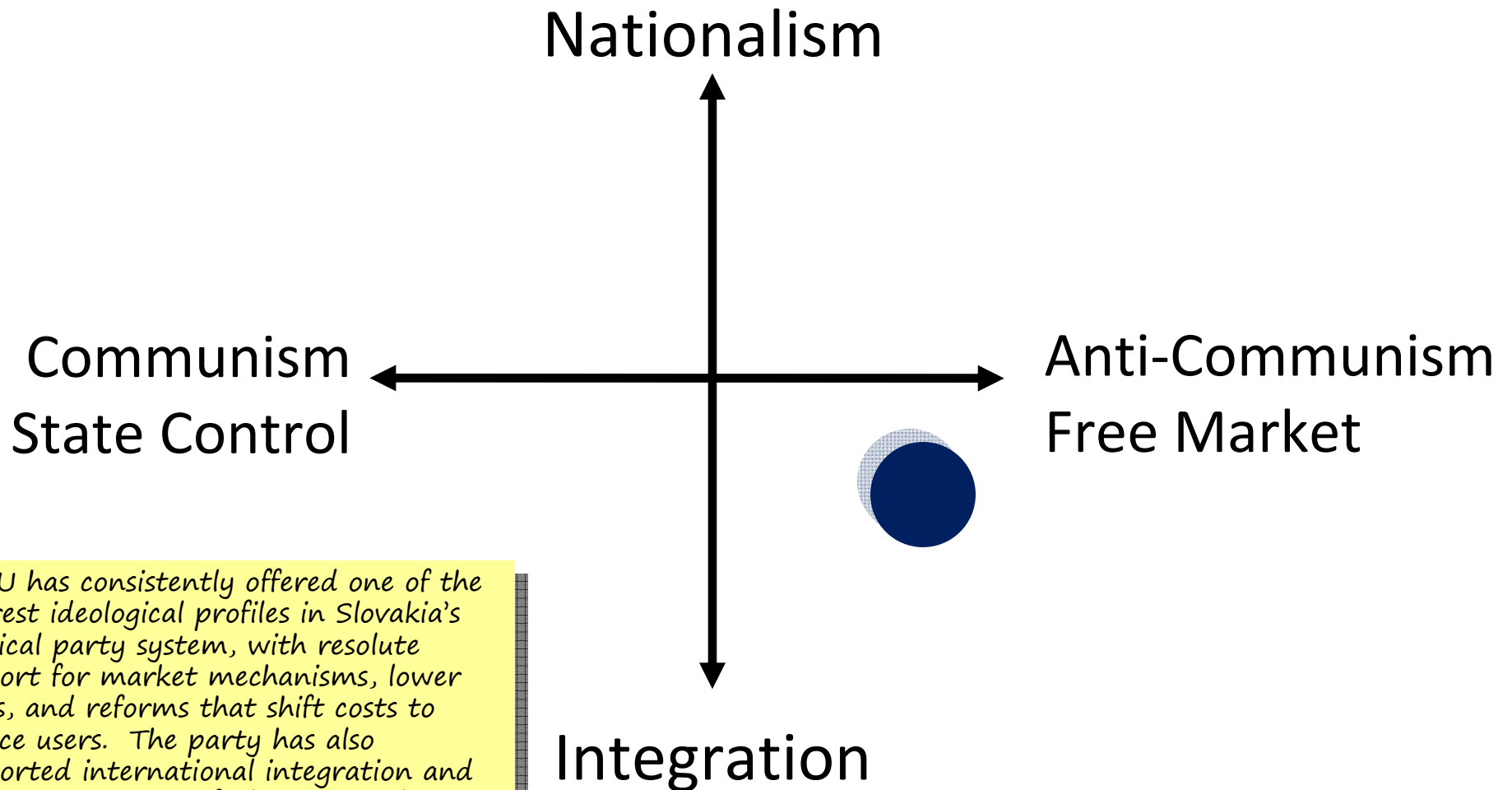


The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) emerged out of the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) a party that itself emerged from the coalition of five pro-democracy parties against Mečiar's HZDS in 1998 (and forced into a single party structure by a restrictive electoral law). When the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) withdrew from SDK in 2000, the coalition chair and then prime minister Mikulas Dzurinda formed SDKÚ as a distinct party. Dzurinda continued as prime minister after the 2002 election with a coalition more univocally supportive of economic reform. After the 2006 election the party went into opposition and has faced both significant internal dissent and corresponding attempts at centralization by the party leader. SDKÚ's support has consistently hovered around the 8%-15% mark, though the party has consistently outperformed its polling numbers in actual elections. It has sustained support around the 12%-15% level in despite major internal discord resulting in the expulsion of a significant share of party leaders and members who formed the small parties Free Forum (SF) and Civic Candidates (OK)



Issues

SDKÚ



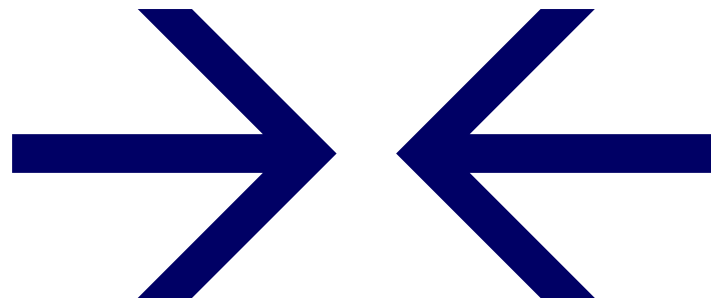
SDKU has consistently offered one of the clearest ideological profiles in Slovakia's political party system, with resolute support for market mechanisms, lower taxes, and reforms that shift costs to service users. The party has also supported international integration and within the context of Slovakia's politics has been relatively open to calls for minority rights, though it has at times also tried to employ national issues.

Leaders

SDKÚ

Leadership v. Membership

First v. Second Tier

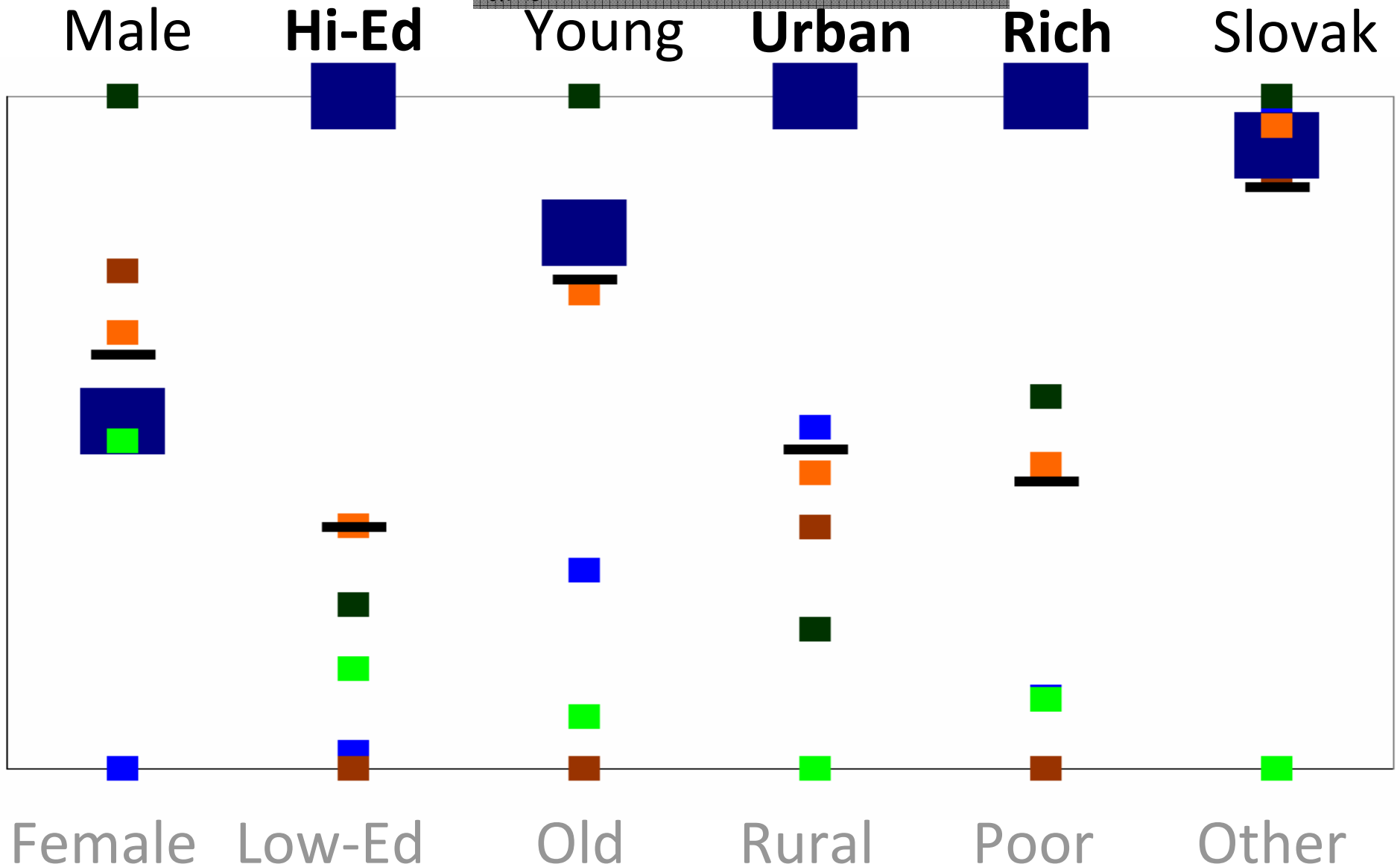


SDKU presents an interesting hybrid model of party internal organization, at least by Slovakia's standards, at least at present. The party's longtime chair Mikulas Dzurinda has, because of scandal, stepped aside from the candidate list. Furthermore, although SDKU never boasted a large membership and was created from within parliament, it nevertheless differed from other parties in selecting party of the party electoral lists through an internal primary. In the recent primary, members voted to support former presidential candidate Iveta Radicova for the first position on the ballot rather than Dzurinda ally Ivan Miklos. For the moment, then, the party elements are in relative balance, though there is no reason to expect the balance to endure.

there is no reason to expect the balance to endure.

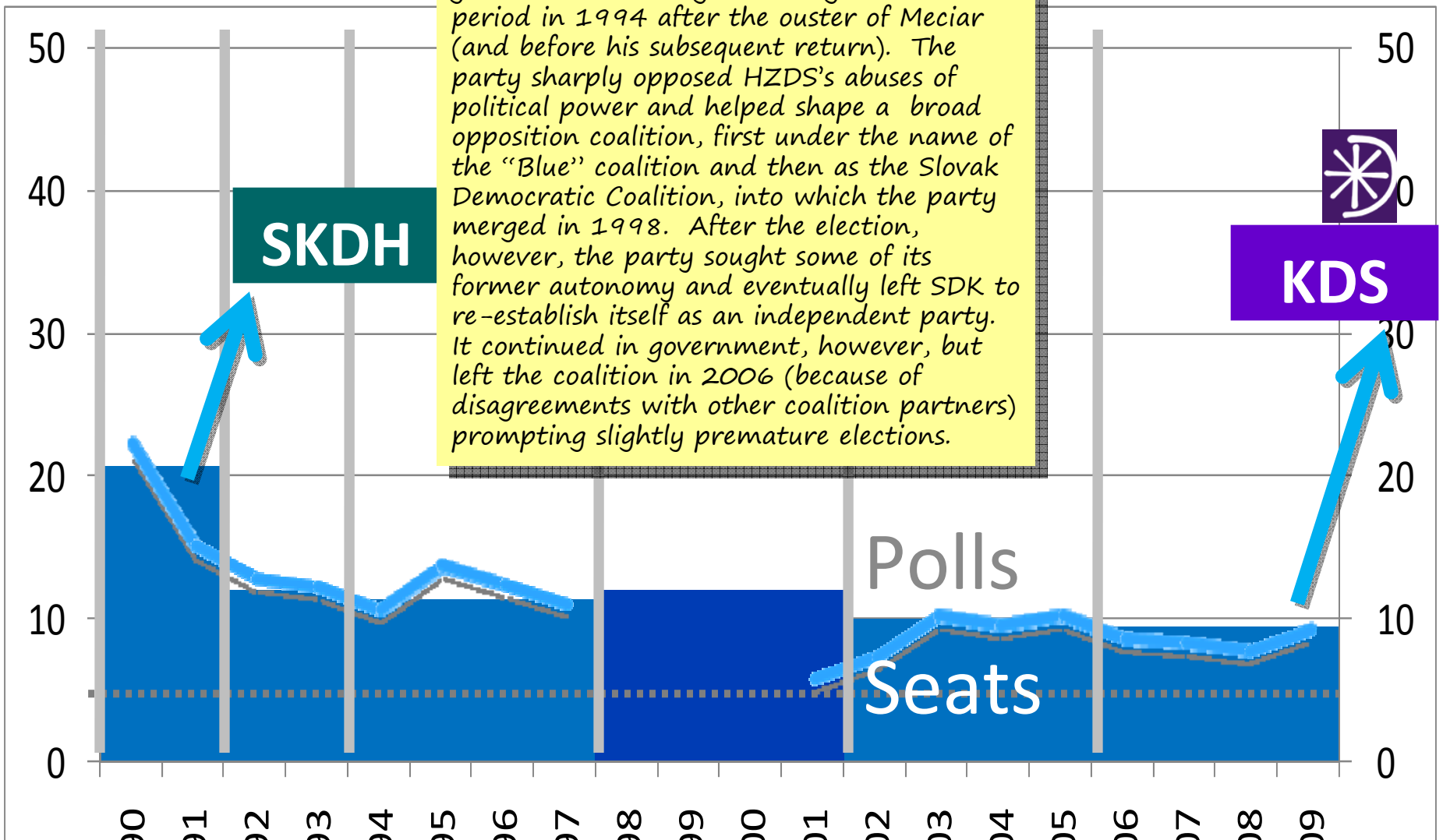
Voters

SDKU has a demographic profile opposite to that of HZDS: more educated, urban, and wealthy and slightly younger than average. It has maintained this demographic position consistently over time



History

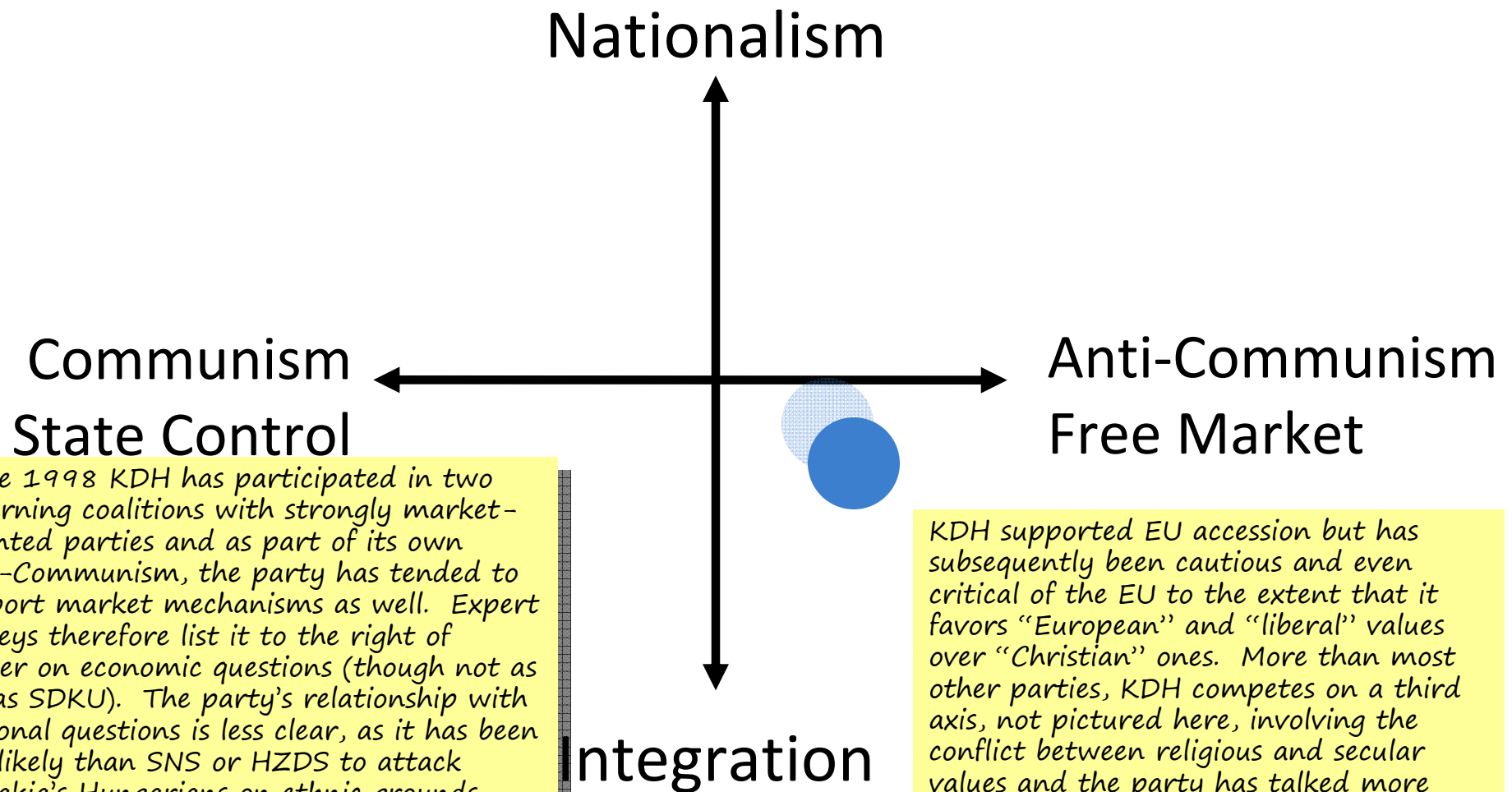
The Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) emerged shortly after the fall of Communism, strongly influenced by Catholic dissident circles. The party played a strong role in the early post-communist governments and again during a brief period in 1994 after the ouster of Meciar (and before his subsequent return). The party sharply opposed HZDS's abuses of political power and helped shape a broad opposition coalition, first under the name of the "Blue" coalition and then as the Slovak Democratic Coalition, into which the party merged in 1998. After the election, however, the party sought some of its former autonomy and eventually left SDK to re-establish itself as an independent party. It continued in government, however, but left the coalition in 2006 (because of disagreements with other coalition partners) prompting slightly premature elections.



For over 15 years, KDH has had a low but stable level of support between 7% and 15% (though actual continuity is harder to determine because of the absence of polling while the party participated in SDK). Party supporters tend to be those with strong religious beliefs, a stable if slowly declining demographic group.

Issues

KDH



Since 1998 KDH has participated in two governing coalitions with strongly market-oriented parties and as part of its own anti-Communism, the party has tended to support market mechanisms as well. Expert surveys therefore list it to the right of center on economic questions (though not as far as SDKU). The party's relationship with national questions is less clear, as it has been less likely than SNS or HZDS to attack Slovakia's Hungarians on ethnic grounds (and has indeed served in coalition with them) but has also not shied away from national themes and expressions of discontent with the MKP/SMK as well as with the European Union.

KDH supported EU accession but has subsequently been cautious and even critical of the EU to the extent that it favors "European" and "liberal" values over "Christian" ones. More than most other parties, KDH competes on a third axis, not pictured here, involving the conflict between religious and secular values and the party has talked more than other parties about such themes as homosexuality, abortion, and law and order.

Leaders



Leadership v. Membership

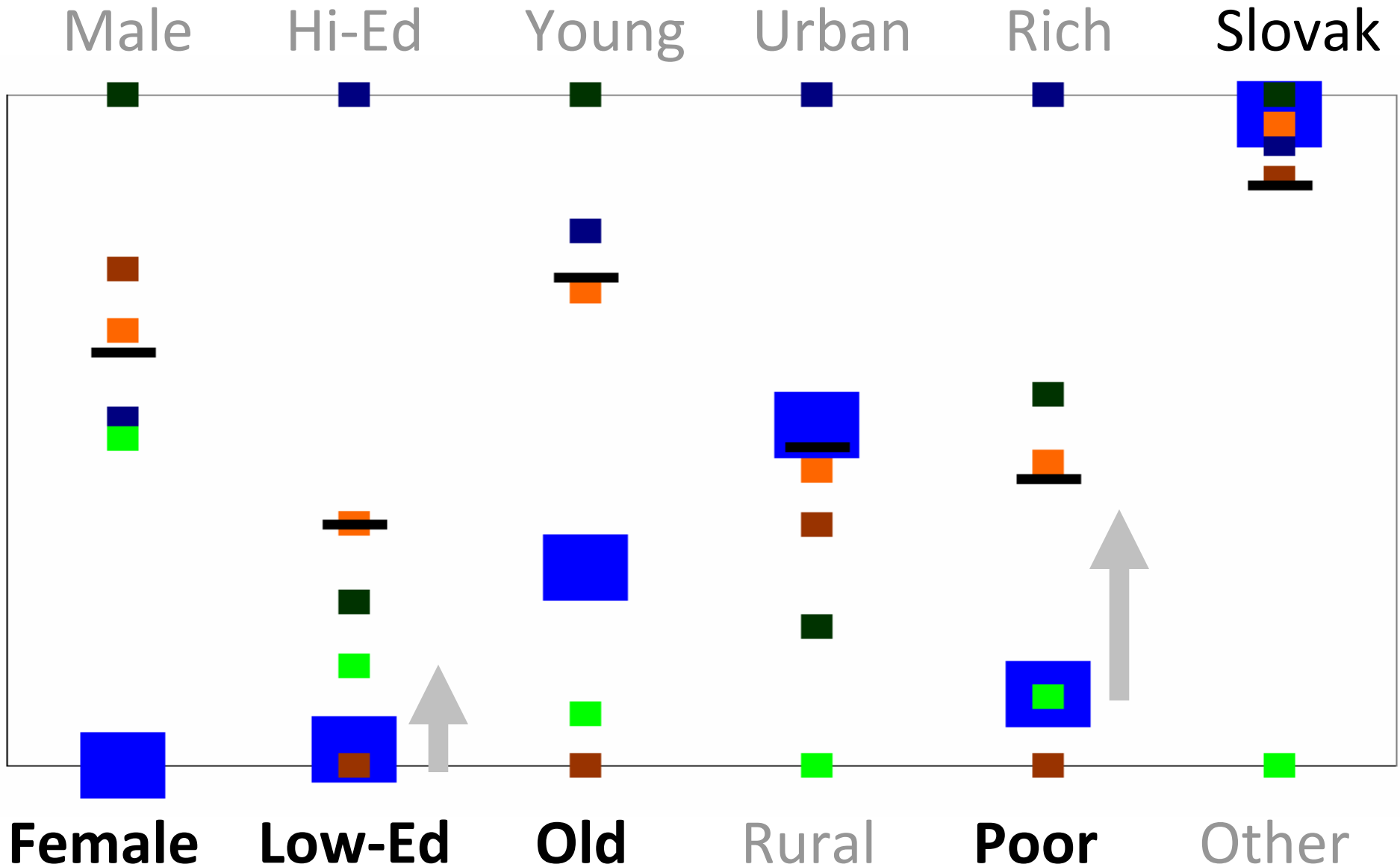
First v. Second Tier



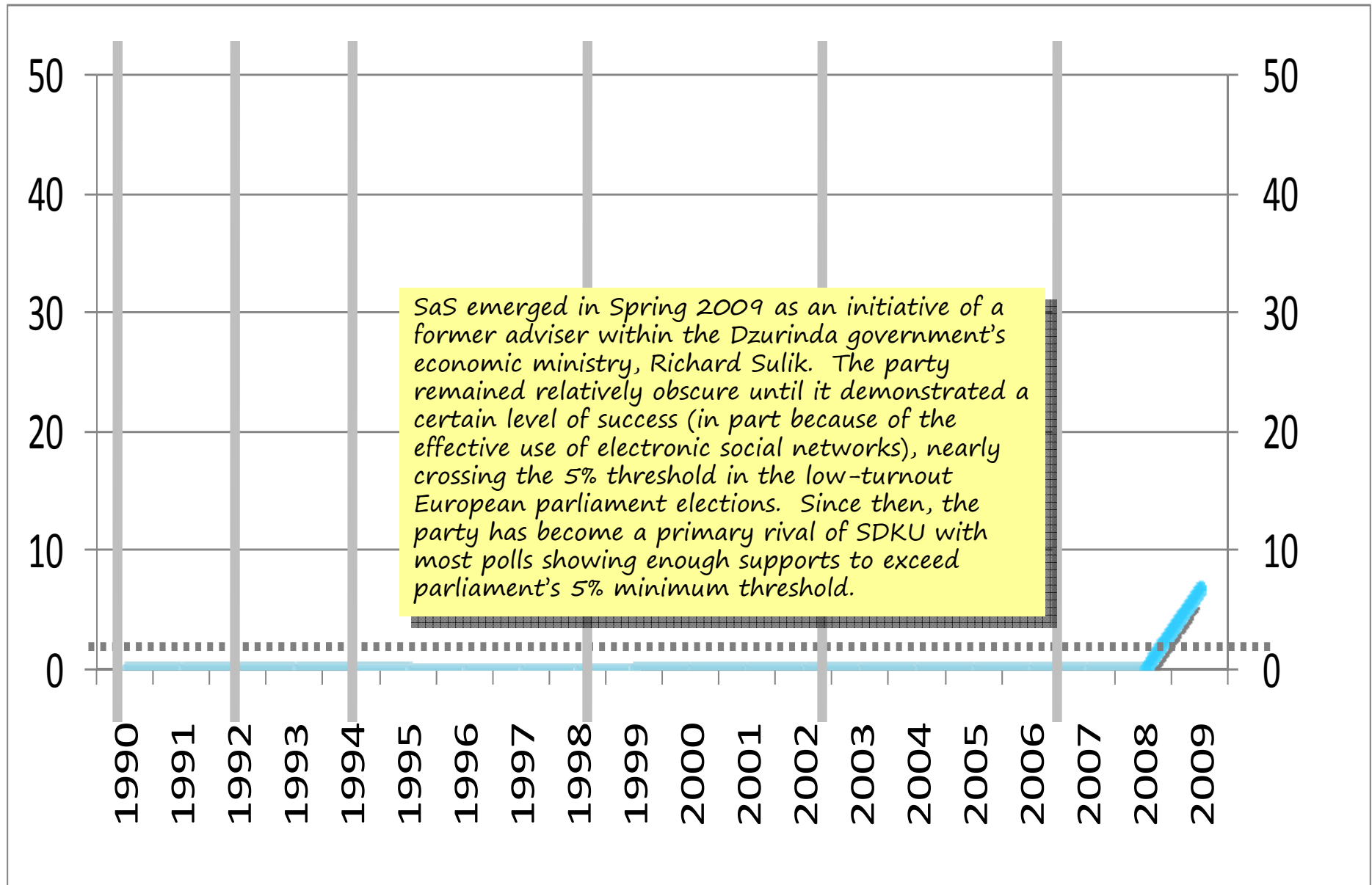
KDH is the party in Slovakia with the strongest and most influential organizational base, at least as related to the party elite. While the party has seen the departure of some frustrated would-be leaders (most recently in 2009, when some leaders departed to form KDS with but failed to take KDH voters) but it is unique among Slovakia's parties for the regular and orderly change in party leadership. It is the only major party in Slovakia where past leaders hand over power and yet continue to remain involved. In 2000, Pavol Hrusovsky replaced retiring long-time party leader Jan Carnogursky, but Carnogursky and a variety of other leaders continued to play a prominent role, and in 2010 Jan Figel replaced Hrusovsky producing a small uptick in support. Other KDH leaders including Daniel Lipsic also exert influence over party decisions.

Voters

A KDH voter is more likely than average to be female, older, and poorer, with a low level of education. 2009 surveys suggest that the education level is not as low as that of HZDS, however and that the KDH voters are more likely to be white collar than those of HZDS.

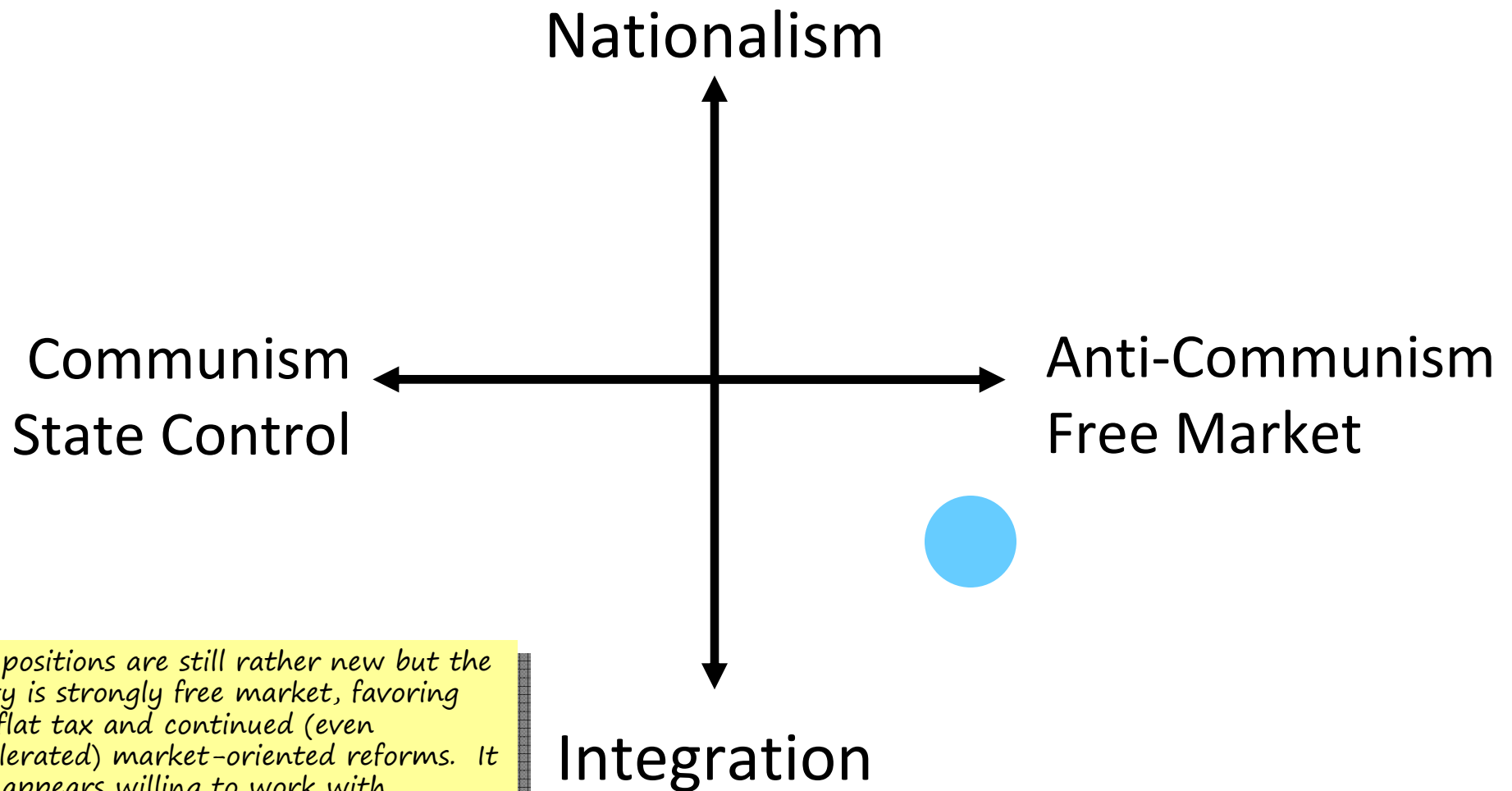


History



Issues

SaS



SaS positions are still rather new but the party is strongly free market, favoring the flat tax and continued (even accelerated) market-oriented reforms. It also appears willing to work with Hungarian parties and even considered an electoral coalition with Bugar's Most-Hid. It has tended to avoid dealing with nationality and identity questions.

Leaders



First v. Second Tier



Leadership v. Membership



SaS internal organization is difficult to judge. It appears to be largely the brainchild of founder Richard Sulik. It has attracted talented second tier members but their influence on the party's overall direction is unclear. The party has also made significant use of electronic social networks but it remains to be seen whether electronic relationships are used primarily for party marketing or actually have influence on party direction.

Voters

The logo for the SaS (Slovak National Party) is a teal square with the letters "SaS" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Male

Hi-Ed

Young

Urban

Rich

Slovak

No formal data can be presented here but recent surveys show that a large share of SaS voters come both from Smer and SDKU and from young voters and outside the electorate, while a small share come from KDH, SF and SNS and none at all from the Hungarian Parties and HZDS. Like SDKU but even more extreme in that way, SaS is a party with an overrepresentation of well-educated, young, urban and relatively wealthy supporters.

Female

Low-Ed

Old

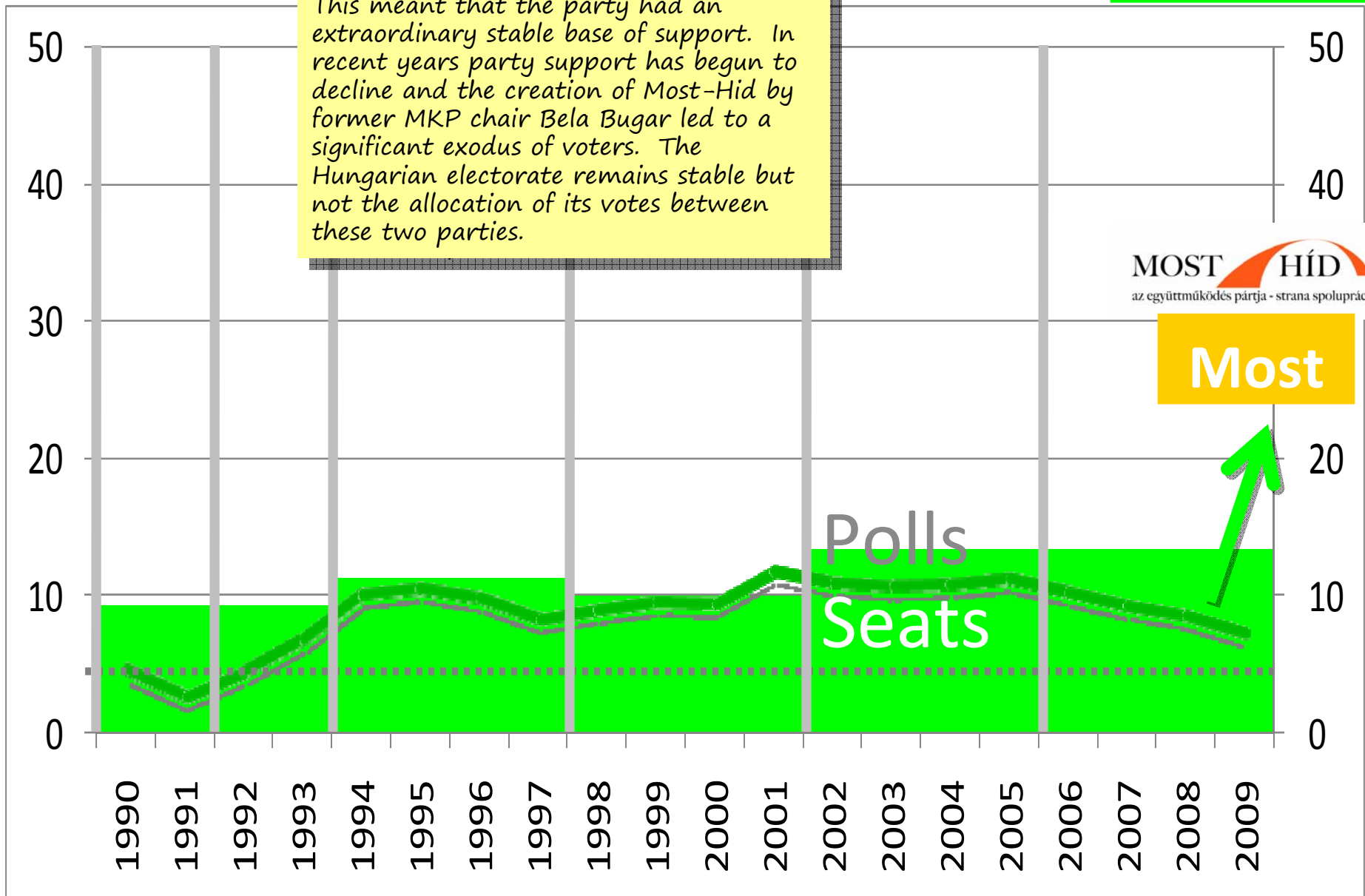
Rural

Poor

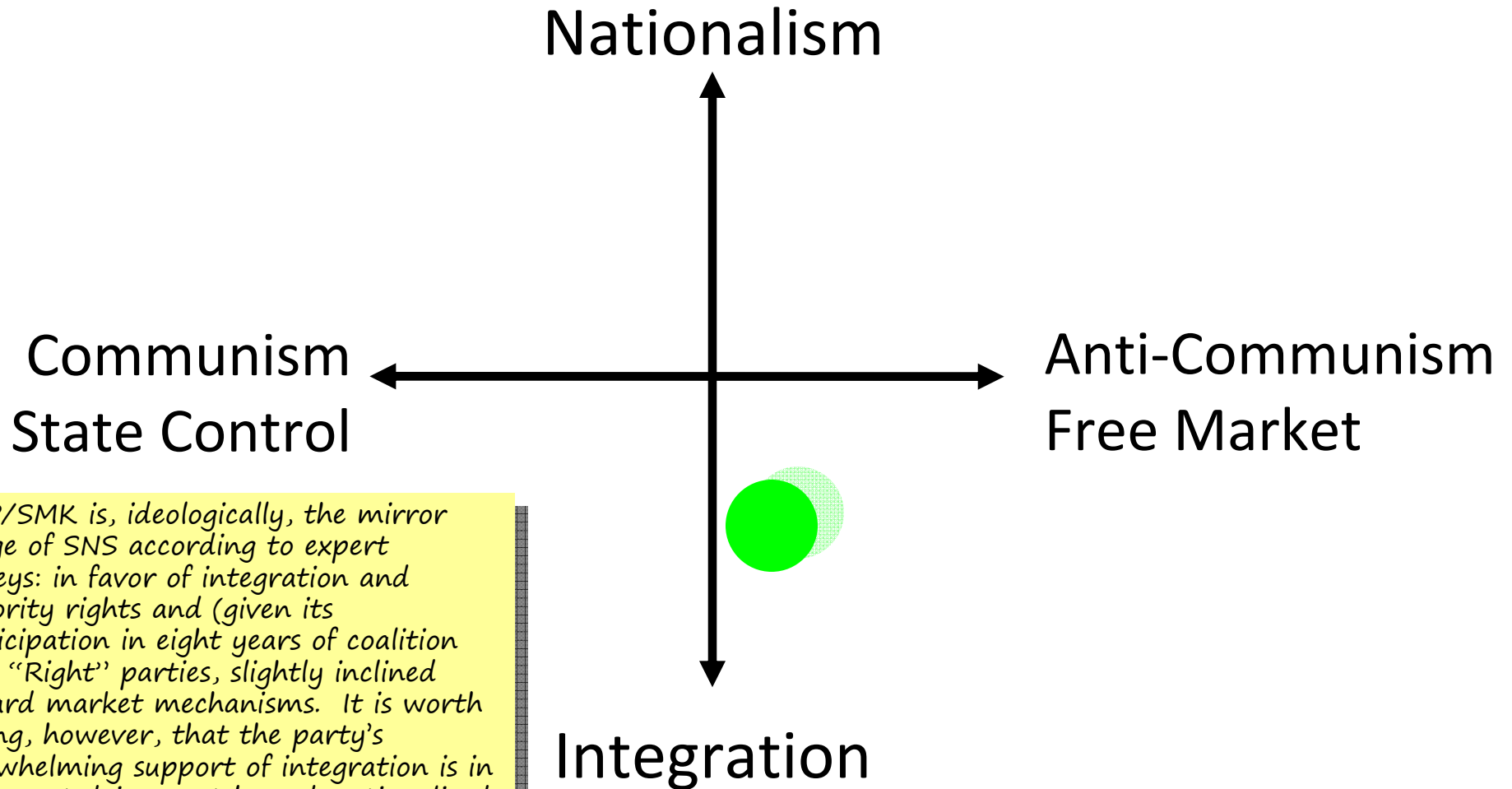
Other

History

MKP-SMK is almost exclusively identified with the Hungarian ethnic population in Slovakia: few party voters are not Hungarian and until recently nearly all Hungarian voters supported this party. This meant that the party had an extraordinary stable base of support. In recent years party support has begun to decline and the creation of Most-Híd by former MKP chair Bela Bugar led to a significant exodus of voters. The Hungarian electorate remains stable but not the allocation of its votes between these two parties.



Issues



MKP/SMK is, ideologically, the mirror image of SNS according to expert surveys: in favor of integration and minority rights and (given its participation in eight years of coalition with "Right" parties, slightly inclined toward market mechanisms. It is worth noting, however, that the party's overwhelming support of integration is in large part driven not by a denationalized cosmopolitanism but by a strong emphasis on creating a counterweight that helps preserve rights for the Hungarian ethnic group within Slovakia.

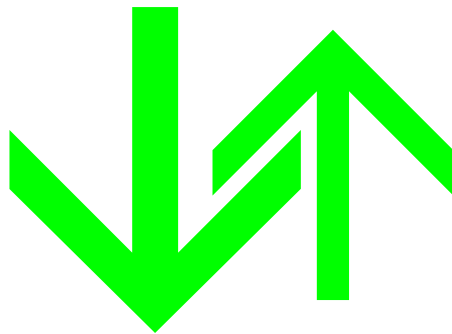
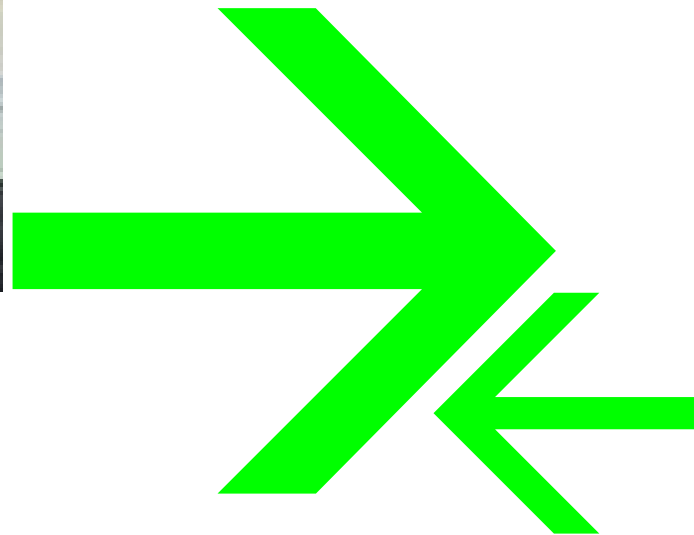
Leaders



First v. Second Tier



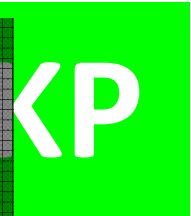
Leadership v. Membership



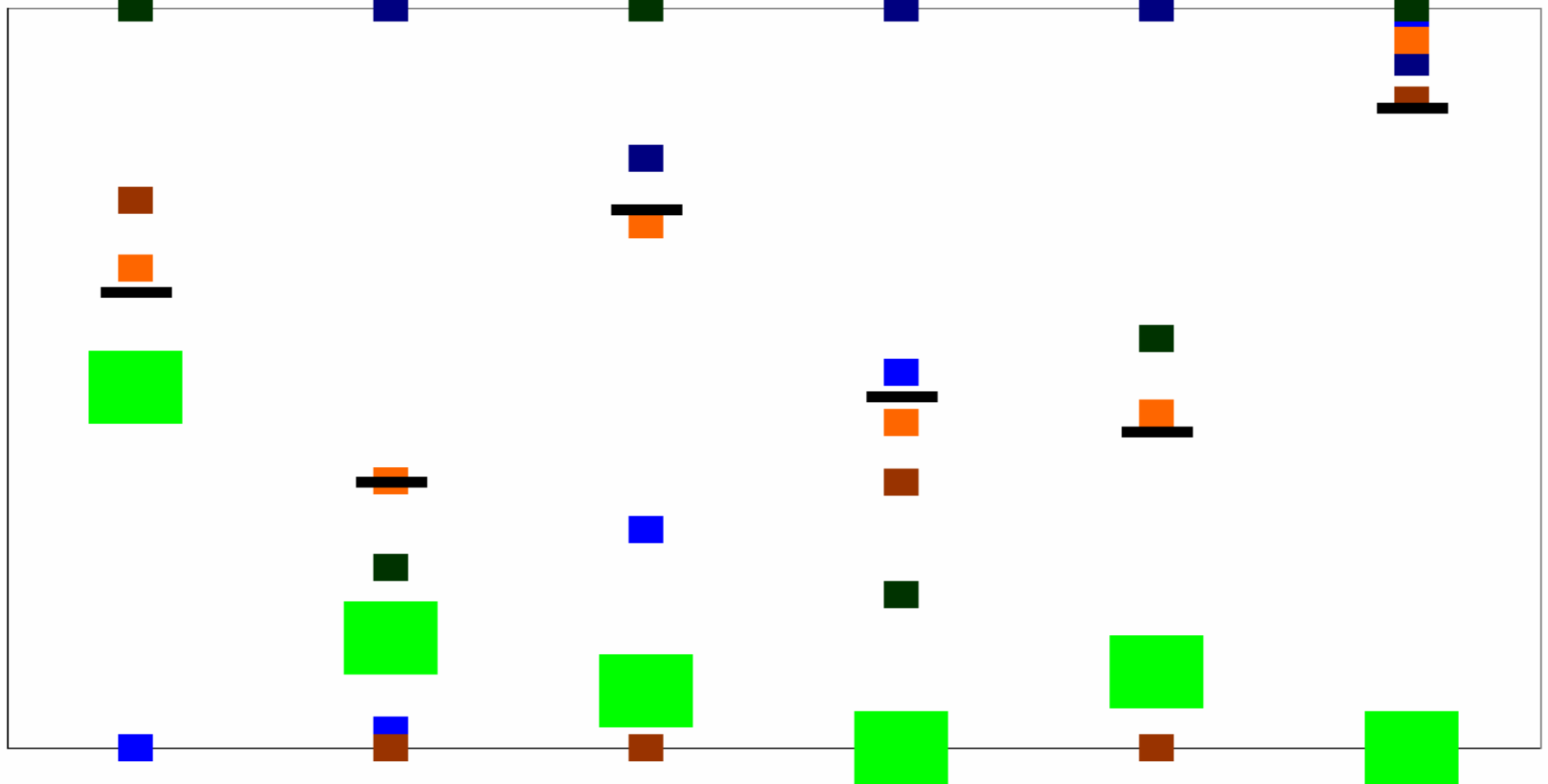
Like KDH, MKP-SMK has maintained a relatively strong organization vis-à-vis the party elite—one that could influence, if not command, party decisions. Party leadership was also more collegial than in many other parties, with a large number of influential elites. In 2007 A narrow vote among these leading members removed longtime chair Bela Bugar. Bugar stayed for a time within the party but eventually left to form Most-Hid. Csaky is the most significant leader within the party hierarchy but appears to face constraint from at least some other leaders.

Voters

In past years the story of MKP-SMK's demographic support was easy to tell: with a few exceptions, Hungarians and only Hungarians supported the party. Recent surveys show that this is true but that there are differences between MKP-SMK and Most-Hid within the Hungarian population. MKP-SMK voters are more likely to have low education levels and live in rural areas, have less income. They are also slightly older. Interestingly, whereas a small but significant group of Most-Hid voters are non-Hungarian, SMK appears to have lost what few non-Hungarian voters it had.



Male



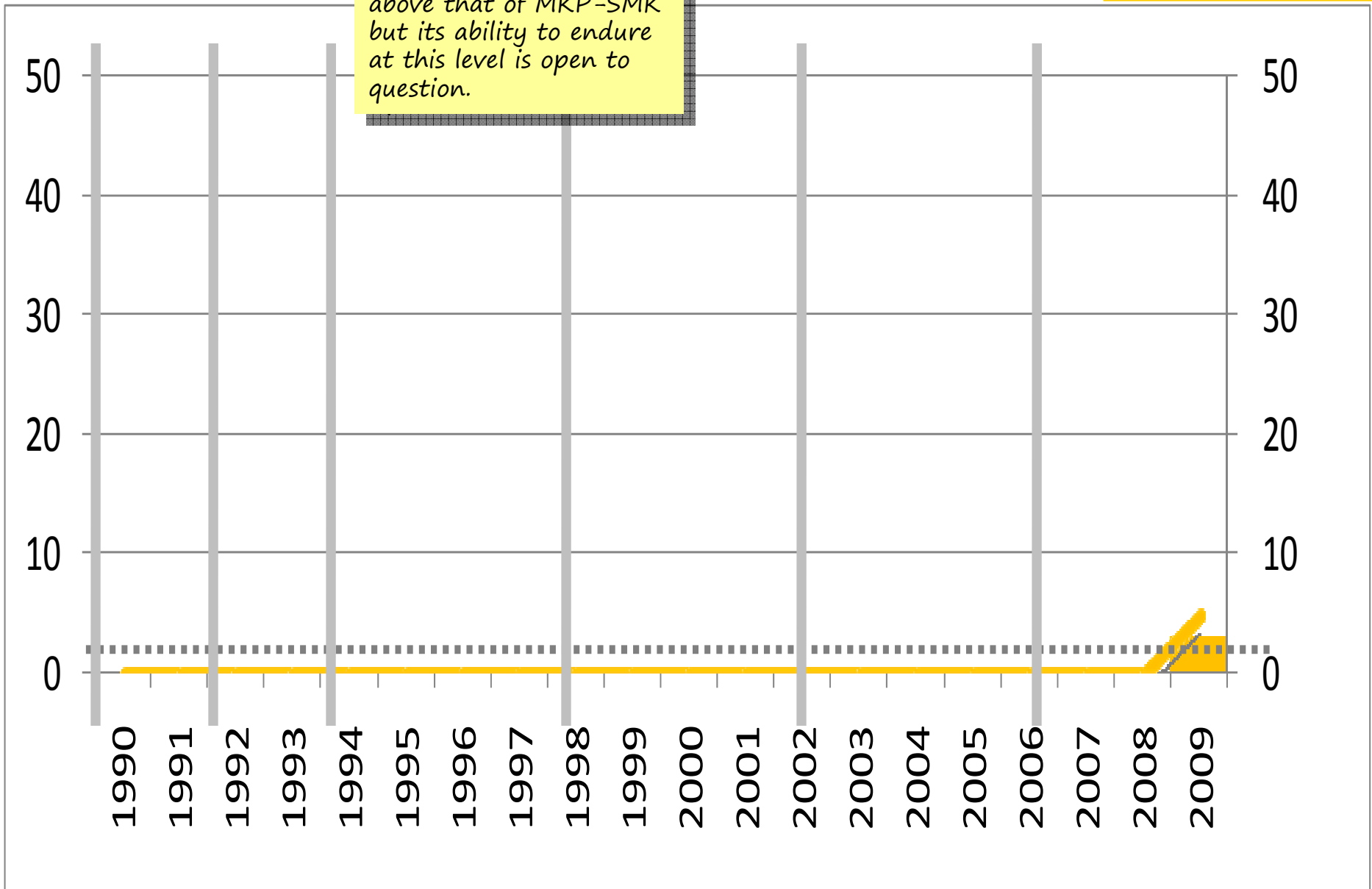
Female Low-Ed Old Rural Poor Hungar.

ovak

History

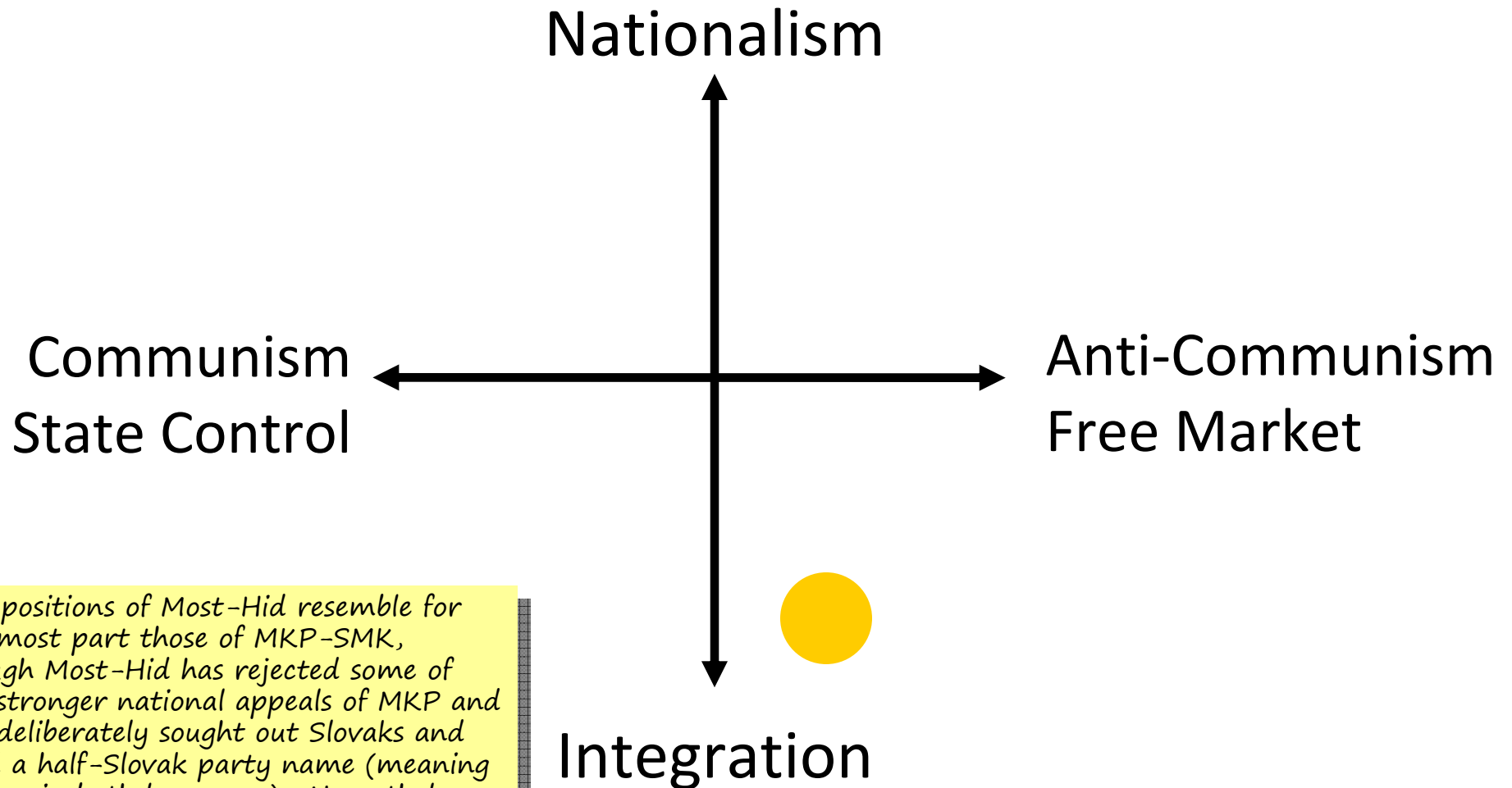
The party is too new to have a very strong electoral track record. It has gone from nothing to a position slightly above that of MKP-SMK but its ability to endure at this level is open to question.

MOST HÍD
az együttműködés pártja - strana spolupráce



Positions

Most



The positions of Most-Hid resemble for the most part those of MKP-SMK, though Most-Hid has rejected some of the stronger national appeals of MKP and has deliberately sought out Slovaks and used a half-Slovak party name (meaning Bridge in both languages). Nevertheless the primary appeal of MKP is to Hungarians and the party strongly defends the right to Hungarian cultural reproduction.

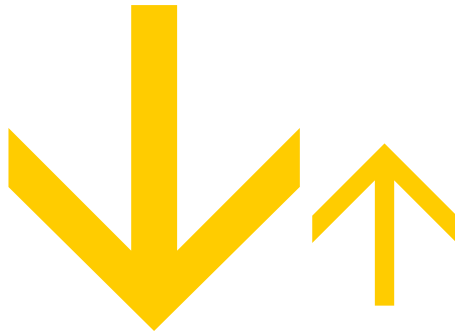
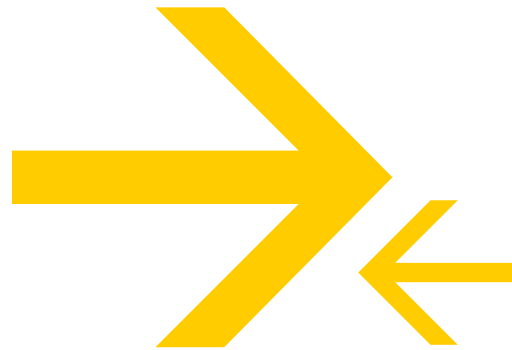
Leaders



First v. Second Tier



Leadership v. Membership



As with SaS, Most-Hid's internal organization is difficult to judge. It is the project of Bela Bugar, former chair of MKP-SMK and attracted some other prominent members of MKP-SMK as well as a few ethnic Slovaks. The party is too new to determine the internal dynamics but Bugar looks set to exert a commanding role, having left behind many of the constraining influence in MKP-SMK.

Voters

Most

Male

Hi-Ed

Young

Urban

Rich

Slovak

No formal data can be presented here but recent surveys show that a nearly all Most-Hid voters come both from MKP-SMK, but that a few come from voters previously outside the electorate, while a small share come from SDKU and Smer. Compared to voters in Slovakia as a whole, Most-Hid voters are older, more rural, poorer and more Hungarian, but compared to MKP-SMK voters, Most-Hid voters are more educated, younger, less rural, less poor and less likely to be Hungarians.

Female

Low-Ed

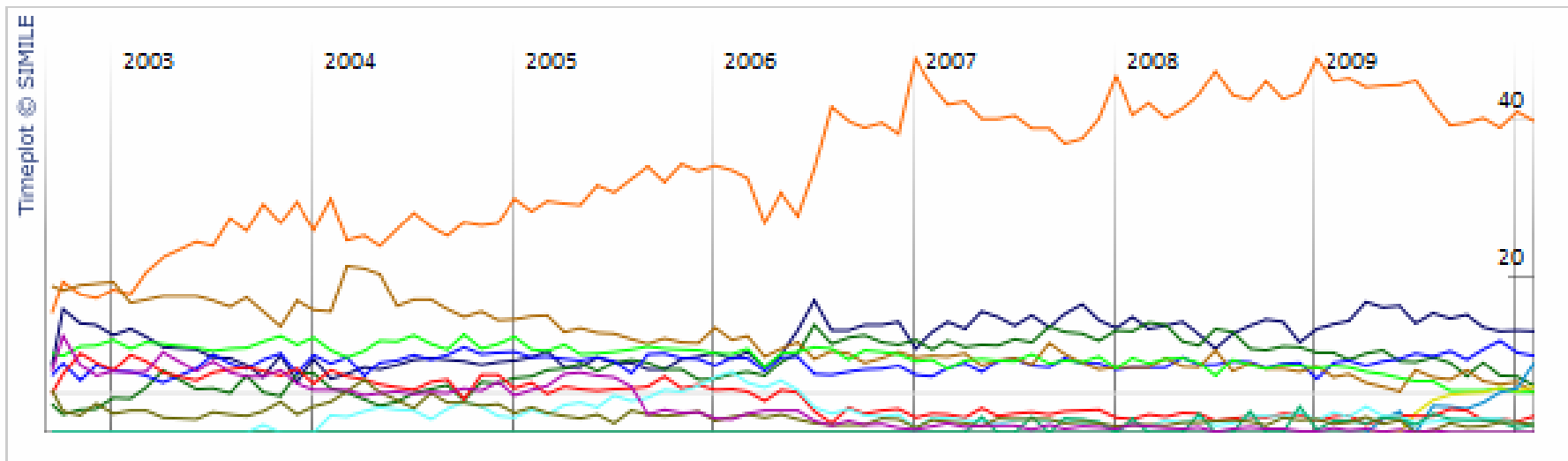
Old

Rural

Poor

Hungar.

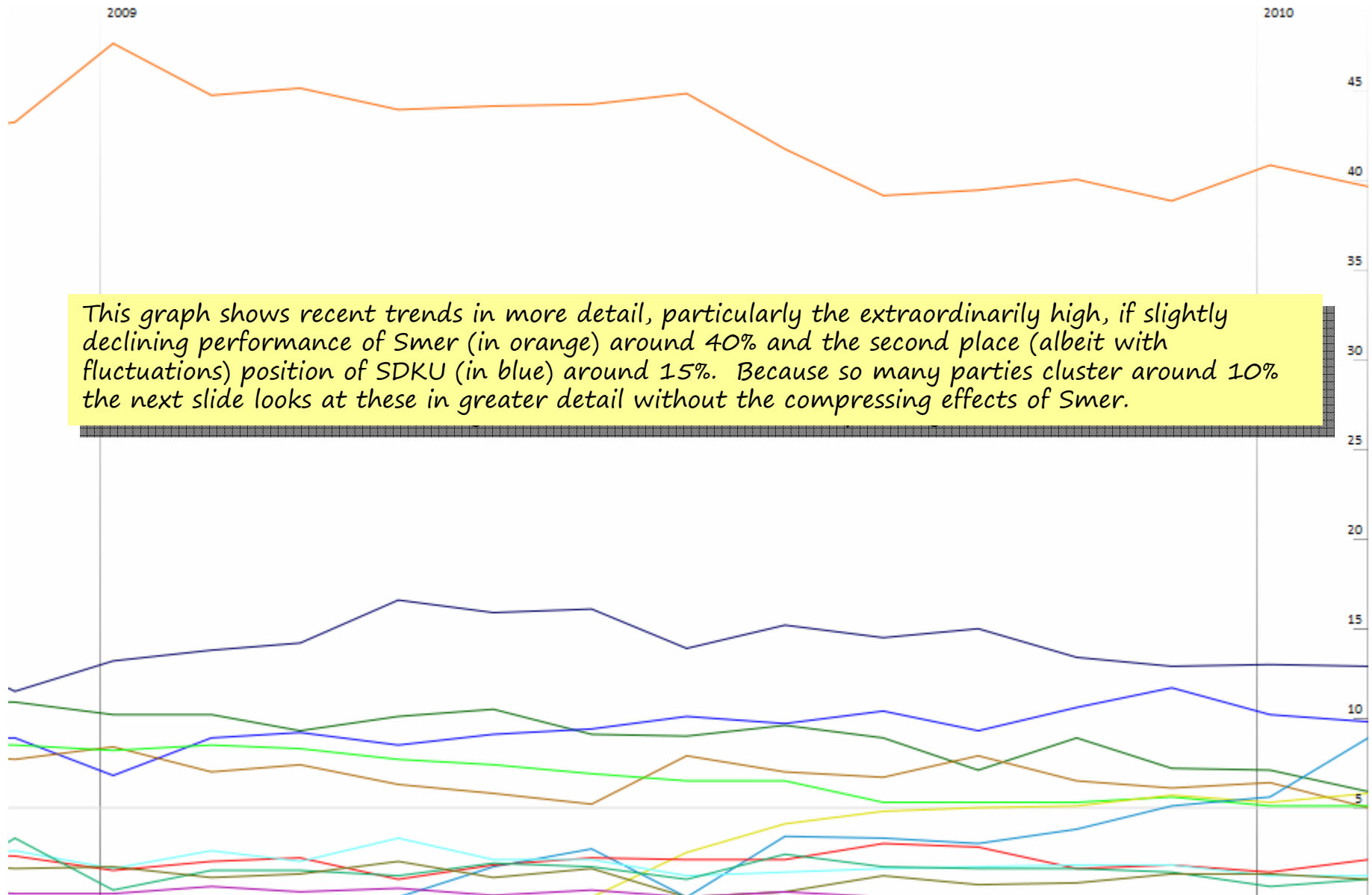
Elections



Long-term polls show several important developments over the last 8 years:

- The rise of Smer to a dominant position, even more dominant since the 2006 election and now hovering around 40%
- The cluster of other parties between 5% and 15%, with SDKU usually holding the position of the second party and others fighting for the remaining positions.
- The “viability gap” that emerged in 2006 with parties either well above or well below the 5% threshold. This gap disappeared in 2009 but the disappearance may be temporary if both new parties that rose through that gap (Most-Hid and SaS) manage to stay above. No other parties appear poised to rise above. A few parties (SNS and HZDS and MKP-SMK) could fall below. The next slide offers a closer look at the last year.

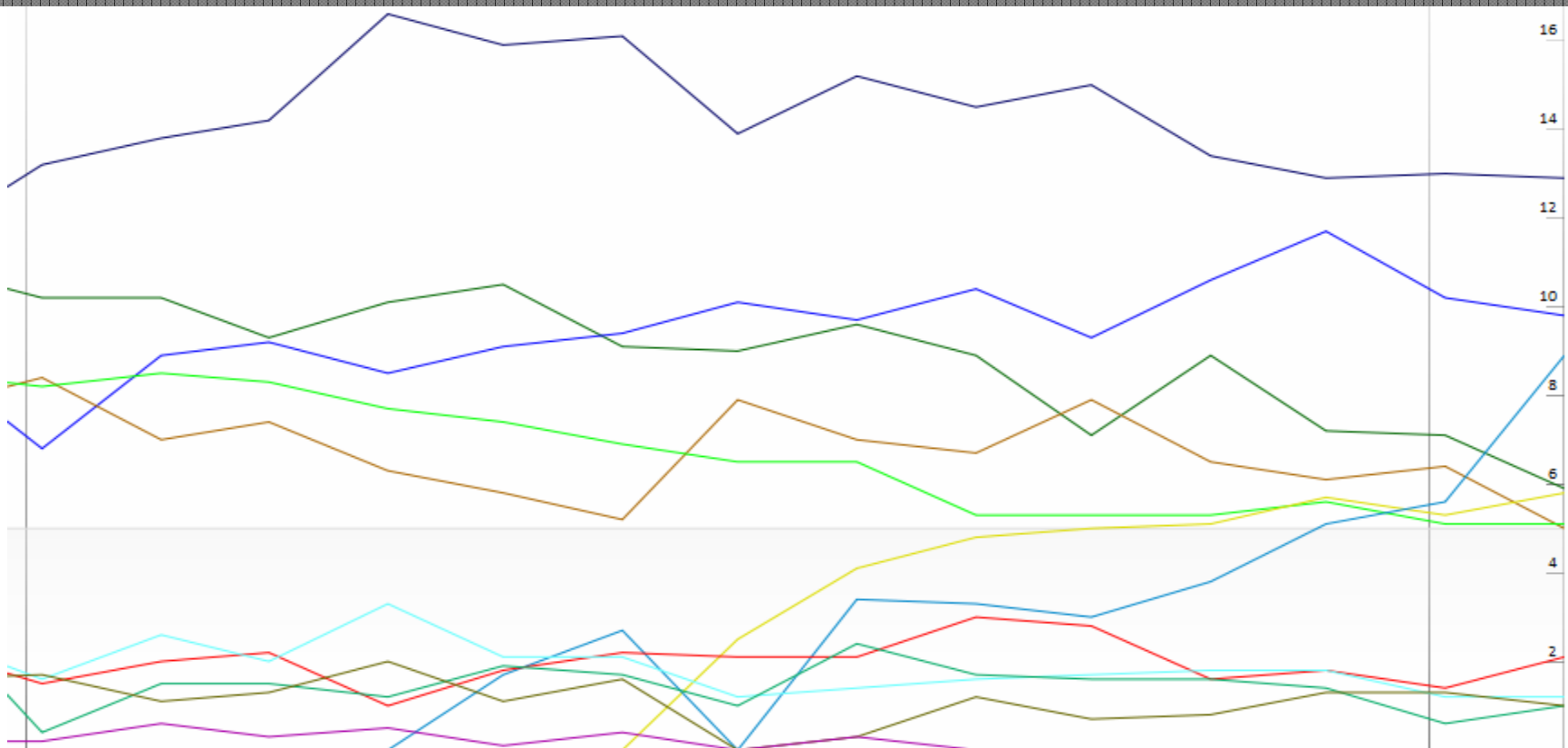
Elections



This graph shows recent trends in more detail, particularly the extraordinarily high, if slightly declining performance of Smer (in orange) around 40% and the second place (albeit with fluctuations) position of SDKU (in blue) around 15%. Because so many parties cluster around 10% the next slide looks at these in greater detail without the compressing effects of Smer.

This graph shows the shifts in greater detail. The following points are noteworthy:

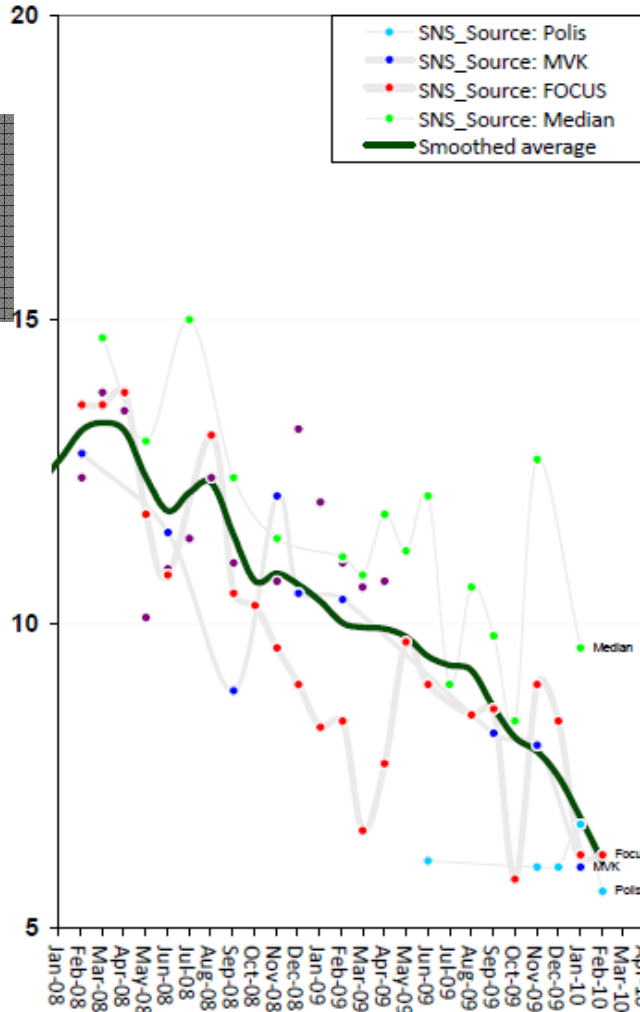
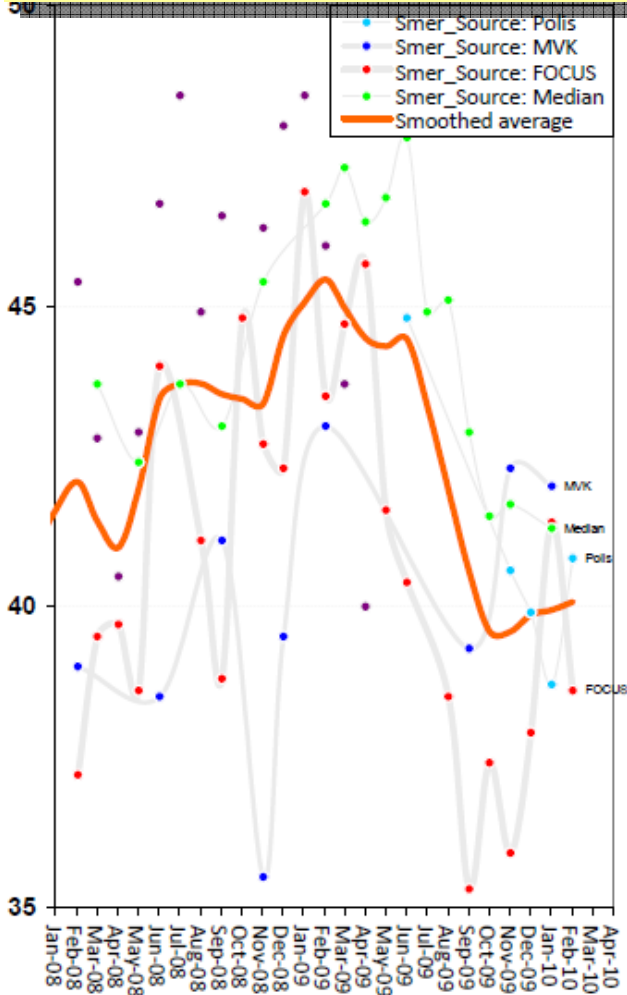
- SDKU (in dark blue) has risen as high as 16% but has fallen recently, largely in parallel to the rise of SaS (in aqua), but SDKU has not fallen as far as SaS has risen suggesting that SaS gets some voters from other sources.
- KDH (in bright blue) has remained stable around 10% as is that party's habit.
- MKP-SMK (in bright green) has fallen significantly, especially with the rise of Most-Hid (in mustard) but Most-Hid has risen faster suggesting (as with SaS) that it is recruiting at least some voters from elsewhere. Both parties are currently right at the threshold of viability. Chances are that one will get in. Chances of both getting in are smaller but by no means impossible).
- HZDS (in brown) and SNS (in dark green) have both fallen this year to near the 5% threshold. HZDS fell near the threshold once in mid 2009 but recovered only to fall again. SNS, starting from a higher point, has fallen steadily over the past year (past two years in fact)
- More established small parties remained small: ANO has died. HZD fell too low to sustain itself and merged with Smer, SF despite a surge in early 2009 has fallen low again, and KSS has stayed around 2% without showing much sign of change.



By the numbers using specific poll data.

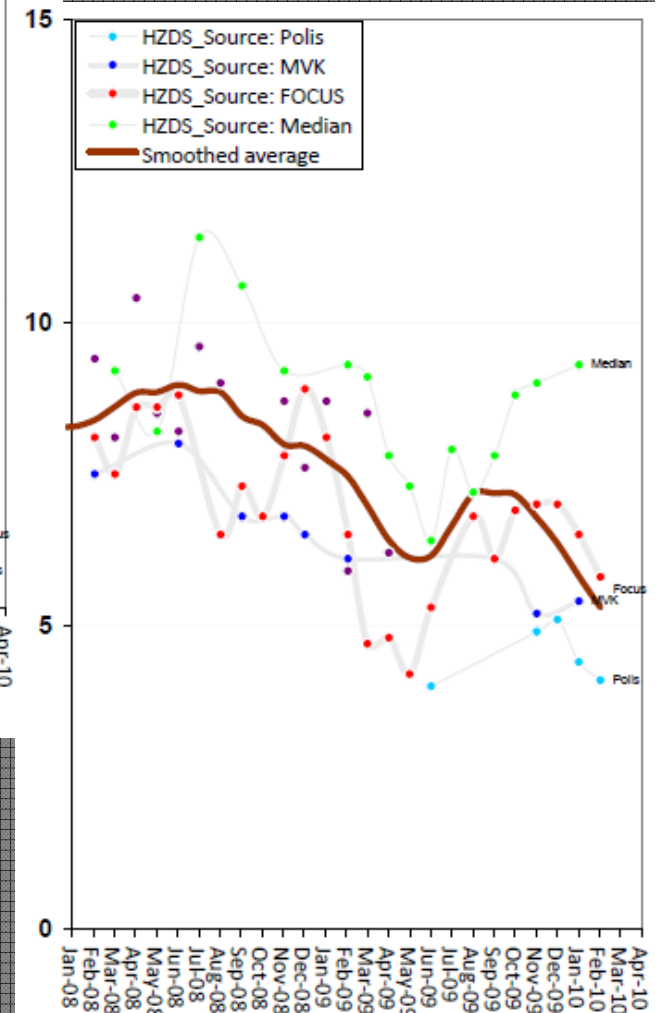
Elections

Smer, in a class by itself has saw significant rise (to yet another peak) in early 2009 but has fallen back below 2008 levels according to almost every poll (still higher than in 2006)



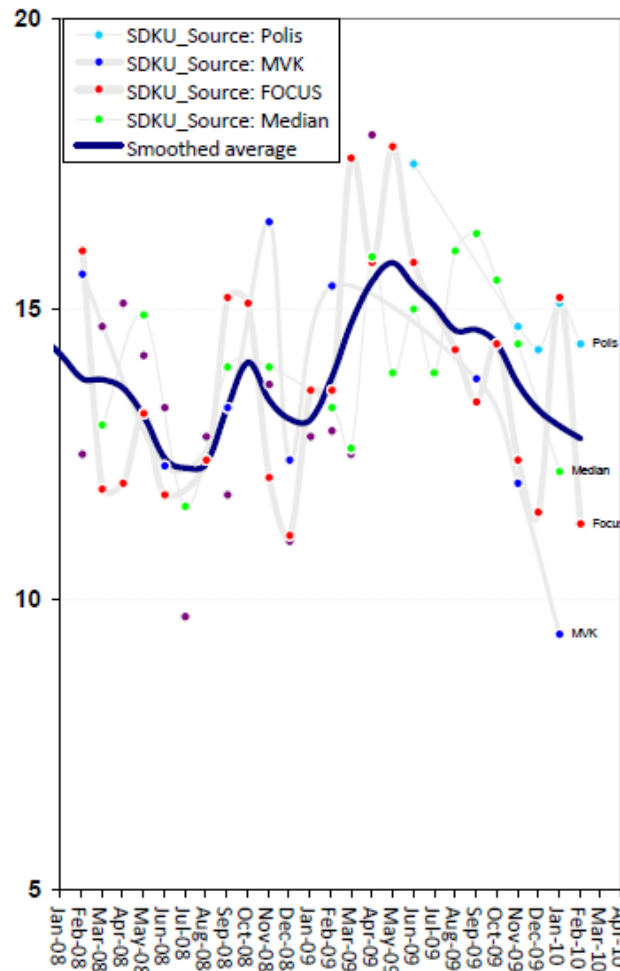
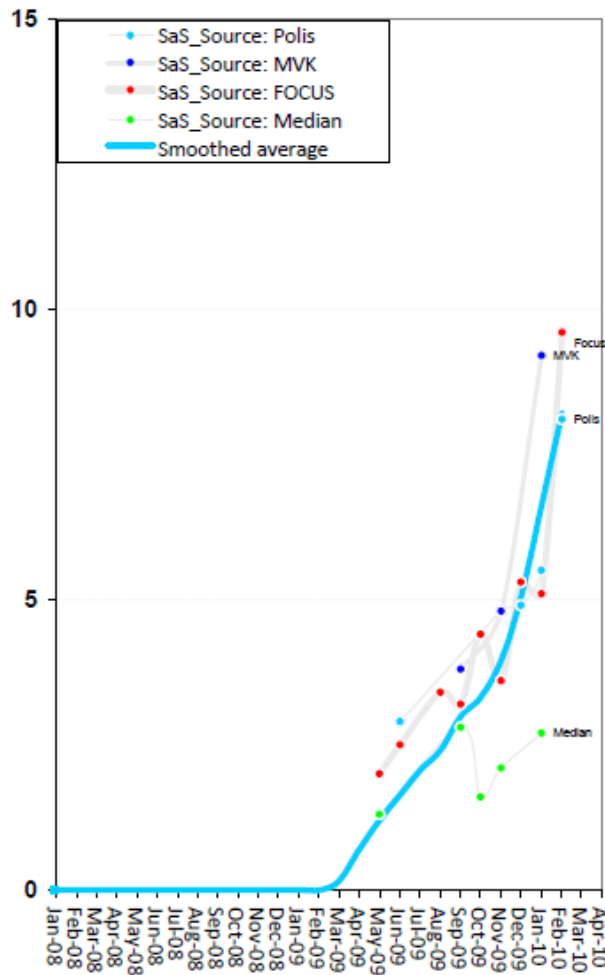
SNS Shows a process of almost linear decline in the smoothed average, accelerated by the inclusion of Polis polls in which SNS scores low but these are countered by unreasonably high Median polls for SNS and the trend is traceable in both FOCUS and MVK polls

HZDS has continued its slow process of two steps down, one step up, recovering from lows in early 2008, falling to new lows and then recovering again in Fall 2009. Addition of Polis polls accelerate the current descent but these are countered by unreasonably high numbers measured by Median. MK and FOCUS both show the same trend.



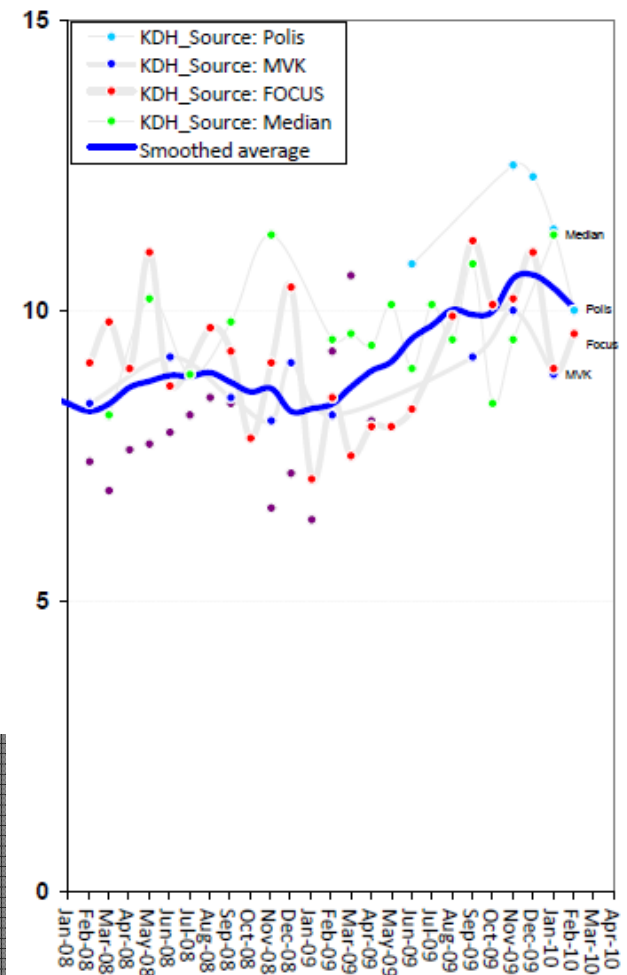
Elections

SaS has risen from nowhere, first appearing on polls in spring of 2009 and in every poll except Median (which is unusually low) rising steadily each month.



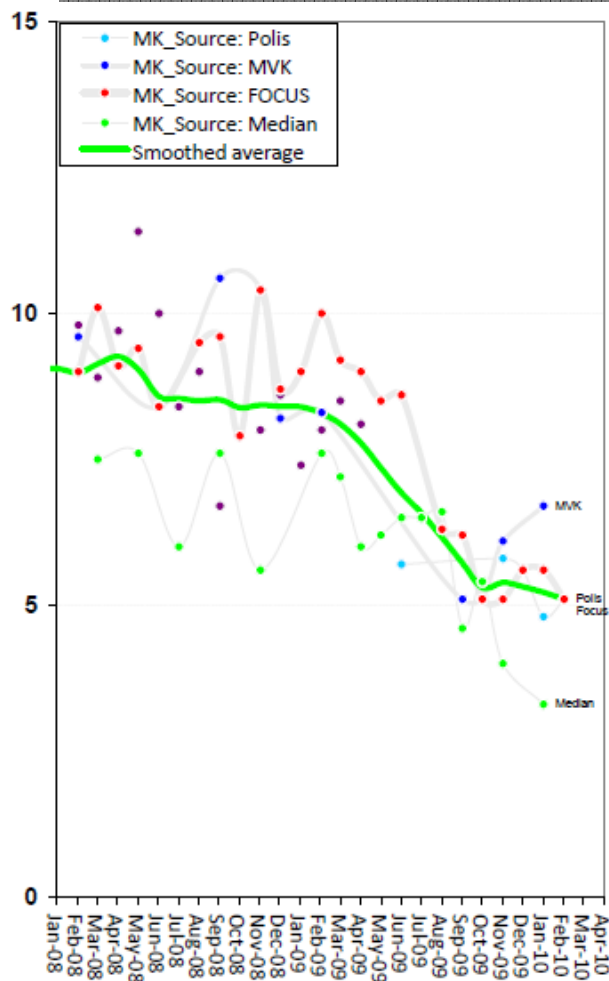
SDKU has fluctuated in the past year, rising from a trough in summer 2008 to a peak in summer 2009 and then falling again, probably related to the rise in SaS. All the polling firms are quite consistent on this one.

KDH has always hovered around 10%. It rose slightly over the last year with the coming of Figel but that effect may have worn off (and some voters may have left for SaS).

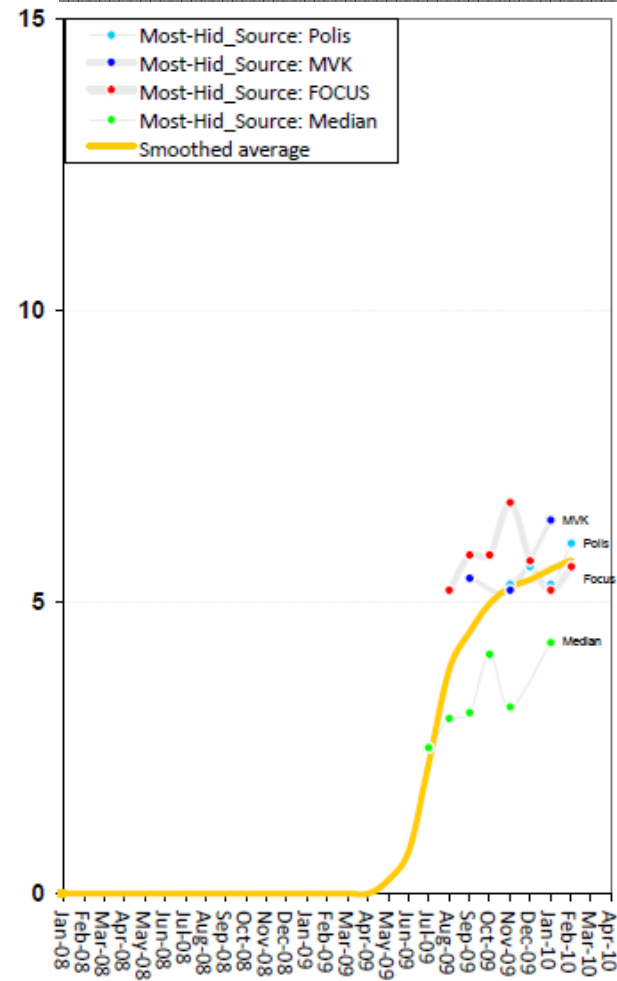


Elections

MKP shows a steady decline accelerating with the emergence of Most-Hid, but not isometric to it, suggesting that MKP lost potential voters beforehand.

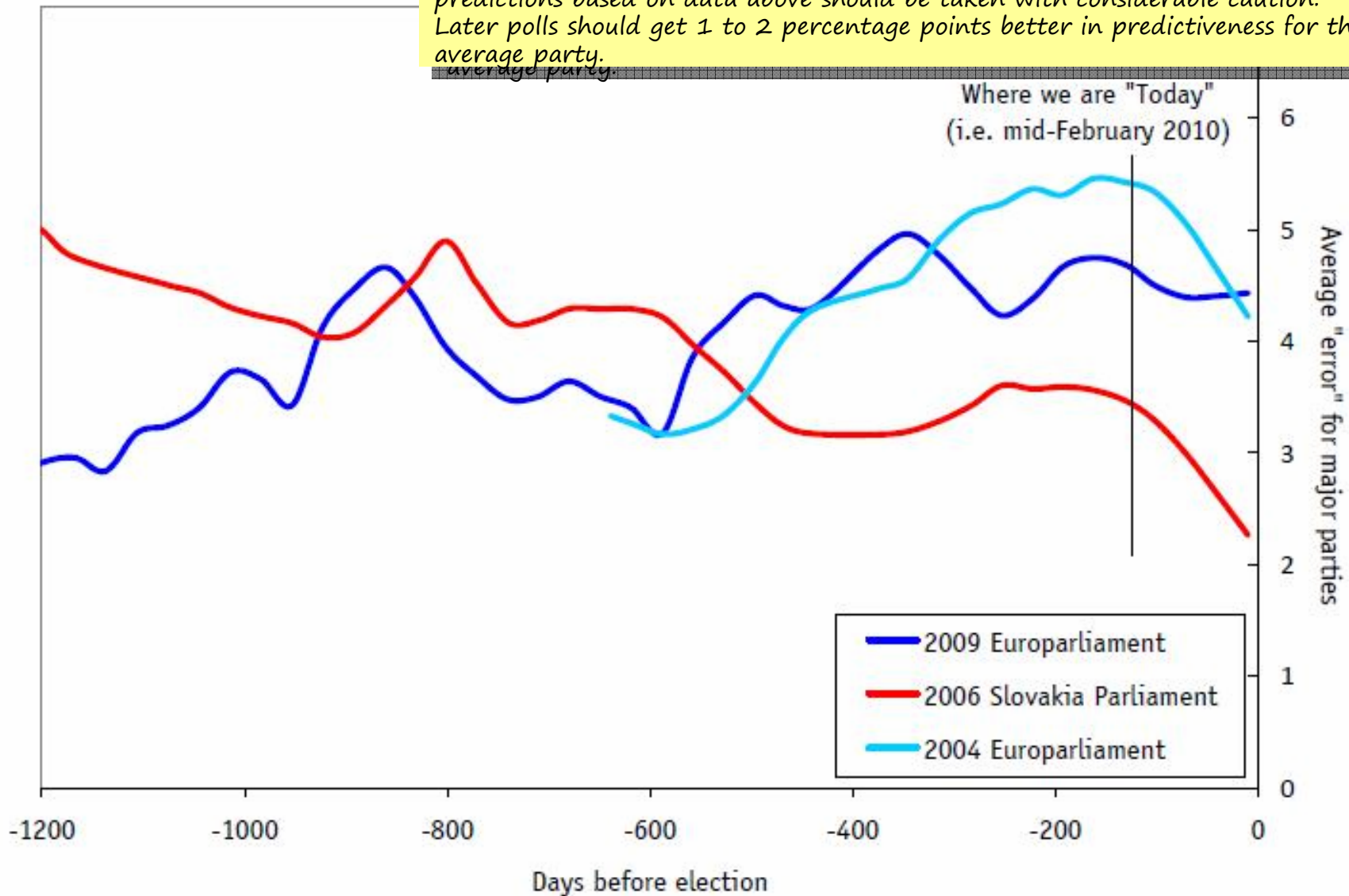


Most-Hid's rise is so rapid that it looks to have pulled voters from non-MKP sources (disaffected MKP voters who withdrew earlier and perhaps some Slovaks). It now shows no upward trend (and really never did, starting all of them around the current level except Median, where the slow rise suggests greater name recognition).



Elections

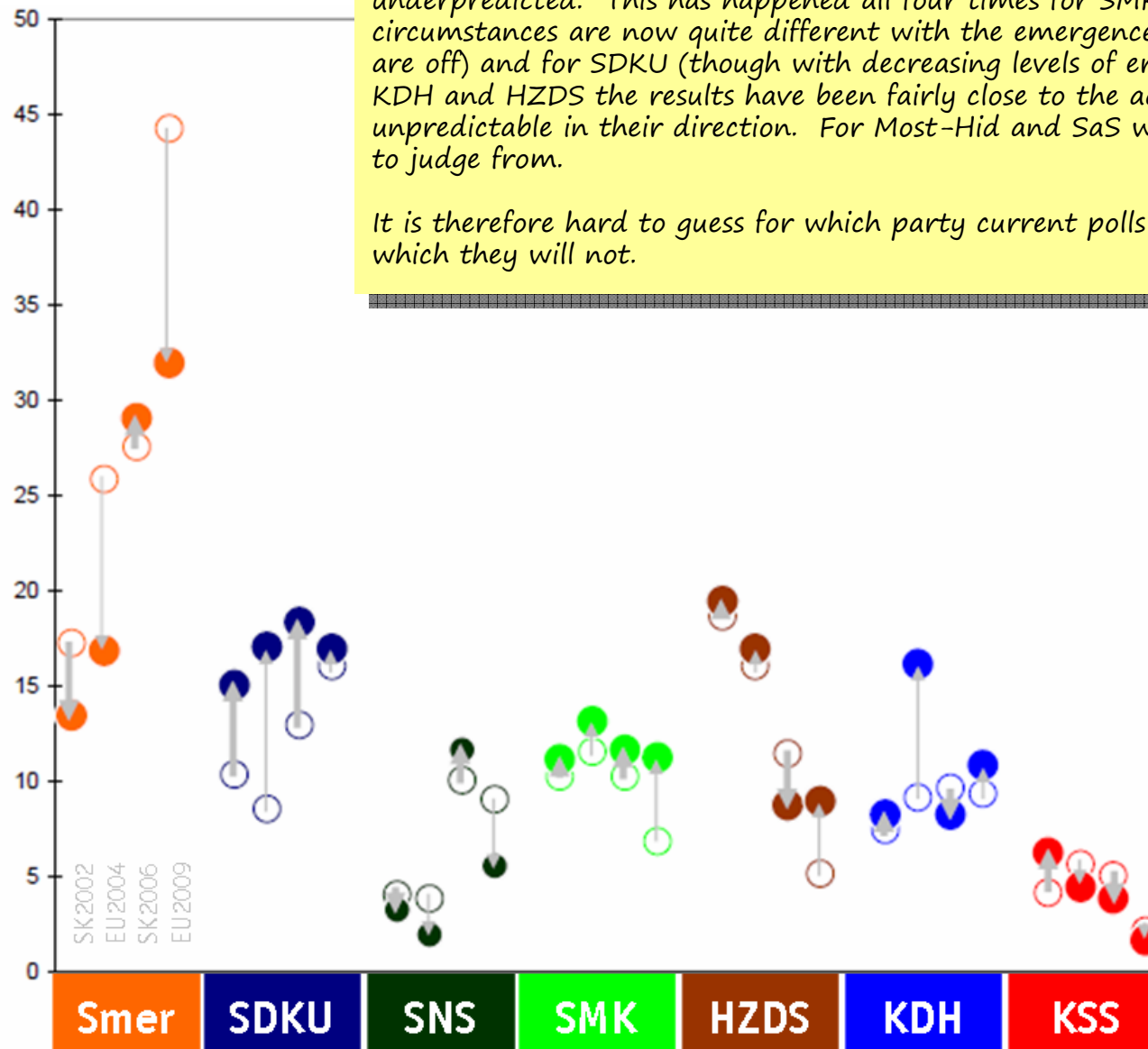
This chart shows levels of predictivity of polls at various points over time. Predictivity is greater for elections to Slovakia's parliament than for Europarlament elections (very low turnout obscures the relationship) but for all of them predictiveness appears to begin increasing about 6 months before the elections. We are slightly beyond that point right now. This means that all predictions based on data above should be taken with considerable caution. Later polls should get 1 to 2 percentage points better in predictiveness for the average party.



Elections

This chart shows levels of predictiveness of polls for various parties and elections. When the white circle is above the colored circle, the polls have overpredicted. This has happened for Smer and SNS in 3 of 4 elections (but not the most recent parliamentary election, suggestion caution about thinking that current results are overprediction). When the colored circle is above the white one the polls have underpredicted. This has happened all four times for SMK-MKP (though its circumstances are now quite different with the emergence of Most-Hid and bets are off) and for SDKU (though with decreasing levels of error over time). For KDH and HZDS the results have been fairly close to the actual results and unpredictable in their direction. For Most-Hid and SaS we have no track record to judge from.

It is therefore hard to guess for which party current polls will be accurate and for which they will not.

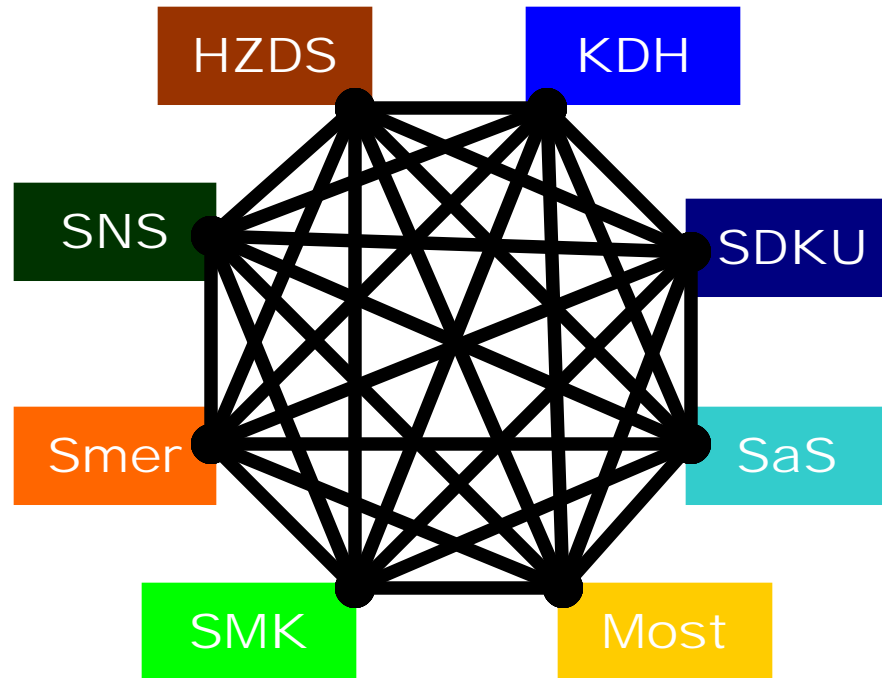


Coalitions

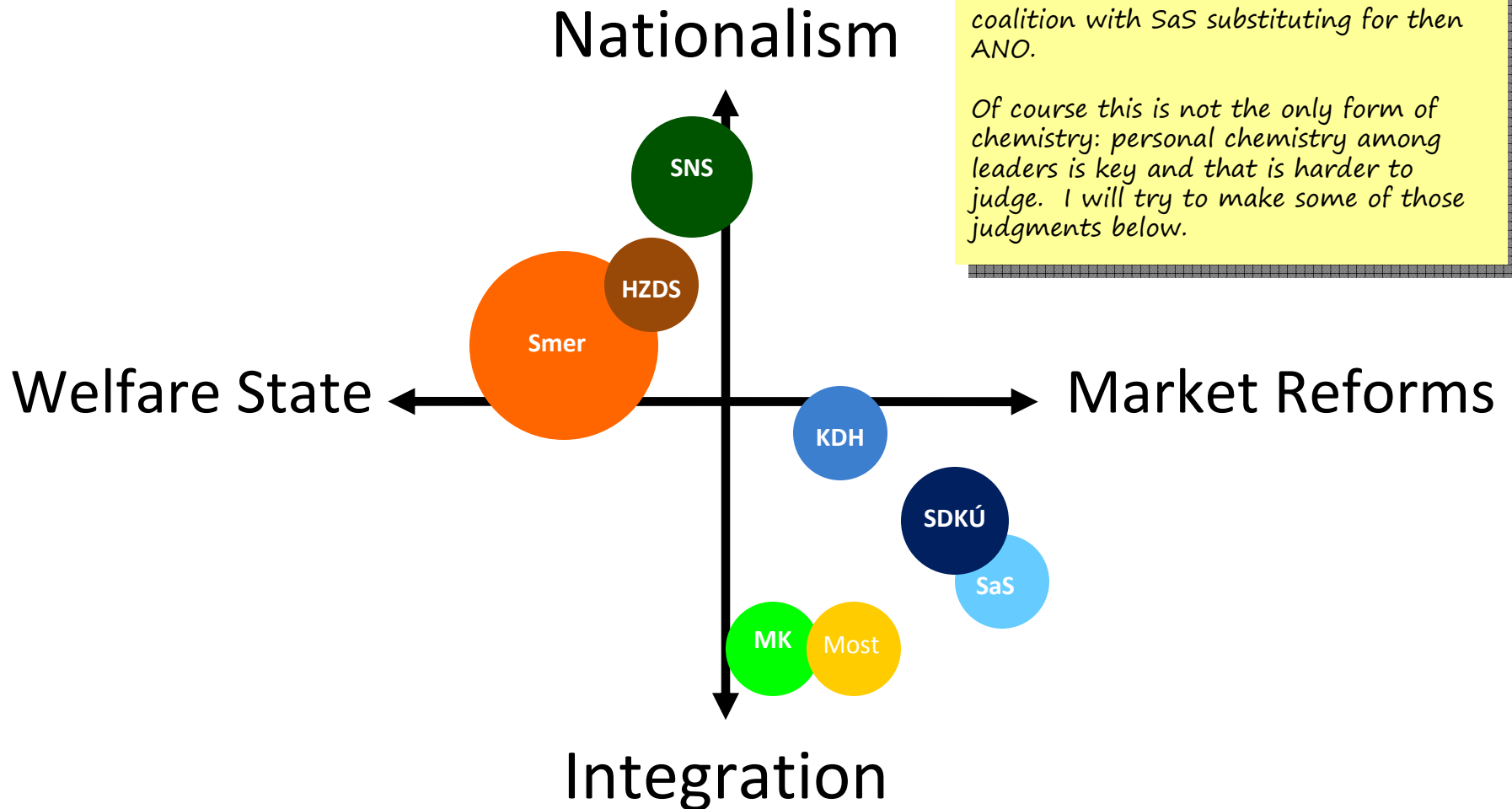
There are two key elements in assessing the likelihood of the next coalition:

- Math: does a given combination have a sufficient number of seats
- Chemistry: can a given combination get along.

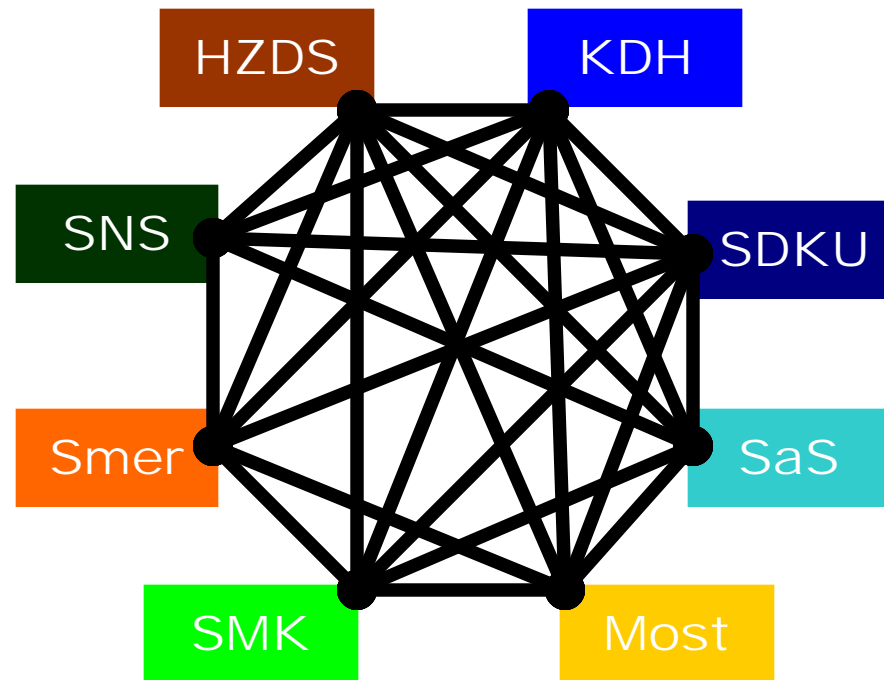
With 8 parties potentially reaching parliament, there are 256 possible coalitions. Most of these, however, can be eliminated or discounted as improbable on the basis of chemistry or math



Coalitions



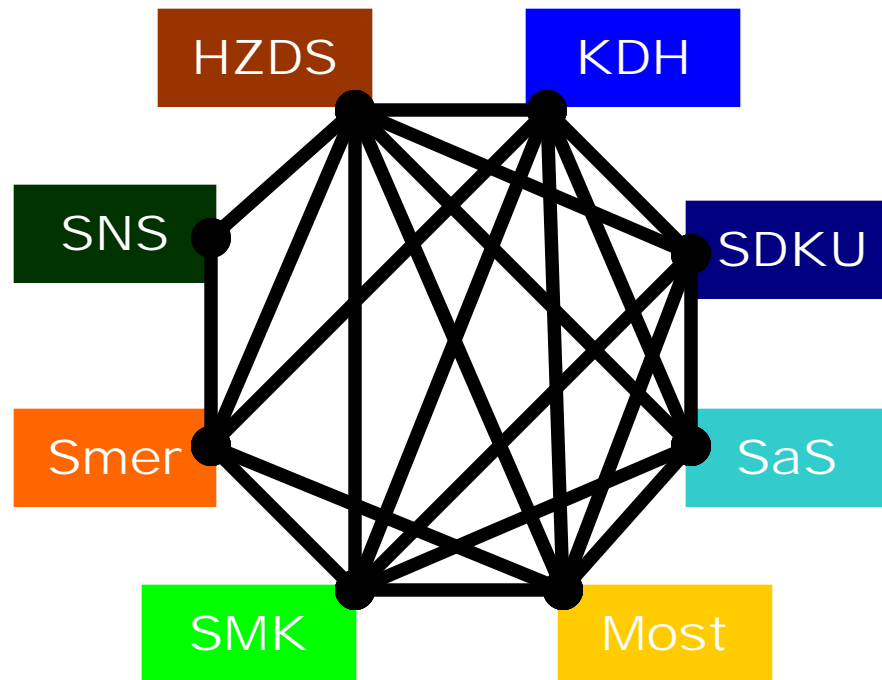
Coalitions > Hard to imagine



There are a few combinations that can be eliminated because they would violate one or another party's reason for existence:

- The Slovak National Party and either Hungarian party. In a sense they need each other but unless aliens cause all humanity to unite against a common foe, these two are matter and antimatter.*
- SaS and Smer. SaS has made rejection of things-communist part of its explicit appeal. Were it an older party, it might be able to change its mind. As a new party it probably cannot.*

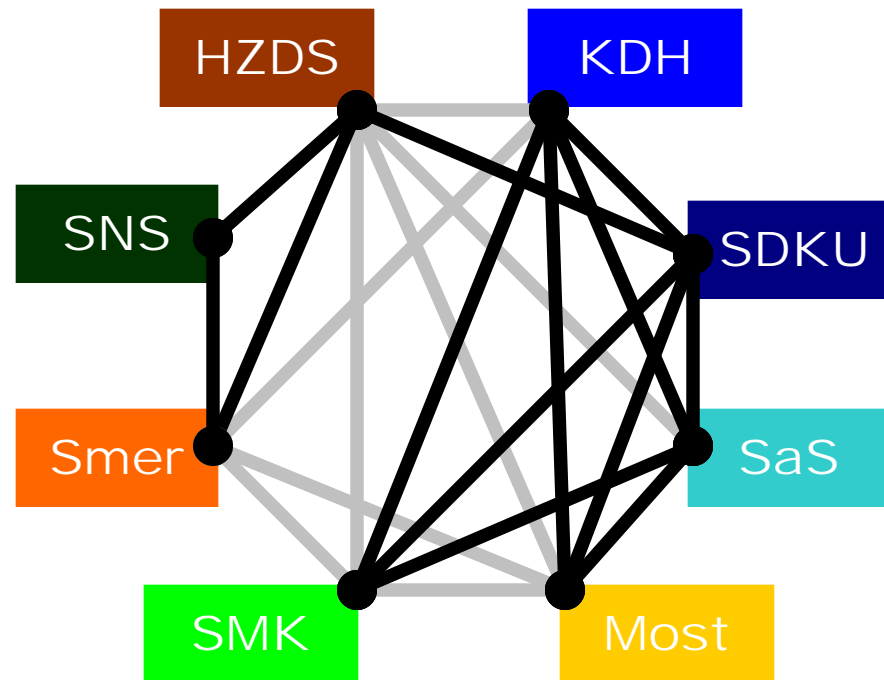
Coalitions > Highly unlikely



There are a few other combinations that are highly unlikely but not impossible:

- SNS and the "right". Those parties have repeatedly excoriated SNS for its extreme nationalism and alleged its corruption. Right parties have not explicitly excluded the combination (and such stated exclusion would not mean much in any case—Meciar explicitly excluded coalition with SNS in 2006 and then changed his mind)
- SDKU and Smer. While theoretically possible, these parties have been so thoroughly antagonistic to one another that the combination is highly unlikely.

Coalitions > Difficult



A number of coalition possibilities—listed here in gray—would be costly:

- HZDS with KDH or SaS. KDH has extensive negative experience with HZDS and its supporters would be unlikely to go easily into a coalition with HZDS. SaS leaders have made statements suggesting the difficulty as well. On the right only SDKU appears capable of working relatively easily with HZDS
- Smer with Most-Hid or MKP-SMK. Smer would lose the ability to play Hungarian issues and might face an exodus of some hard-won SNS and HZDS voters if it accepted this coalition. It would not be easy for the Hungarian parties either.
- Most-Hid and MKP-SMK. These parties probably would align in the end but there is no love lost among their leaders
- Smer and KDH. Both of these parties—especially KDH—would have difficulty explaining the coalition to supporters.

Coalitions

Chemistry →
(can they get along?)

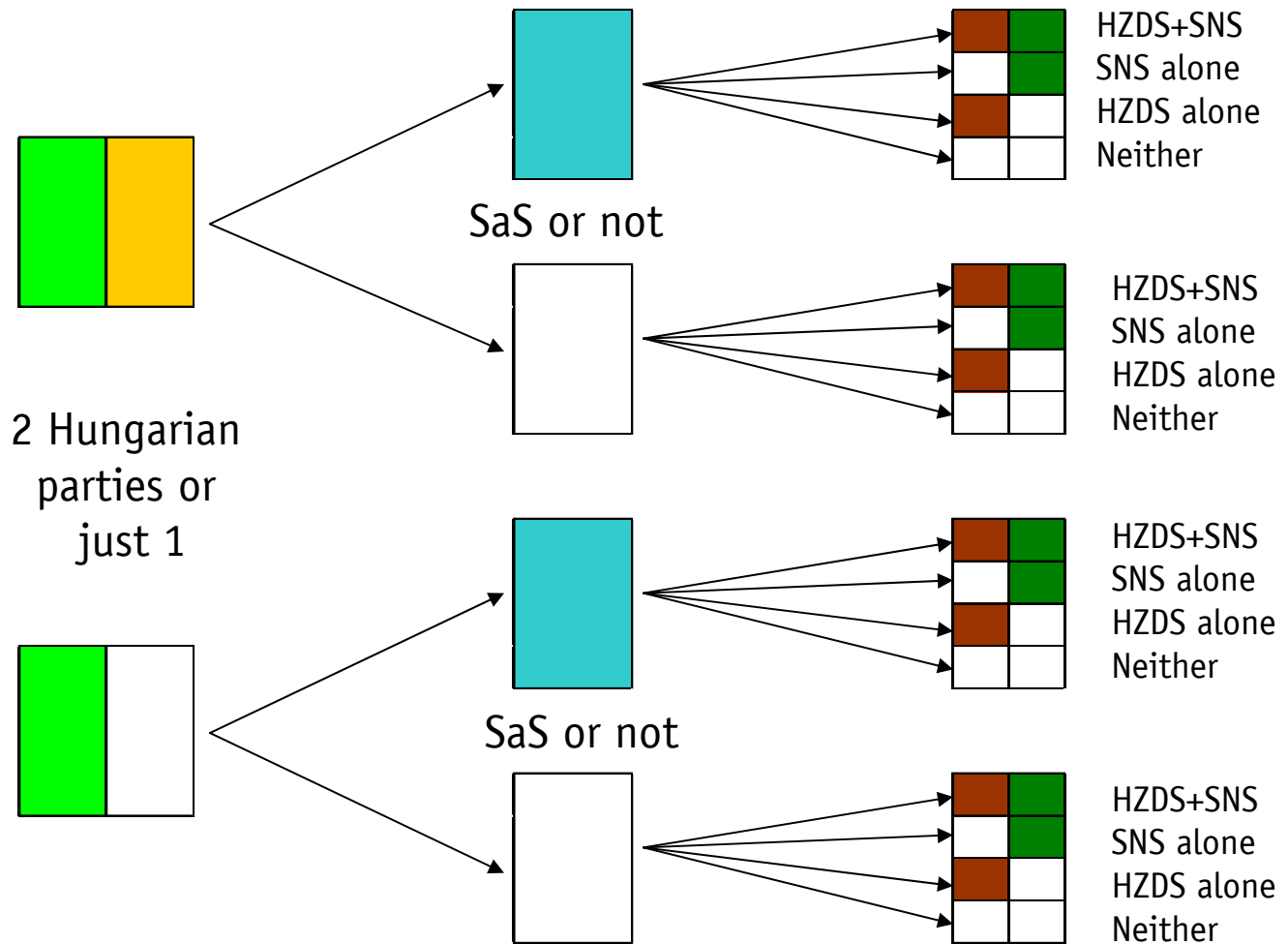
Combining the coalition math plus the coalition chemistry produces a schematic like the following in which the coalitions with the most chance are closest to the grail. The grail for any given party is for that party to have enough seats on its own to form a government.

- The only candidate for the one-party grail—Smer alone—is currently mathematically unlikely and therefore resides in the medium-gray ring.
- The current coalition is less cohesive but mathematically more likely. Smer plus one of its two current coalition partners is between the two in terms of mathematical likelihood and chemistry. These lie in the inner ring.
- Smer plus two Hungarian partners is mathematically certain but with lower chemistry; one Hungarian partner might be more palatable but would have less chance of a majority. These lie in the middle ring.



Coalitions > Threshold

The 5% threshold may play a major role in determining the outcome because 5 parties are currently near that threshold and the presence or absence of these parties could account for up to 25% of all seats being redistributed to the larger parties. 5 parties on the threshold means 32 possible combinations, but I presume that the failure of both Hungarian parties is unlikely, which reduces it to 16. Here is what that looks like:



Coalitions > Threshold

Arrayed these combinations vertically leads to the following parliamentary combinations

Smer	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
SNS	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White
HZDS	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White
SaS	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	White	White	White	White	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	White	White	White	White
Two Hungarian	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
One Hungarian	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
KDH	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
SDKU	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue

These have consequences for the viability of coalitions (using current polling numbers). Chances for Smer alone increase with more parties falling below (3 fails makes it possible). Smer plus only one of its current partners needs at least one party to fall short. The current coalition survives in every case.

Smer alone	65	68	68	74	68	73	73	79	67	72	72	78	72	76	76	84
Smer+HZDS	75	-	80	-	78	-	85	-	77	-	84	-	82	-	89	-
Smer+SNS	75	80	-	-	78	85	-	-	77	84	-	-	82	89	-	-
Smer+SNS+HZDS	84	-	-	-	88	-	-	-	87	-	-	-	93	-	-	-

Coalitions > Threshold

Smer	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
SNS	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White
HZDS	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White
SaS	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	White	White	White	White	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	White	White	White	White
Two Hungarian	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
One Hungarian	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
KDH	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
SDKU	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue

Smer plus only one of Hungarian party at least one other party to fall short. Smer plus both Hungarian parties survives in every case.

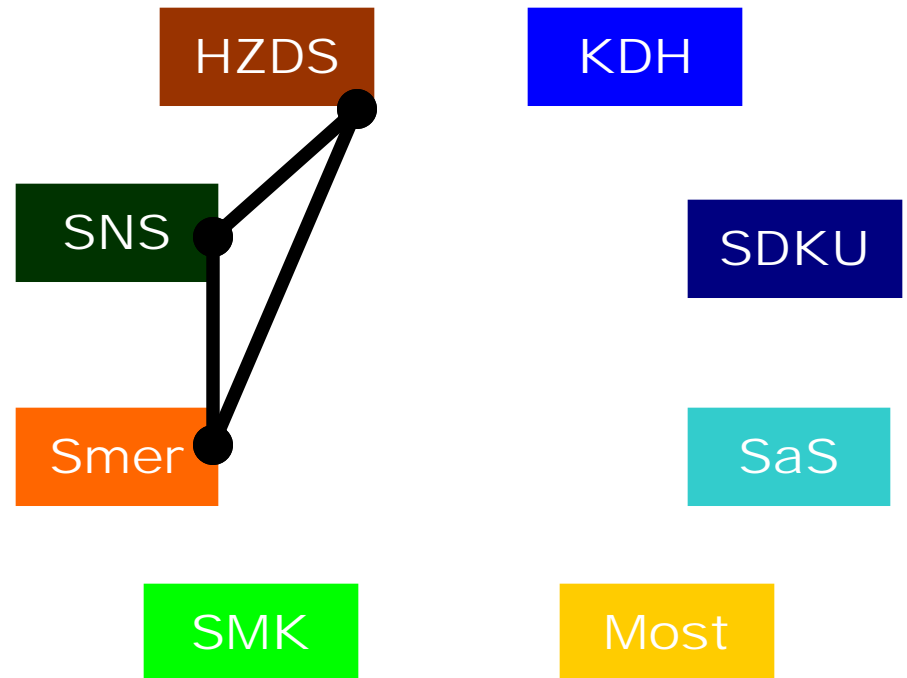
Smer+SMK or Most	74	78	78	84	78	83	83	90	73	78	78	85	78	83	83	91
Smer+SMK+Most	83	87	87	94	87	93	93	¹⁰¹	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Smer+KDH	81	85	85	93	82	88	88	95	84	90	90	98	87	92	92	¹⁰¹

Coalitions > Threshold

Smer	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
SNS	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White	Green	Green	White	White
HZDS	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White	Brown	White
SaS	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	White	White	White	White	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	Cyan	White	White	White	White
Two Hungarian	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
One Hungarian	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
KDH	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
SDKU	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue
<p><i>The 2002-2006 coalition becomes possible only if both Slovak national parties fall short but not any of the others (quite unlikely). The 2002-2006 coalition plus HZDS is slightly more likely but only assured if SNS fails and no other party does (again not likely)</i></p>																
SDKU+KDH+SaS+ Hungarians	66	70	70	76	62	65	65	71	63	66	66	72	57	61	61	66
SDKU+KDH+SaS+ Hungarians+HZDS	66	-	82	76	62	-	77	71	63	-	78	72	57	-	74	66

Coalitions

So how do these coalitions stack up in terms of consequences? I assess 4 possible combinations



Likelihood:

Moderate to High

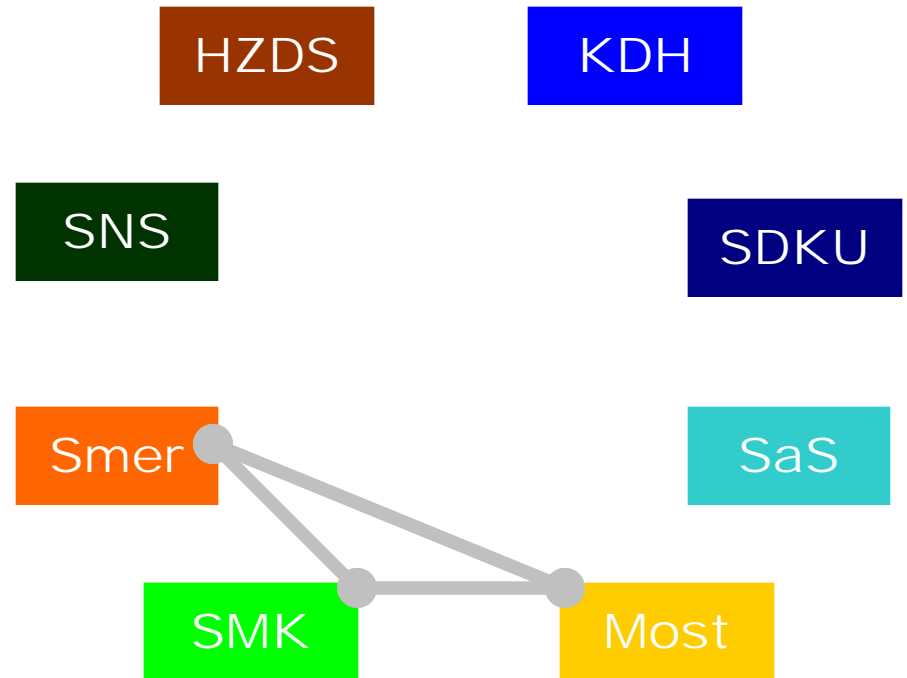
Consequences:

Business as usual, with somewhat more clientelism and national-emphasis

Stability:

Relatively high but decreasing with time.

Coalitions



Likelihood:

Low to Moderate

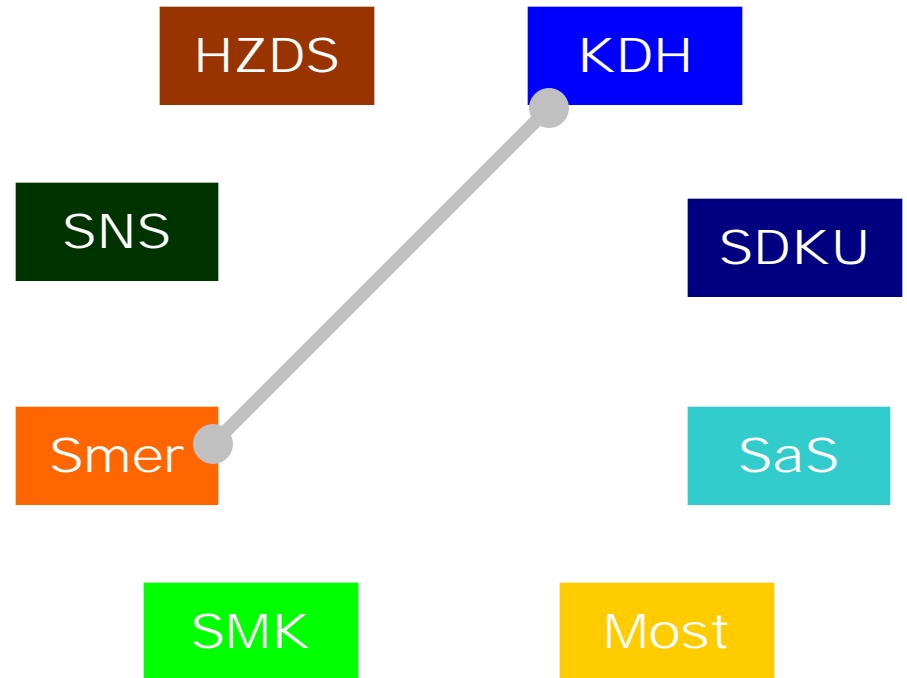
Consequences:

Ameliorated ethnic policy, but significant clientelism

Stability:

Fractured and unstable

Coalitions



Likelihood:

Low but possible

Consequences:

Slightly ameliorated ethnic policy

Increased accountability

Stability:

Conflictual

Coalitions

Likelihood:

Low

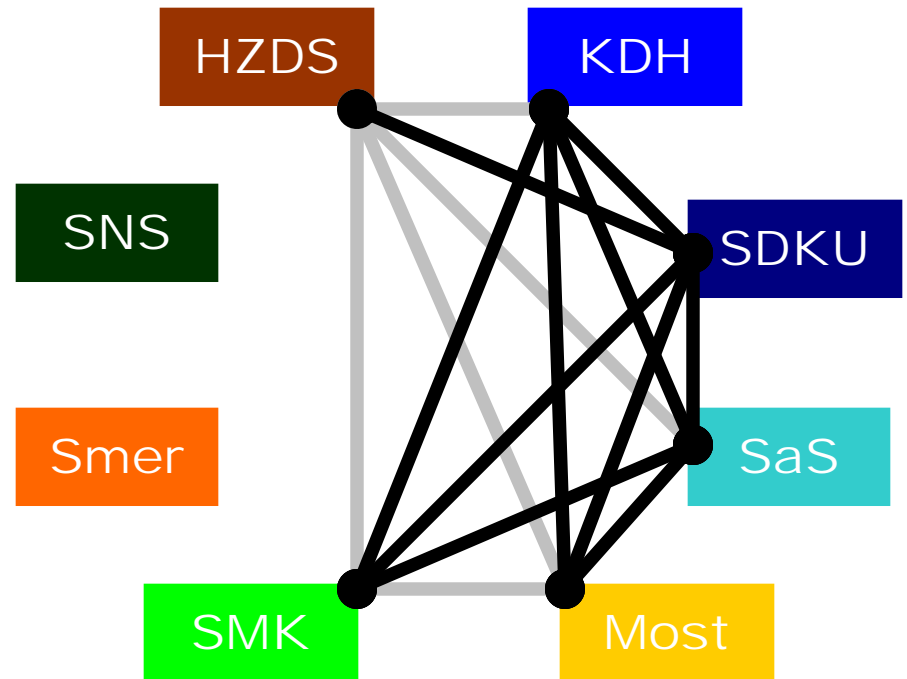
Consequences:

Ameliorated ethnic policy

Return to slight pro-market emphasis

Stability:

Highly conflictual and unstable



Coalitions

Likelihood:
Very low

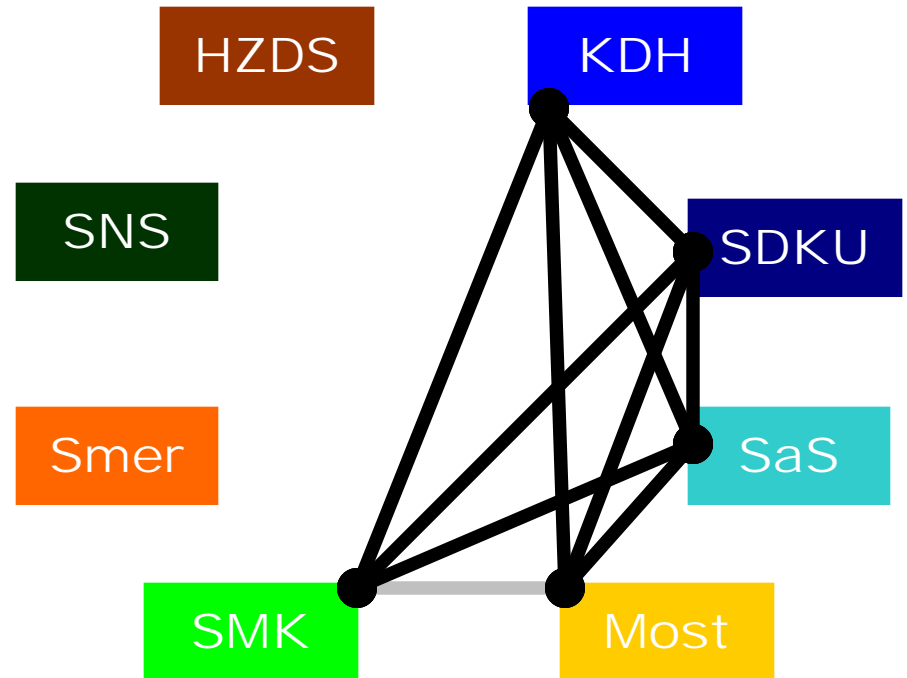
Consequences:

Ameliorated ethnic policy

Return to pro-market emphasis

Stability:

Conflictual and unstable



More questions?



If you've gotten this far, thanks for reading. This document and longer versions of all of these thoughts are available in various posts on my blog, the address of which is below. Please feel free to ask follow up questions, ask for more details or even ask for additional data analysis. Your question will probably be interesting for me as well and I'll try to find an answer.

--Kevin

<http://www.pozorblog.com>