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Doctoral Dissertation Defense

Abstract

The Electoral Geography of the Slovak Republic: A Comparison of the
1994, 1998, and 2002 Parliamentary Elections

by

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In what can rightly be said to be one of the most dramatic geopolitical shifts in modern times, the collapse of communist regimes in Central Europe and the former Soviet Union brought about dramatic changes in the entire region. As a consequence, wide ranging political, economic, and social transformations have occurred in almost all of these countries since 1989. The Slovak Republic, as a newly democratic country, went through the establishment of the electoral and party systems that are the central mechanisms to the formation of almost all modern democratic governments. The primary research purpose of this dissertation was to describe and explain regional variations in party support during Slovakia's ten years of democratic transformation. A secondary purpose was to relate these spatial variations to the evolution of political parties in the post-independence period in light of the literature on transitional electoral systems.

Research questions were analyzed using both aggregate and survey data. Specifically, the study utilized electoral data from 1994, 1998, and 2002 Slovak parliamentary elections and socio-economic data of the population within Slovak regions which were eventually correlated with the voting results by party in the 79 Slovak districts. The results of this study demonstrate that there is a tendency among voters in certain regions to provide continuous support to the same political parties/movements over time. In addition, the socio-economic characteristics of the Slovak population (gender, age, education, religion, nationality, unemployment, work force distribution, wages, urban-rural variable, and population density) in different regions tend to influence voting preferences in the parliamentary elections. Finally, there is an evident correlation between party preference and the party's position on integration into European Union, as measured by perceived attitudes regarding the benefits of EU membership.

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