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ZUZANA KAPUTOVA AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN 2019

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Abstract

Despite the low electoral attendance, the opposition and unknown candidate Zuzana Kaputova won the presidential elections in the Slovak Republic in 2019. The results of the presidential elections were well received outside the country. The media and abroad began to talk enthusiastically about the new President in the Slovak Republic and the issue of more such examples arose. Despite the low voter turnout, the opposition and unknown candidate Zuzana Kaputova won the election. What political events, factors, trends allowed Zuzana Kaputova to win? In order to find an answer to this question, an analysis of provisions from interviews for scientific publications and mass media of Slovak and foreign scientists about the presidential elections in the Slovak Republic in 2019 was carried out. Thus, the author of the article was able to identify the reasons for Zuzana Kaputova's victory in the presidential elections in 2019, her understanding of the public mood, clearly constructed image of the presidential candidate: absence of competitors, withdrawal of one of the candidates in favour of Zuzana Kaputova's candidacy, non-participation of the incumbent President in the presidential elections, well-structured marketing campaign, strong oratorical skills, personal professional awards, lack of any political experience, financial support, etc. Voters voted for Zuzana Kaputova to see new changes in domestic political life in the Slovak Republic in the future.

1.   Introduction

Studying the peculiarities of elections is the main prerequisite for understanding the election results, both in the present and in the past (Marmilova, 2019). Election of the President of the Slovak Republic in 2019 was the fifth direct election of the Head of State of the Slovak Republic. It took place in two rounds: 16 March 2019 (1st round) and 30 March 2019 (2nd round). Zuzana Kaputova won the presidential election with 58.4 per cent of total votes. On 15 June 2019, Zuzana Kaputova became President of the Slovak Republic. She became the first woman to hold the office of the President of the Slovak Republic. She managed to win, despite being previously unknown to most of her electorate.

2.   Problem Statement

Zuzana Kaputova was not a well-known candidate before the presidential elections in the Slovak Republic, but she managed to win and become the President of the Slovak Republic. How did she manage to win in case of her low popularity in the presidential elections of the Slovak Republic in 2019?

3.   Research Questions

What political events, factors, trends allowed the new President of the Slovak Republic to win in 2019?

4.   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify the factors that allowed Zuzana Kaputova to win the presidential elections in case of unknown candidacy among her voters by the example of the presidential elections of the Slovak Republic in 2019 and to define a portrait of a political leader who can win presidential elections in other countries.

5.   Research Methods

Article analyzes the provisions of the interview for Slovak and foreign scientific publications and media on the presidential elections in the Slovak Republic in 2019.

6.   Findings

Elections in the Slovak Republic fall within the scope of interests of Slovak and foreign scientists: Rybářa (2005), Rybářa and Spáč (2015), Fitzmaurice (2001), Pavlović (2019), Gyárfášová and Henderson (2018), Marušiak (2017), Charvát and Just (2016).

Zuzana Kaputova was not a well-known candidate before the presidential election, and it was assumed that only voters from major cities in Slovakia would vote for her, but Zuzana Kaputova won the election at polling stations across the country, not just in major cities.

Zuzana Kaputova built her victory step by step.

She had a clear and ideal image of a presidential candidate in the Slovak Republic: a woman, a liberal, advocating for the rights of citizens. "Kaputova attracted voters with a pro-European program and a promise to fight corruption and campaign for social justice and environmental protection"(Tomašević, 2019, para. 7). Kaputova's greatest triumph as a lawyer and her ticket to the national political arena was her victory against an illegal dump in her hometown of Pezinok in western Slovakia. The 14-year battle against a wealthy developer with links to local authorities, which included filing lawsuits, organizing protests and petitioning European Union institutions, brought her the Golden Award 2016, the leading award given to environmental activists, often referred to as Green Nobel (Kalan, 2019).

The presidential election followed the murder of investigative journalist Jan Kucak last year. Slovakia was shocked by this murder. The demonstrations were one of the biggest anti-government marches in Slovakia and led to the resignation of former Prime Minister and leader of Smer Robert Fitzo (Davies, 2019). Zuzana Kaputova cited the murder of Mr Kucak as one of the reasons she decided to run for head of state. She described the election as a struggle between good and evil: "Let us meet evil together" (Kalan, 2019). Zuzana Kaputova quietly praised the values that seem to have come from a bygone political age: compassion, tolerance, truth. "I offer my knowledge, emotions and activity. I offer my mind, my heart and my hands," she said. "I want to be the voice of those who are not heard" (Santora, 2019). Kaputova's election campaign was based on the fight against corruption. "I see my candidacy as an attempt to restore citizens' trust in politics in the future," said Zuzana Chaputova (Simicek, 2019).

Zuzana Chaputova's candidacy was clearly different from that of typical officials who dominated the presidential elections for most of the last twenty years. Voters were against political nepotism and corruption. The electorate was disappointed with the political elites; it was assumed that they all had some form of legitimised corruption (Rossi, 2019). For many voters it was important that Zuzana Kaputova fulfilled their hopes for a fair policy in the service of the citizens (Dębiec & Groszkowski, 2019). Lack of political experience became her advantage over other candidates.

The incumbent president Andrej Kiska decided not to run for a new term, allegedly due to family reasons, but stated that he would continue his political activities.

Robert Mistrick had a similar image of a political leader. In early 2019, he withdrew his candidacy for the presidency in favor of Zuzana Kaputova. This circumstance increased the number of voters in Zuzana Kaputova's cashier.

Maros Šefrović was supposed to be a strong candidate to win the presidential elections in the Slovak Republic in 2019, but in reality it turned out that he was not. Maros Šefrović lived and worked in Brussels for a long time, when he returned to the Slovak Republic, it turned out that his speeches were completely contrary to the liberal values of Slovak society. Maros Šefrović held various positions in the European Commission, the election campaign was based on the "faith-family-fatherland" framework, telling voters not to be attracted by Zuzana Čaputova's "ultra-liberal agenda," which stood "in exact contradiction to traditional Christian values. In a region where politics is almost always dominated by the same political elites who either retain power or fight for it, these political slogans were no longer relevant (Rossi, 2019). He was an independent candidate, but still everyone knew that he was a candidate for the ruling Smer party. The victory of Zuzana Kaputova was also due to the strengthening of the anti-

government movement in the Slovak Republic. All opposition parties in the second round were on Zuzana Kaputova's side.

Zuzana Kaputova demonstrated strong oratorical skills at debates and in political interviews. She always spoke confidently, with restraint, without giving in to provocations, and without avoiding controversial positions when answering questions (for example, about the possibility of banning adoption by same-sex couples). Instead of attacking other candidates, she presented herself better.

Zuzana Kaputova also won as a result of her ability to conduct a well-informed online marketing campaign. Zuzana-Kaputova's popularity was growing fast. Robert Fitzo (one of the most influential political figures in the country) criticized Zuzana-Chapurova, calling the presidential candidate a man "without values" and "a liberal candidate on the George Soros list" (Rossi, 2019).

Zuzana-Chapurova was well aware of public sentiment, and as a result, she received support from many small donors and volunteers.

She was also able to receive support from Slovak Hungarians.

The election results showed that voters did not support the independent presidential candidate of the Slovak Republic, Maros Šefčovič.

The Smer party may have received support from the party's indigenous electorate (about 20-25%) but failed to attract voters from other parties (Rossi, 2019).

Zuzana Kaputova's victory in the presidential election strengthened the opposition liberal alliance Progressive Slovakia/Wome, which will in future compete with the ruling Smer party in the general parliamentary elections of 2020.

The results of the presidential elections were positively received outside the country itself. The media and abroad began to talk enthusiastically about the new President in the Slovak Republic and the question of more such examples arose.

Despite the low attendance of voters, the opposition and unknown candidate Zuzana Kaputova won the election.

7. Conclusion

Thus, we can name the reasons for Zuzana Kaputova's victory in the presidential elections in 2019: understanding of the public mood, clearly constructed image of the presidential candidate, absence of competitors, withdrawal of one of the candidates in favor of Zuzana Kaputova's candidacy, not participation of the current President in the presidential elections, well-structured marketing campaign, strong oratorical skills, personal professional awards, receiving financial support from volunteers and volunteers, approval of the Slovakian President. In addition, voters in the Slovak Republic have become more supportive of the new trend of political leader with the following characteristics of "ordinary person, independent personality", "civic activist". Voters voted for her to see new changes in the domestic political life of the Slovak Republic in the future.

Acknowledgments

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