

Nationalism in Slovak Politics

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Preamble of the Constitution

*„We, the Slovak Nation,
bearing in mind the political and cultural heritage of our
predecessors, the experience gained through centuries of
struggle for our national existence, and statehood..“*

*„...together with members of national minorities and
ethnic groups living on the territory of the Slovak Republic“*

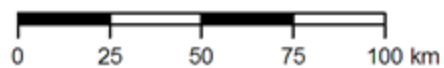
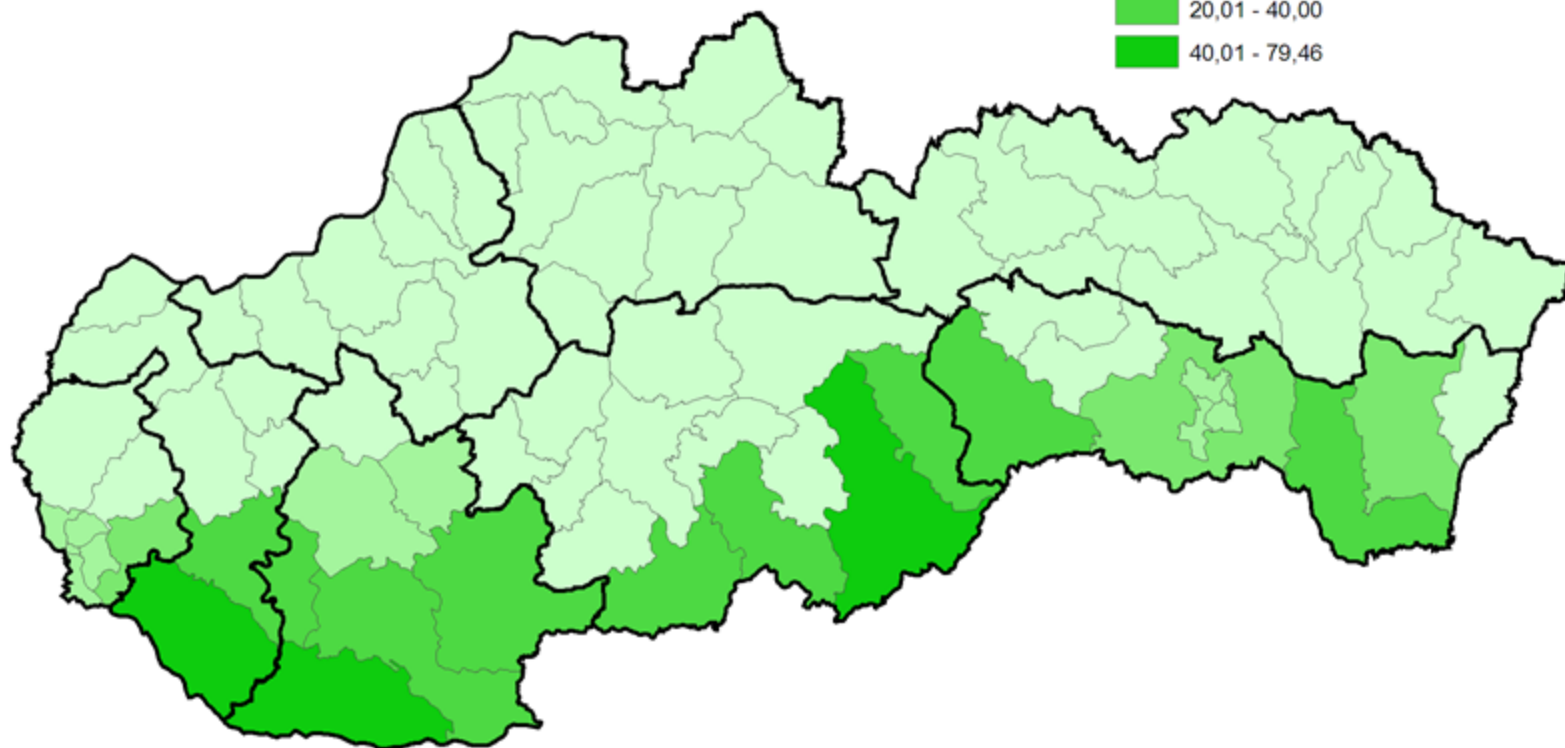
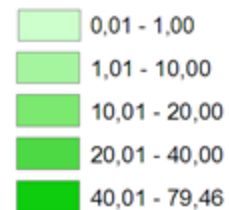
The Hungarian issue

The basic facts

- Slovakia:
 - Population of 5,4 mil.
 - Ethnic composition: Slovaks (85,2 %), Hungarians (9,4), Roma (2), Czechs (1), Ruthenians (0,4), Ukrainians (0,2), other (1,6)
- Hungarian minority:
 - Around 500 000 citizens
 - Concentrated in southern part of Slovakia but this land **does not** form a solid region

HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN SLOVAKIA

Share of ethnic Hungarians (%)



Hungarian parties in Slovakia

- 1990 – 1998:
 - Three independent and relevant parties
 - Mutual cooperation
- 1998 – 2009:
 - Integration in one subject representing the minority
- 2009 –
 - Split to 2 parties
 - Unsuccessful aims for cooperation yet

1990 – 1998

- **Coexistence:**

- „Hawks“
- Miklós Duray



- **Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement:**

- „Moderates“
- Béla Bugár

- **Hungarian Civic Party:**

- „Liberals“
- László Nagy



- Elections 1994 – together as the Hungarian Coalition (MK)

1998 - 2009



- 1998 – Mečiar’s electoral reform against coalitions → MK transforms to Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK)
- Participation on executive power in both governments led by Mikuláš Dzurinda
- Internal tension after elections 2006
- 2009 – group led by Bugár leaves SMK

Since 2009

- Existence of two parties:
 - SMK
 - The Bridge (Most-Híd)
- Most-Híd took the earlier position of SMK
- SMK stays out of parliament
- Unsuccessful effort to cooperate

MOST HÍD
az együttműködés pártja - strana spolupráce



MK
MAGYAR KOALÍCIÓ PÁRTJA
STRANA MAĎARSKEJ KOALÍCIE

Influencing relations

- **3 models of relations:**
 - International (Hungary – Slovakia)
 - Domestic (Slovakia – Hungarian minority)
 - National (Hungarian minority – Hungary)
- **Primary features:**
 - Reflection of historical issues in present time (Treaty of Trianon, Beneš decrees)
 - Changing intensity of mutual tension

Trianon

- Occasional topic for the radicals
- Relevance of the topic neutralised with entry of Slovakia and Hungary to the EU
- *„Does anyone understand that since Trianon we do not have our home? Today's Hungary is not a real home even for those who live there, but it is only a „residual“ country“*

Miklós Duray, 2006

Autonomy

- A topic situated more in the 90s than in the present
- Different understanding of the word „autonomy“ and its content by Hungarian politicians
- Autonomy of culture and schools vs. territorial autonomy
- Approval of Hungarian politicians **not to open** this topic allowed them to participate on government

Hungarian extraterritorial laws

- *„In a legal sense, in accordance with the Constitution, I want to act as the head of the government of all the citizens of this 10 million strong country, but in spirit and sentiment as the **prime minister of 15 million Hungarians.**”*

József Antall, Hungarian Prime Minister in early 90s

- *„14-15 million Hungarians can do much more than 10 million”*

Viktor Orbán, current Hungarian Prime Minister

Hungarian extraterritorial laws



- **Foreign IDs (2002):**
 - Available for „minority“ Hungarians except from Austria
 - Financial advantages directly from Hungary
 - Some SMK officials got these IDs
- **Dual citizenship (2010):**
 - Possibility to gain also a Hungarian citizenship
 - Slovakia adopted a counter-law leading to abandoning the Slovak citizenship
 - Until 2012 – about 200 thousand requests (minimum from Slovakia)

The Hungarian issue

Now from the other side

Anti-Hungarian nationalism



- Playing with the so called „*Hungarian card*“
- **Various ways of usage:**
 - Electoral campaign
 - Daily politics
 - Reactions on Hungarian political actions
 - Suitable way how to overlay other negative problems

Slovak National Party



- Created in 1990, claims a link with historical SNS
- Radical right party:
 - Nationalism, xenophobia
 - Topics – Hungarians, Roma, homosexuals, against NATO, reserved towards EU
- Main leaders:
 - **Ján Slota (excluded)**
 - Anna Belousovová (excluded)



Slovak National Party



- **Development:**

- Early years – searching for identity → radicalization since 1994
- 2001 – Slota creates the True SNS (PSNS)
- 2003 – unification after unsuccessful elections

- **Position in the system:**

- Member of governments led by Mečiar (1994-1998) and Fico (2006-2010)
- Out of parliament (2012 – 2016)
- Since 2016 back in government (with Most-Hid)

The peak of nationalism

- Mečiar's government in 1994 - 1998
- SNS got ministries of **education and defense**
- Topics:
 - Bilingual school reports
 - Name of towns
 - Names and surnames in registers
 - New administrative division of Slovakia
 - Lowering the funds for minorities' culture

Issues - Language

- 1990 – aim to allow Slovak as the only official language
- 2009 – controversial language law:
 - Government of Robert Fico
 - Spread of areas where Slovak has to be used
 - High sanctions for breach of the law
- Usage of minority languages:
 - Share of towns' minority inhabitants
 - Trench warfare between 10 and 20 %



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PRIATELIA SLOBODNÝCH INFORMÁCIÍ (PSI)

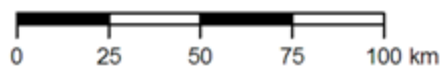
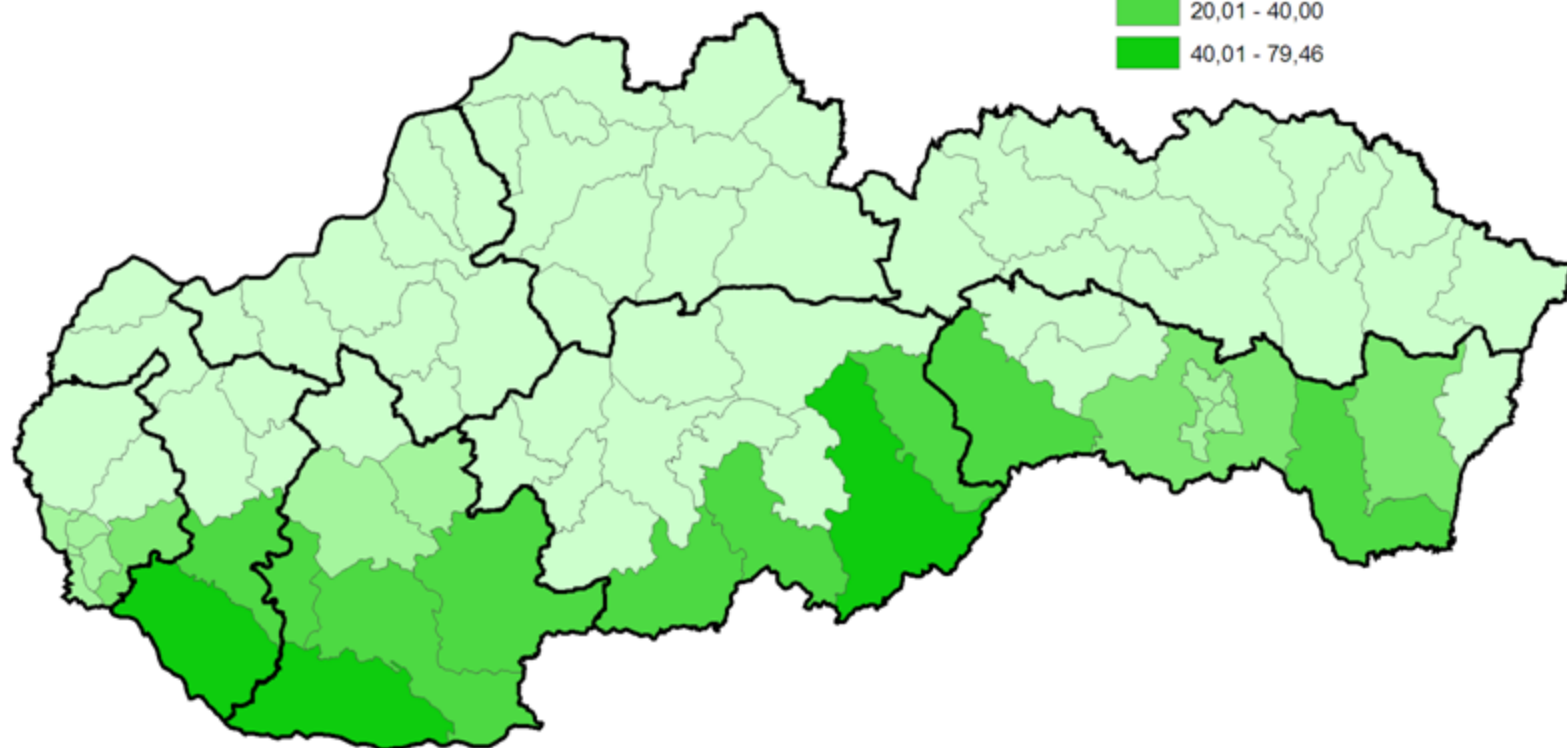
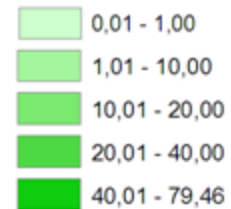
BRIDGET
I LOVE YOU
MARK

Issues – Administrative division

- 1997 – new districts:
 - Mečiar's government (potential aim for electoral reform)
- 2001 – regions:
 - Plan of Dzurinda's government – 12 regions
 - SMK's proposal for a 13th „Hungarian“ region
 - Result – Dzurinda's government (most of its Slovak parties) and opposition adopted 8 regions in existing borders
 - In every region Hungarians compose only a minority

HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN SLOVAKIA

SHARE OF HUNGARIAN MINORITY (%)





Issues – Electoral Campaign

- *We are Slovaks. A Slovak government for Slovaks“*
 - Program of SNS for elections 2006
 - Reaction to presence of Hungarians in government
- SNS - billboards, slogans etc. with clear message:
 - Hungarians as an enemy
 - Hungarians as a threat
- Regional elections 2001 in Nitra district:
 - 2nd round of chairman elections – Slovak vs. Hungarian candidate
 - Slovak candidate used the word „Slovak“ to differ from his opponent



A billboard featuring the Slovak flag on the left and the SNS logo (a white eagle with wings spread, perched on a laurel wreath, above a red circle with a white cross) on the right. The text is in white on a dark background.

Aby sme sa zajtra nečudovali.

VOĽTE ČÍSLO **10**

www.sns.sk



A billboard with a close-up of a young child's face looking directly at the camera. The SNS logo is on the right. The text is in white on a dark background.

Aby naše deti mali istotu.

www.sns.sk



A billboard featuring a portrait of Rudolf Pučík on the left and the SNS logo on the right. The text is in white on a dark background.

Rudolf Pučík

Pozsony? Nie, Bratislava!

VOĽTE ČÍSLO **10**

www.sns.sk



A billboard with a golden cross on a hill against a cloudy sky. The SNS logo is on the right. The text is in white on a dark background.

Aby naše hranice zostali našimi hranicami.

www.sns.sk

akzent media

0044 11 22 00



Aby sa zo suseda nestal nepriateľ.



VOLTE
ČÍSLO

10

www.sns.sk

Ján Slota

- The most visible representative of Slovak nationalism until 2010
- Very offensive language towards various social groups
- Verbal attacks on:
 - Hungary, its history, symbols and politicians
 - Hungarian minority
 - Roma
 - Homosexuals
 - Slovak politicians including prominent members of SNS
 - Media

The tank attack on Budapest



- Most „popular“ incident
- Occurred in 1999 on a meeting of HZDS where he was present
- Slota called for a tank attack on Budapest
- *„We will not leave it like this, we will go in tanks and we will flatten Budapest“*

SNS today

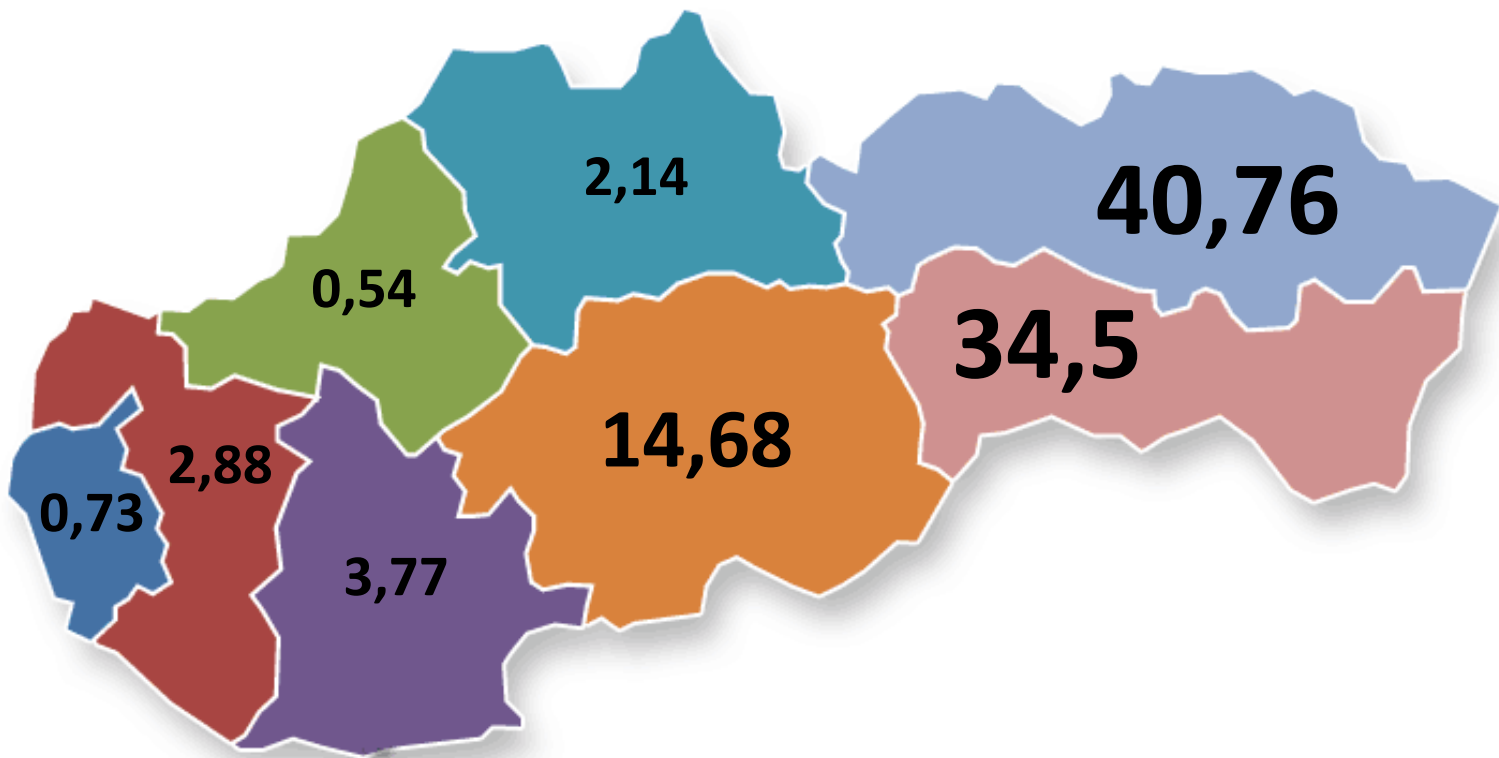


- The party officially proclaims to be `different` and `renewed`
- New leader – Andrej Danko
- Many representatives from the 90s remained in the party
- In government with Hungarian party Bridge

The Roma issue

Roma in Slovakia

- Unclear proportion of the population
- Official census:
 - 1991 – 75 802 (1,4 %)
 - 2001 – 89 920 (1,7 %)
 - 2011 - 105 738 (2 %)
- Real estimations around 400 000
- Geographically concentrated in Central and Eastern Slovakia



Roma in Slovakia

- Very bad image from the majority's point of view
- Associated features:
 - Lack of education
 - Unemployment
 - Living conditions and habits
 - Criminality

Public surveys – „Who would you not accept as your neighbor?“

Category	2006	2008
Drug addict	84,9	88,6
Roma	72,8	82,4
Convicted felon	58,8	71,3
Right-wing extremist	62	66,8
Muslim	49,5	54,7
Homosexual	38,8	51,2
Immigrant	35,2	41,5
Person of a different race	28,8	39,5
Jew	21,5	29
Disabled	6	8,7



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Roma and politics

- No relevant Roma political party
- Attempts to create such subjects end without any success
- Lack of organizational skills
- Non disciplined voters (regular attempts to buy their votes)

Roma as a topic for nationalists

- Mostly stressed by SNS in the past
- Ideas even beyond the principles of democracy or human rights
- Examples:
 - Reservations (as Indians in North America)
 - „*A small yard and a big whip*“

SNS campaign in 2010



Rise of extremism?



- People`s Party – Our Slovakia (LSNS)
- Leader – Marian Kotleba
- Emerged in 2010
- Previous links with Slovak Brotherhood:
 - Electoral failure in 2006
 - Dissolved in 2008

Ideology

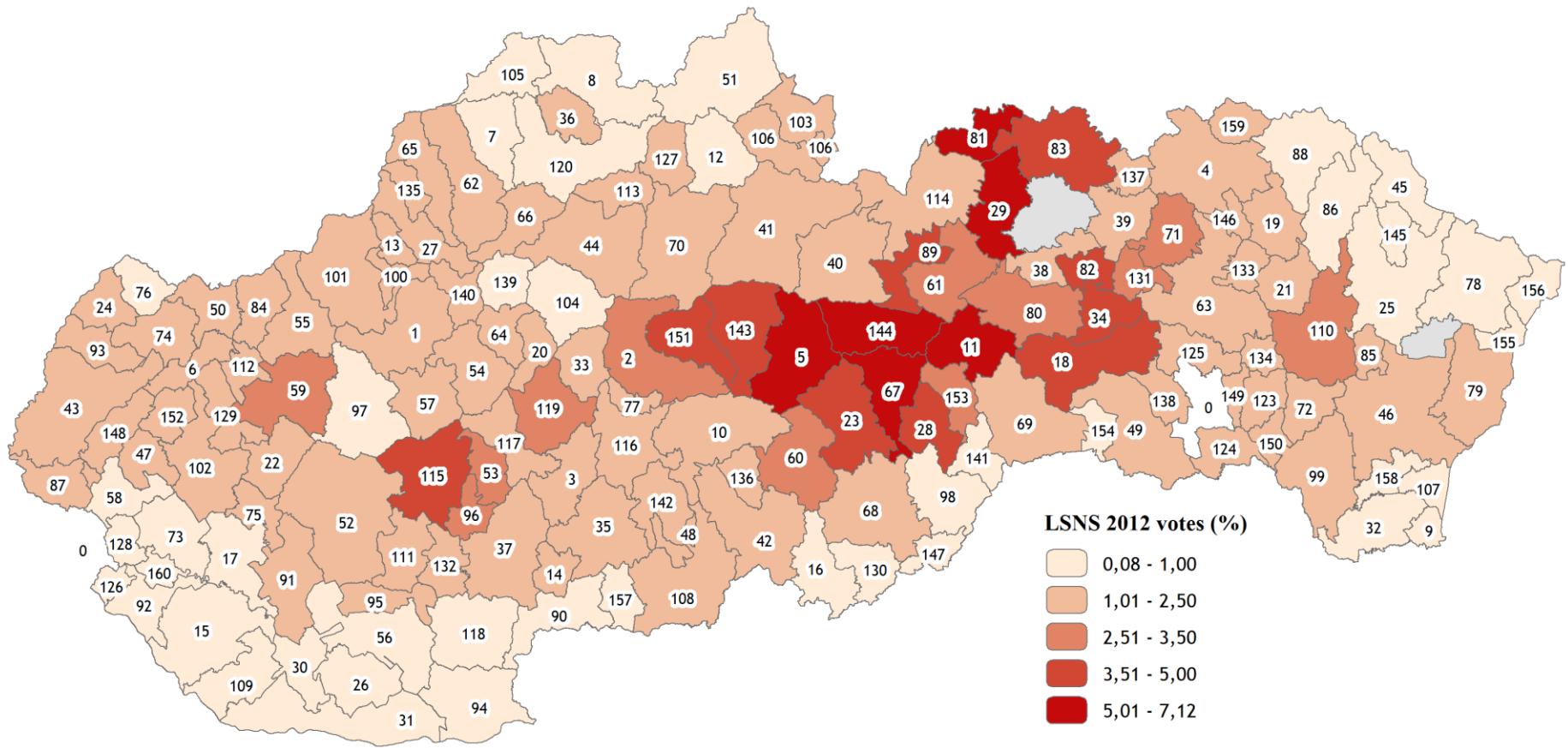
- Slovak Brotherhood:
 - Various topics
 - Slovak wartime state, Hungarians, Roma, NATO, homosexuals...
- LSNS:
 - Modification of the profile
 - Primary focus on Roma
 - Other topics present, but rather secondary
 - Change after 2012?

LSNS and Roma minority

- Party`s framing of the minority:
 - Asocial parasites
 - Gypsy terrorists
- LSNS blames the mainstream parties for being passive and for keeping the majority unprotected
- Trips to towns with Roma settlements
- Kotleba`s purchase of land with an illegal settlement

Performance in elections

- Only minor success in national elections:
 - 2010 – 1,33 %
 - 2012 – 1,58 %
 - 2016 – wait for it
- Kotleba`s unsuccessful attempt to become governor in 2010
- Regional election 2013:
 - Kotleba scored second in the first round
 - In runoff Kotleba won over SMER`s incumbent



National elections 2012

- LSNS support grows with rising share of Roma in municipalities
- Maximum votes obtained in areas with 25.1 – 50 per cent Roma
- Slight increase of votes in areas near Roma settlements

National elections 2016

- LSNS gained 8 per cent (more than 200 000 votes) and entered parliament
- Five times more votes than in 2012 election
- The party won among young people
- Rise of extremism or adoption of protest image?

Extremism or protest?

