

# Nationalism and Extremism 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“***

# Why so Much Nationalism/Extremism?

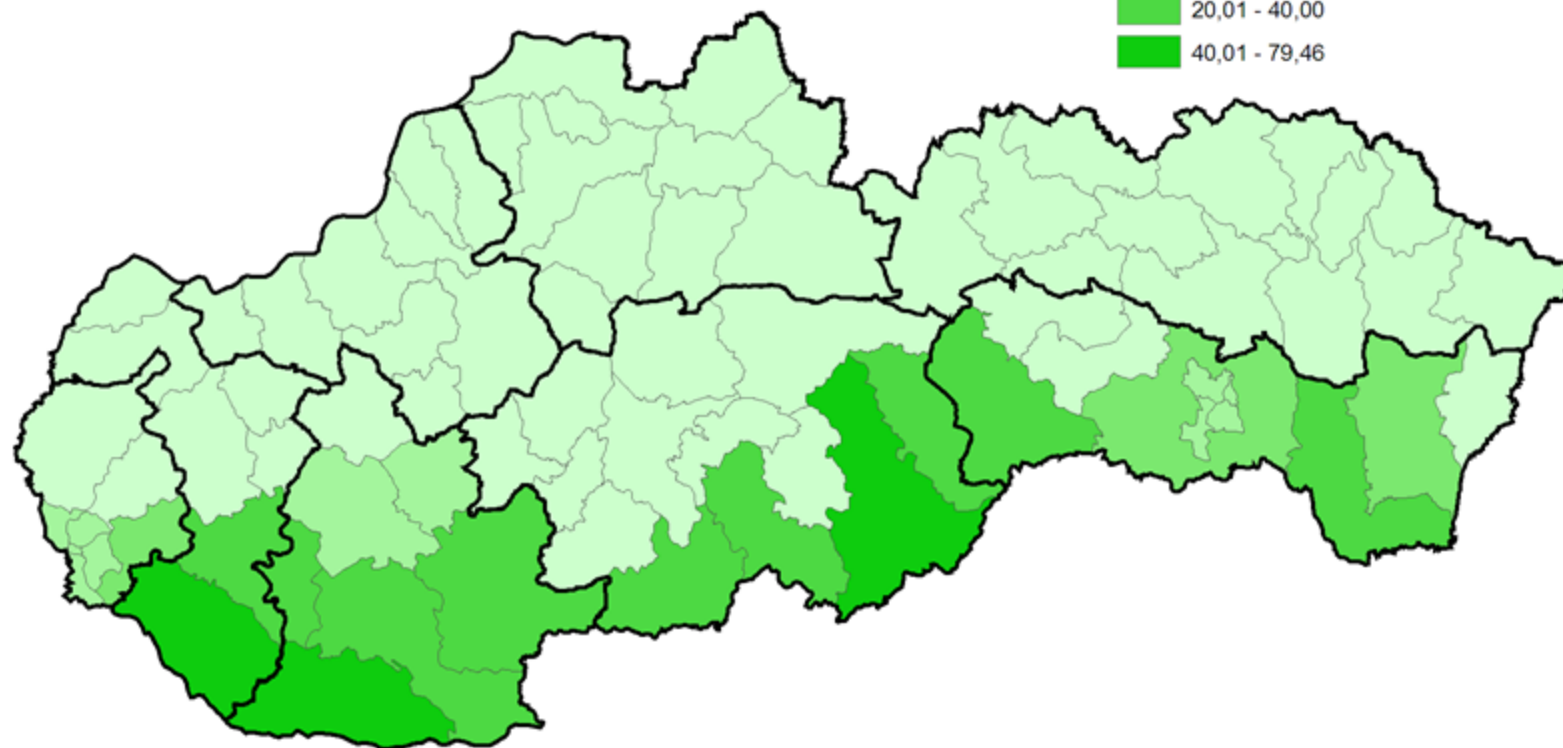
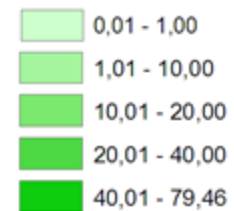
- Slovakia as multiethnic country
- Historical tensions and legacies
- Recent development
  - Financial crisis
  - Migration crisis

# Hungarian Minority

- Around 450 000 citizens
- Concentrated in southern part of Slovakia but this land **does not** form a solid region
- Important issues:
  - Historical bondage to the territory
  - Once a dominating nation
  - Self-awareness
  - Strong attachment based on ethnicity

# HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN SLOVAKIA

Share of ethnic Hungarians (%)



# Hungarian Parties in Slovakia

- Four stages:
  - 1990 – 1998 – cooperation of three independent parties
  - 1998 – 2009 – integration into a single party (SMK)
  - 2009 – 2021 – split and competition of SMK and Most-Hid
  - 2021 – integration into a single party (Alliance)

# 1990 - 1998

- **Coexistence:**

- „Hawks“
- Miklós Duray



- **Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement:**

- „Moderates“
- Béla Bugár

- **Hungarian Civic Party:**

- „Liberals“
- László Nagy



- 1994 election – 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



# 2009 - 2021

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



# 2021

- A second attempt of full integration
- Most-Hid, SMK and a third less relevant party
- March 2021 – announcement of Alliance party
- April 2021 – 5 per cent in polls

# Why are Hungarians an Issue?

- **Primary features:**

- Reflection of historical issues in present time (Treaty of Trianon, Beneš decrees)
- Changing intensity of mutual tension

- **3 models of relations:**

- International (Hungary – Slovakia)
- Domestic (Slovakia – Hungarian minority)
- National (Hungarian minority – Hungary)

# Trianon

- Occasional topic for the radicals
- Relevance of the topic neutralized 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 stressed 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 after 1998

# 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 Exterritorial 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)

# 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, LGBTI, against NATO, reserved towards EU
- Main leaders until 2012:
  - **Ján Slota (excluded)**
  - Anna Belousovová (excluded)



# Slovak National Party



- **Development:**

- Early years – searching for identity → radicalization since 1994
- 2001 – separation, Slota creates the True SNS (PSNS)
- 2003 – unification after unsuccessful 2002 election

- **Position in the system:**

- Participation in governments: 1994-1998 (PM Mečiar), 2006-2010 (Fico), 2016-2020 (Fico/Pellegrini)
- Since 2020 not in parliament

# SNS Electoral Campaign

- 2006:
  - *We are Slovaks. A Slovak government for Slovaks* (name of manifesto)
  - After 8 years of SMK in the government
- 2010:
  - Higher intensity of hatred due to decline of party support
  - Hungarians as a threat and as an enemy of the country
  - Racial hatred included

eurp.1174



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Rudolf Pučík

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# Ján Slota



- The most visible representative of Slovak nationalism until 2010
- Very offensive language towards various social groups
  - Hungary, its history, symbols and politicians
  - Hungarian minority
  - Roma minority
  - LGBTI
  - Slovak politicians including prominent members of SNS
  - Media
  - The list continues...

# The Tank Attack on Budap



- Most „popular“ incident
- Occurred in 1999 on a meeting of HZDS where he was a guest
- 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 (After Slota)

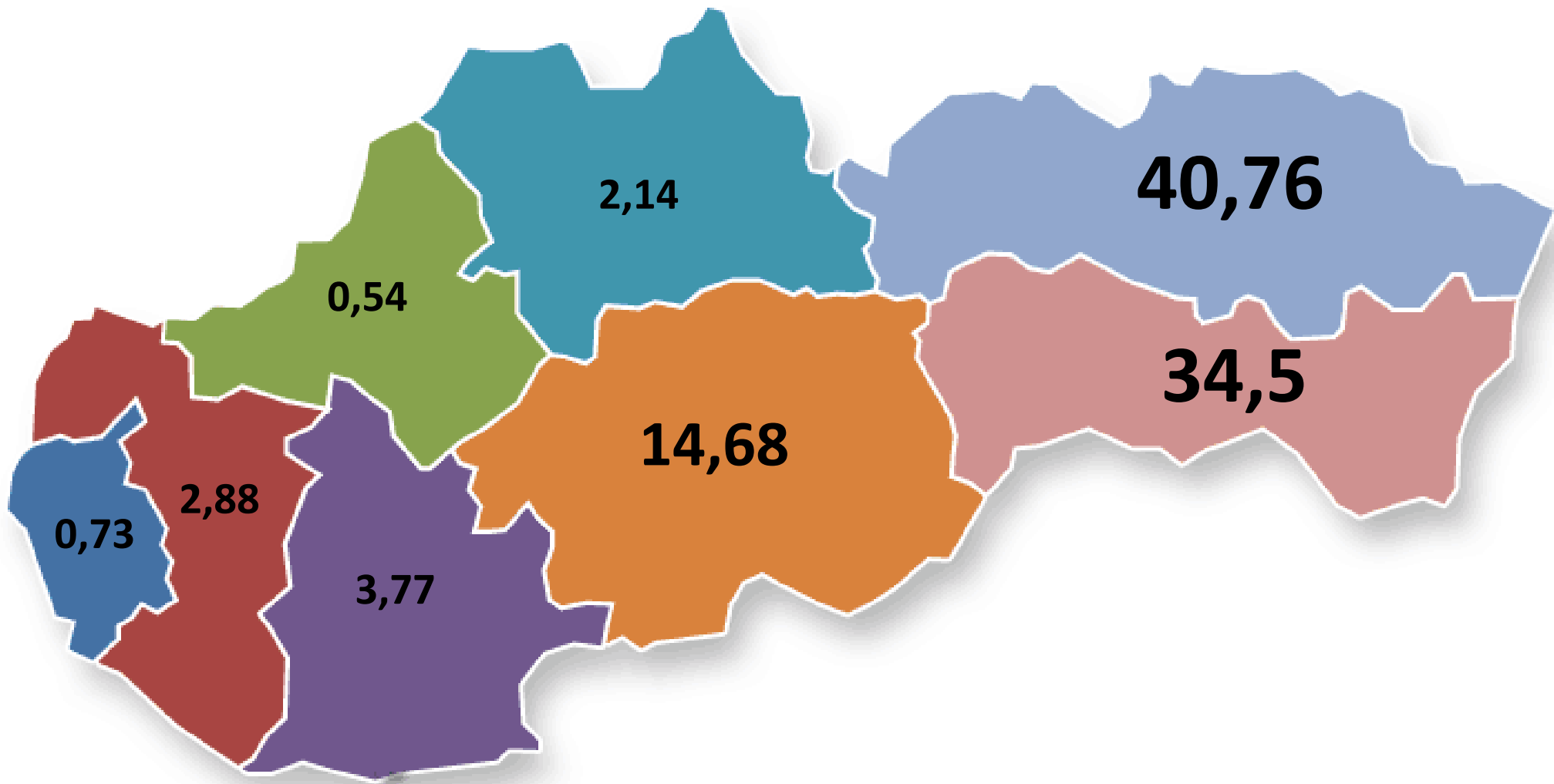


- The party officially proclaims to be ‘different’ and ‘renewed’
- Leader – Andrej Danko
- Many representatives from the 90s remained in the party
- 2016-2020 in government with **Hungarian** party Bridge
- After 2020 elections not in parliament



# Roma Minority in Slovakia

- Unclear proportion of the population
- Official census:
  - 1991 – 75 802 (1,4 %)
  - 2001 – 89 920 (1,7 %)
  - 2011 - 105 738 (2 %)
  - 2021 – still ongoing
- Real estimations around 400 000
- Geographically concentrated in Central and Eastern Slovakia



# Roma Minority in Slovakia

- Very bad public image
- Associated features from the majority's point of view:
  - Lack of education
  - Unemployment
  - Poverty
  - Bad living conditions and habits
  - Crimes and misuse of public money

# 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	62,0	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	29,0
Disabled	6,0	8,7

# Roma Minority and Politics

- No relevant Roma political party
- Attempts to create such parties end without any success
- Compared to Hungarian minority:
  - Low attachment to the territory
  - Never a dominating nation in the land
- Further reasons:
  - Lack of organizational skills
  - Non disciplined voters (low turnout; regular attempts to buy their votes)

# Roma Minority 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 courtyard and a big whip“*

# SNS campaign in 2010



# People`s Party – Our Slovakia (LS)



- 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...
- LSNS:
  - Modification of the profile
  - Primary focus on Roma minority
  - Other topics rather secondary
  - Change after 2012

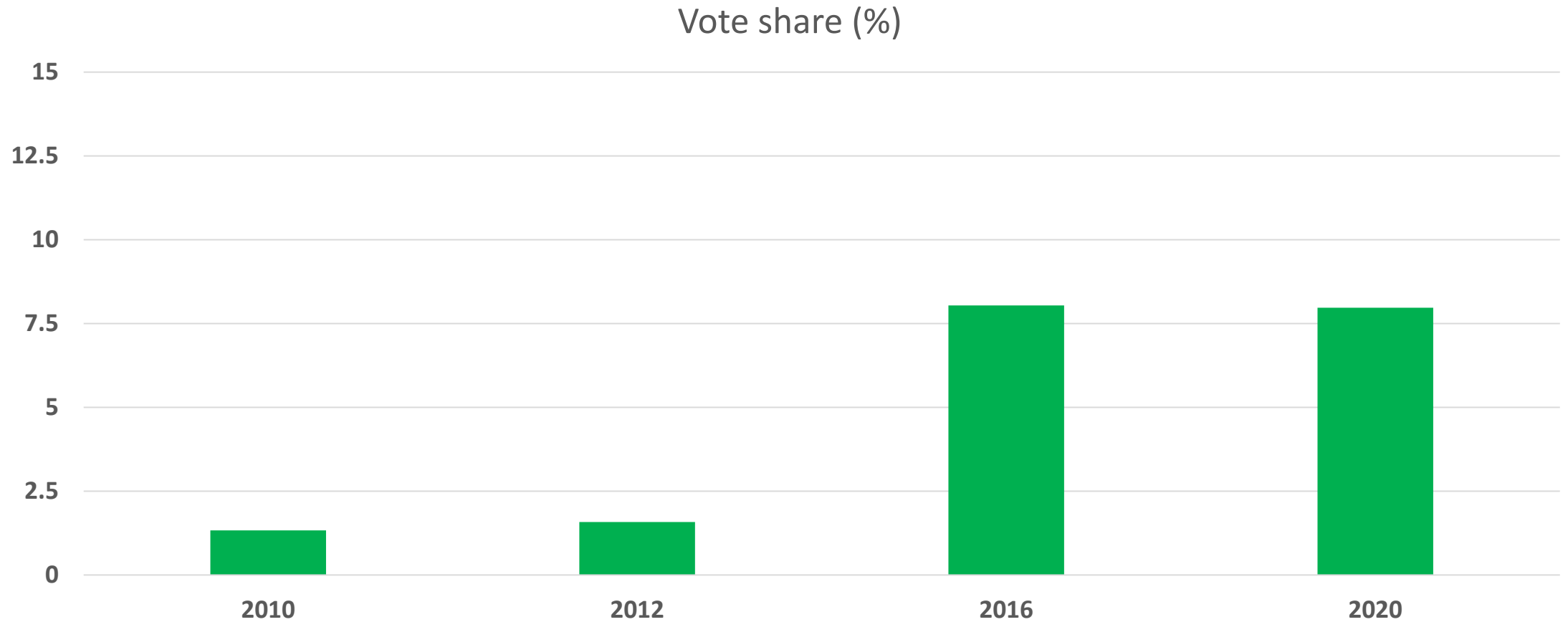
# LSNS and Roma Minority

- 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

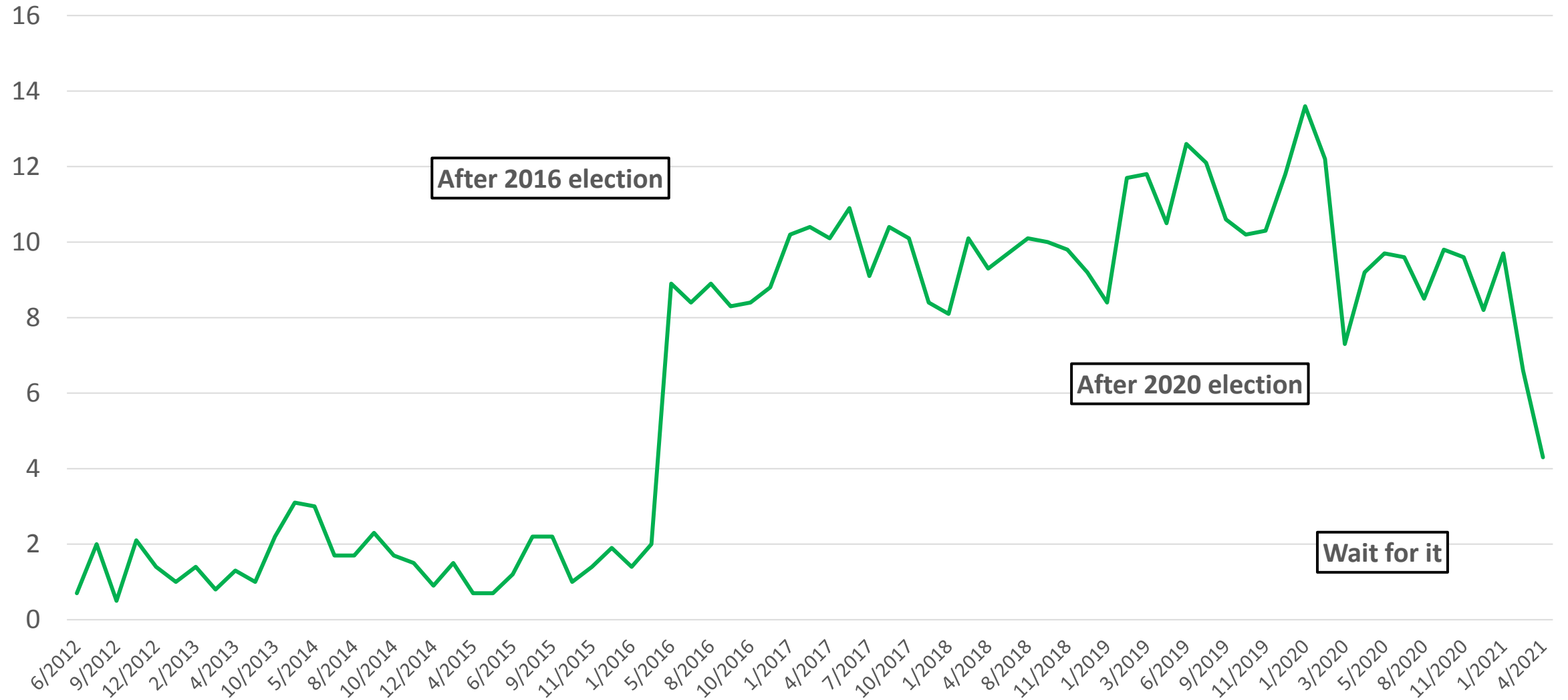
# Performance in Elections

- Initially only minor success in national elections:
  - 2010 – 1,3 %
  - 2012 – 1,6 %
- Change in 2013 regional election:
  - Kotleba scored second in the first round
  - In runoff Kotleba won over SMER`s incumbent

# Performance in General Elections



# Support of LSNS



# Breakthrough in 2016 Election

- 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?
  - Besides racial hatred, LSNS adopted new topics
  - Immigration, populism, anti-elitism, anti-EU, vaccine hesitancy

# From Uniforms to Suits



# 2016 - 2020

- LSNS started to send patrols to trains into regions with higher share of Roma
- Network of alternative media to mobilize people
- Proclaimed stress on conservative values and lives of *decent people*





# If you want to know more

**From Trivialized Neo-Nazis to Parliament: Explaining the Electoral Success of the Extreme Right Party ĽSNS in Slovakia (2021)**

Petr Voda, Alena Kluknavská, Peter Spáč

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10758216.2020.1869909>

# Split of LSNS



- Change of party rules in January 2021 → Kotleba reinforced his leadership position
- Several prominent members left LSNS to establish their own party The Republic
- LSNS and The Republic below 5 per cent in polls



# The Republic

- Officially claims to protect traditional, national and Christian values and to fight against corruption
- Questionable difference between Republic and LSNS

