

Nationalism and Extremism in Slovak Politics

POLb1135 Slovak Politics

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?

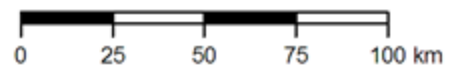
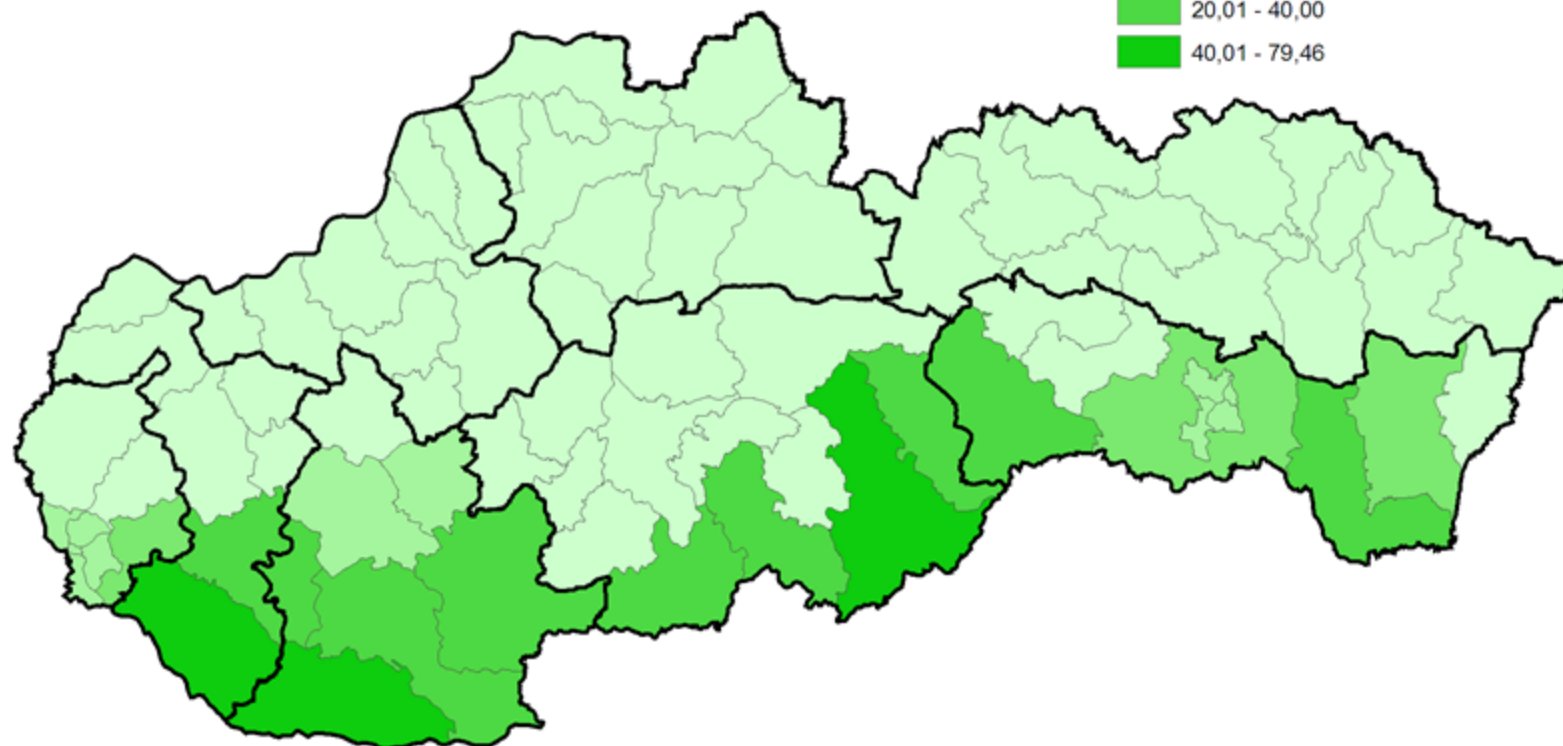
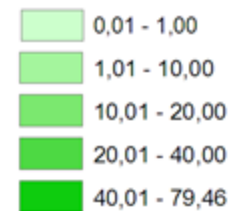
- Slovakia as multiethnic country
- Historical tensions and legacies
- Recent development
 - Financial crisis
 - Migration crisis

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 the 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



Aby naše deti mali istotu.



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Rudolf Pučík

Pozsony? Nie, Bratislava!



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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“*

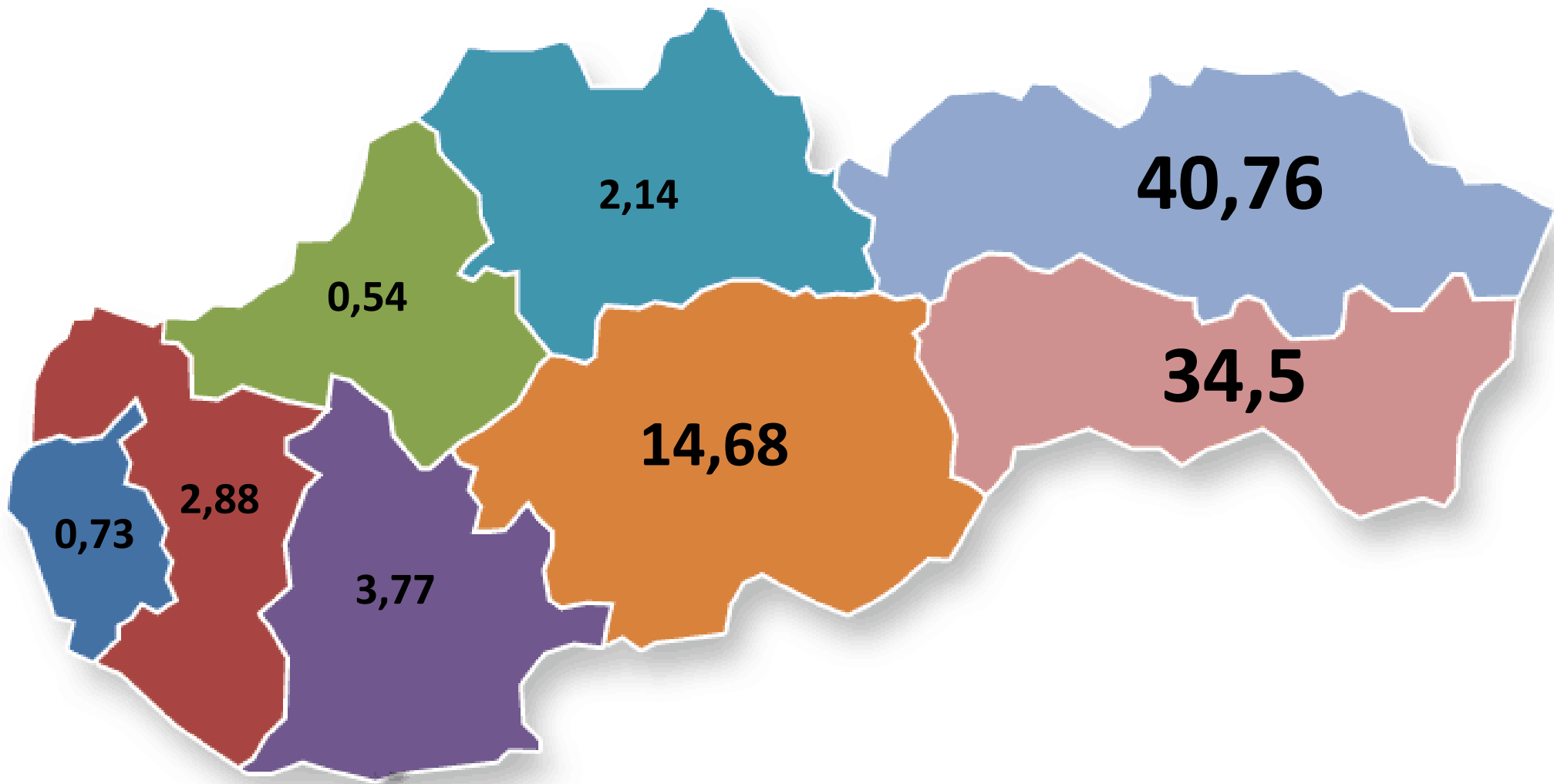
SNS Today (After Slota)



- 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 election 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 (2,0 %)
 - 2021 – 67 179 (1,2 %)
- 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 being 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 and human rights
- Examples:
 - Reservations (as Native Americans 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

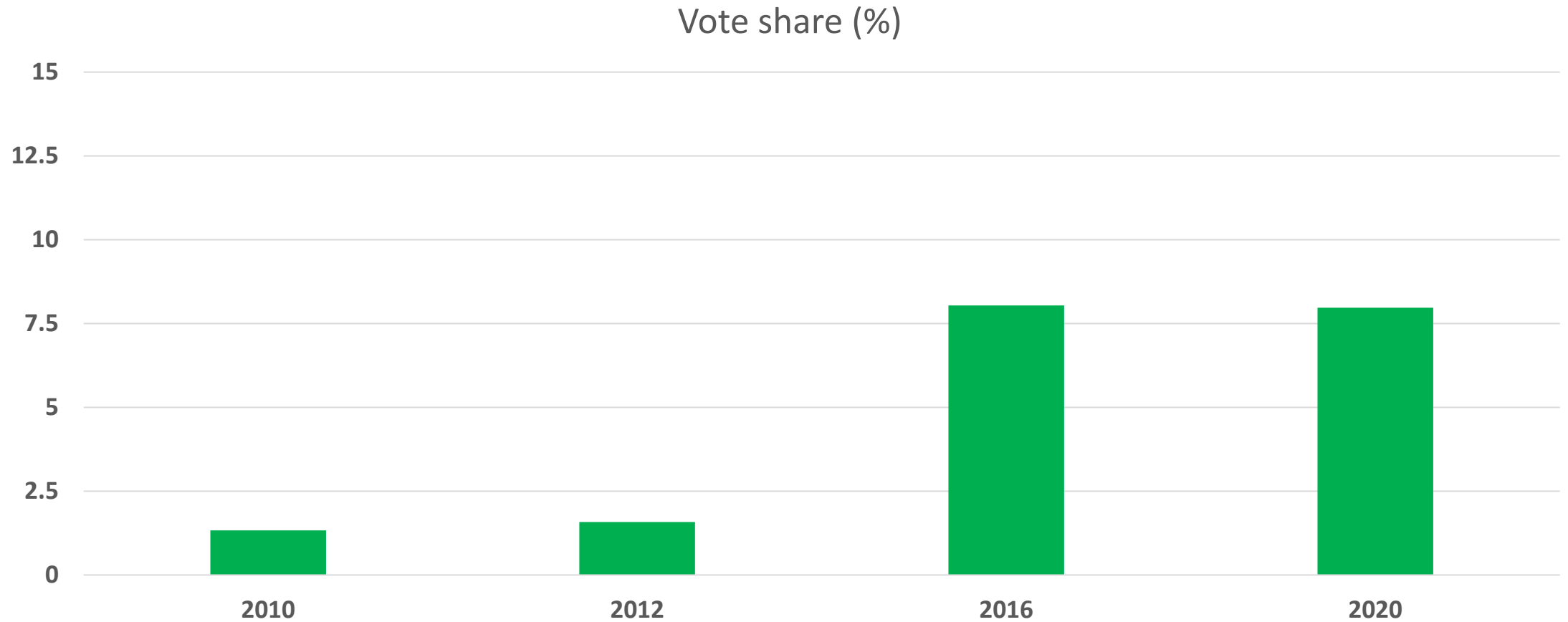
LSNS and Roma Minority

- 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

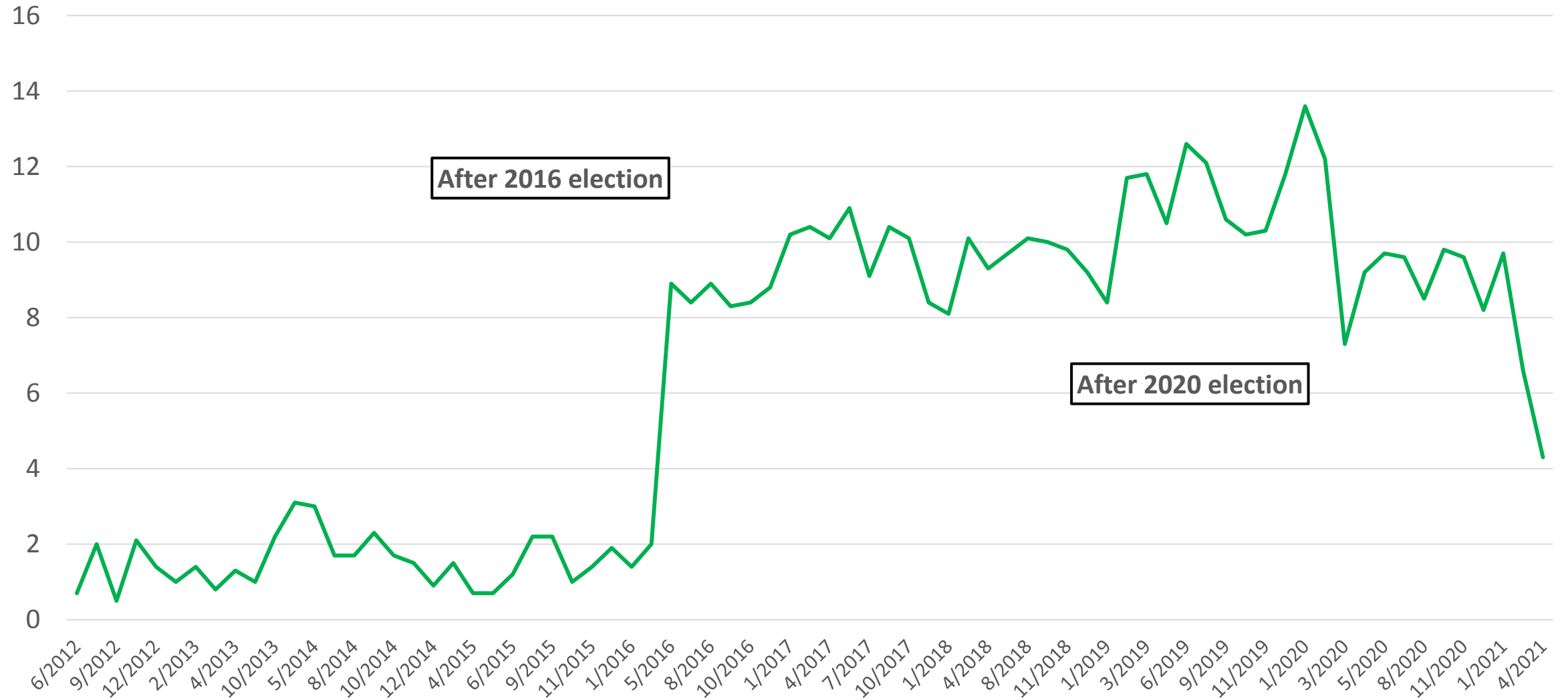
Performance in Elections

- 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 nearby 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

