



7.1 Country Brief: A social psychological perspective on trends of extremism in Hungary

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About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and broader social contexts driving radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation) to move towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalisation programmes. We intend to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, including a sense of being victimised, being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures and coming under the influence of “us vs them” identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts, including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation-states adapt to new security challenges. Mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts is crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that radicalisation processes often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national justice frameworks. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing and devising solutions to online radicalisation is central to the project’s aims.

Executive Summary

This country brief summarises the survey findings for Hungary. It then embeds the survey findings within a national and cultural context for each country. The aim of these summaries is to situate the findings within their respective sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts. The literature review and rationale for the proposed model, analysis of the full dataset, and discussion can be found in the full 7.1 report, which also contains the country briefs.

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1. Results

In Hungary, 25.47% of participants reported not knowing their political attitudes. Thus, this variable was removed, all participants were kept, and the final sample was $n = 318$.

Descriptives

Breakdown by age and sex.

Mean age (SD)	Sex					
	Male		Female		Other	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
24.59 (4.80)	154	48.43	164	51.57	0	0.00

Breakdown by religious affiliation.

	n	%
Christian	225	70.75
Agnostic/Atheist	64	20.13
Other	25	7.86
Buddhist	3	0.94
Muslim	1	0.31
Jewish	0	0.00
Bahá'í	0	0.00
Hindu	0	0.00
Sikh	0	0.00

Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?

	n	%
Yes	48	15.09
No	212	66.67
Don't know	58	18.24

Breakdown of belonging to a group that is discriminated against.

On what grounds is your group discriminated against?

	n	%
Colour or race	10	20.83
Gender	9	18.75
Nationality	8	16.67
Sexuality	8	16.67
Disability	8	16.67
Other	7	14.58
Religion	5	10.42

Ethnic group	4	8.33
Language	3	6.25
Age	2	4.17

Note: participants were allowed to select multiple groups. As such, proportions will not necessarily add to 100%

Breakdown of different organizations participants reported being members of (active or inactive) or not.

	Active		Inactive		Not a member	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Church or religious organization	64	20.13	103	32.39	151	47.48
Sport or recreational organization	105	33.02	70	22.01	143	44.97
Art, music or educational organization	77	24.21	71	22.33	170	53.46
Labour union	47	14.78	68	21.38	203	63.84
Political party	38	11.95	66	20.75	214	67.30
Environmental organization	51	16.04	76	23.90	191	60.06
Professional association	52	16.35	70	22.01	196	61.64
Humanitarian or charitable organization	51	16.04	66	20.75	201	63.21
Consumer organization	60	18.87	63	19.81	195	61.32
Self-help group or mutual help group	48	15.09	65	20.44	205	64.47
Women's group	52	16.35	56	17.61	210	66.04
Other organization	22	6.92	47	14.78	249	78.30

Breakdown of different political actions participants reported taking in the last 12 months.

	Yes		No		Missing value	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Contacted a politician or government official	53	16.67	211	66.35	54	16.98
Worked in a political party or action group	27	8.49	243	76.42	48	15.09
Worked in another ideological organization	32	10.06	241	75.79	45	14.15
Displayed a campaign badge/sticker	39	12.26	235	73.90	44	13.84
Signed a petition	125	39.31	154	48.43	39	12.26
Took part in a lawful public demonstration	70	22.01	209	65.72	39	12.26
Boycotted certain products	46	14.47	228	71.70	44	13.84
Posted or shared anything about politics online	86	27.04	198	62.26	34	10.69

Predictors of realistic threat

Holding stronger beliefs supporting inherent group hierarchies (social dominance orientation) was associated with perceiving migrants as a greater threat to one's national ingroup and its access to resources, welfare, and power. Additionally, perceiving one's national ingroup to be more economically deprived relative to migrants was also linked to perceiving migrants as a greater threat.

Direct predictors of extremism

Holding stronger beliefs about inherent group hierarchies (social dominance orientation) was also associated with increased support for extremist attitudes. Perceiving migrants as a greater threat to one's national ingroup was, in turn, linked with greater support for extremist

attitudes. Relatedly, perceiving one's ingroup as more economically deprived relative to migrants was also linked with greater support for extremist attitudes. Believing that one's ingroup was superior to other social groups (collective narcissism) was associated with support for extremist attitudes. In terms of vulnerability, experiencing more social alienation was associated with greater support for extremist attitudes.

Indirect predictors on extremism

Stronger social dominance orientation had indirect effects on increased support for extremist attitudes via increased collective narcissism and increased perceptions of realistic threat. Simultaneously, increased social dominance orientation indirectly affected decreased support for extremist attitudes via decreased populism, predicting decreased support. The total indirect effect was not significant.

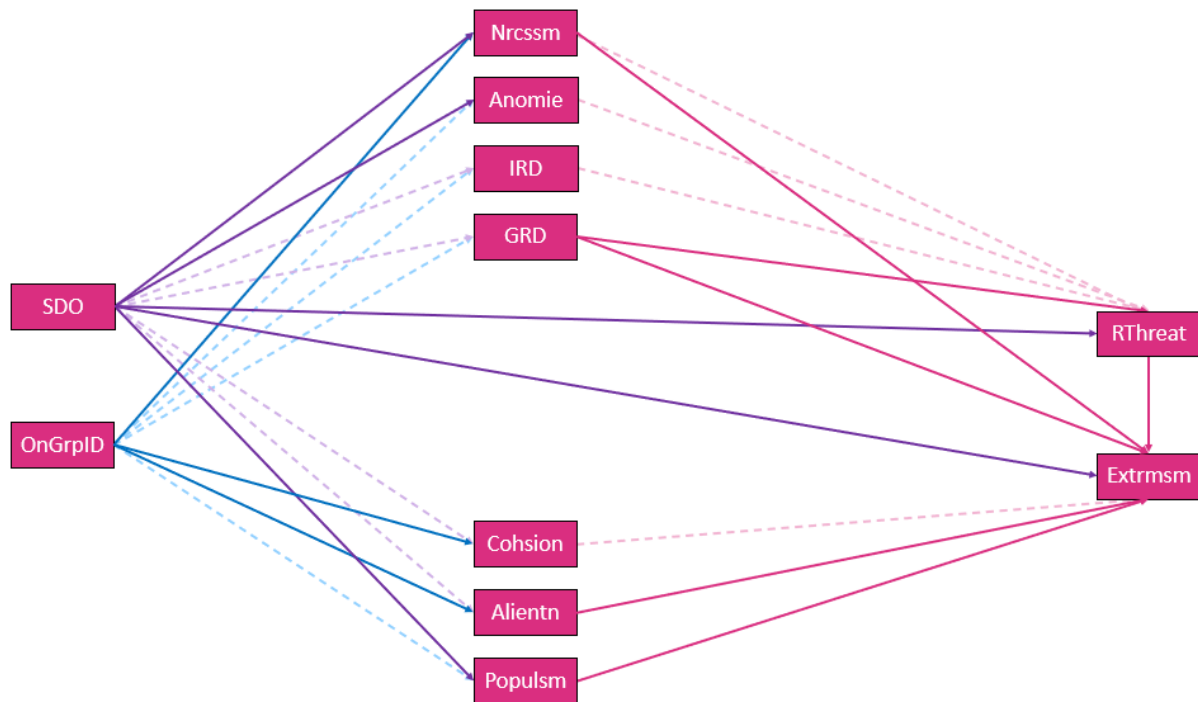
A stronger online group identity had indirect effects on increased support for extremist attitudes via increased collective narcissism and increased social alienation. Similarly, the total indirect effect was statistically significant in a positive direction.

Predictors of attitudes towards Russian culture, Russian and Ukrainian migrants

Feelings of social alienation and endorsement of extremist attitudes were both separately associated with more negative attitudes towards Russia and Russian culture. Greater feelings of anomie and perceptions of migrants in general as a threat to Hungary were linked with improved attitudes towards Russia. None of the variables of interest (i.e. social dominance orientation, online group identity, collective narcissism, anomie, individual and group relative deprivation, social cohesion, social alienation, populism, political trust, perceptions of migrants as realistic threats, support for extremist attitudes) reliably predicted attitudes towards Russian migrants.

In terms of Ukrainian migrants, holding more populist attitudes and perceiving migrants in general as a greater threat to Hungary were both separately linked with worsening attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants in the past twelve months. Conversely, holding more extremist attitudes was linking with improved opinions towards Ukrainian migrants in the past twelve months.

Figure 9. Respecified model for Hungary.



2. Situating the findings within the Hungarian context

The following summary aims to identify and contextualise radicalisation in Hungary. Our findings are based on the D.Rad Survey collected in Hungary with 318 participants. We interpret the survey findings in the following context. In the past 13 years, the right-wing Fidesz government has caused polarisation within the society, where already marginalised groups became further marginalised, and intersectionality has also become a growing issue in rural Hungary. While the Fidesz government has built up a conservative, populist, illiberal system in every aspect, there is a rising right-wing/far-right support in the country, which enabled them to win four consecutive terms with a supermajority in the Hungarian Parliament. Previous D.Rad reports have found that the government is a stakeholder in radicalisation as it prevents de-radicalisation measures, and by law-making and communication, they actively participate in radicalising the public. Their prevention of anti-polarisation or de-radicalisation measures in schools, for instance, is often explained by the government that they refuse to educate children with the “woke, Western liberal” propaganda. In a country where certain books and ideas are banned from education, television networks and now even bookstores, and where 80 per cent of the media landscape is de facto controlled by the government (Reporters without borders, 2023) it is almost impossible to carry out significant changes and de-radicalisation measures. Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hungarian government has been operating with special powers, extending the rule-by-decree many times based on the alleged emergency situation caused by the war in Ukraine. In this political and law-making climate, the opposition has no added value to work in the Hungarian Parliament, and the Fidesz government, with a supermajority, controls the jurisdiction.

The survey shows that the Hungarian society is polarised on many levels, reinforcing the findings of previous D.Rad reports. One of the most intriguing findings of this study pertains to the subject of discrimination. Previous D.Rad reports on Hungary have often linked discrimination to politically incited discrimination and social inclusion against marginalised groups. However, the survey results revealed that merely 15.09% of the participants perceived themselves as belonging to a discriminated group in Hungary. An additional 18.24% responded uncertainly, indicating "Don't know" to the same query. This is a contradictory finding with the current marginalising narrative of the Hungarian government that mainly focuses on supporting Hungarian families with good financial backgrounds while secluding "the Others" from any support and continuing to curb their rights (Amnesty International, 2022).

When respondents were questioned about the characteristics of their perceived discriminated social group, 20.83% attributed their discrimination to factors related to colour and race. Gender came next with 18.75%, while nationality, sexuality, and disability received similar scores at 16.67%. Importantly, participants were allowed to select multiple grounds for discrimination, which opens avenues for further investigation into intersectionality.

Although the figure of 20.83% reporting discrimination based on colour and race might seem paradoxical in a predominantly homogenous society like Hungary, except for a significant Roma minority (Dessewffy, Nagy 2021), a thorough analysis of the raw data and qualitative responses unravelled the underlying reasons.

Roughly half of those who responded "Yes" to the question of whether they feel discriminated against in Hungary seemed to be part of a minority group, including women, people with Roma ethnicity or Ukrainian and Romanian nationals. Out of those who described their self-identity or characteristics as LGBTQ, only one answered "No" to discrimination. At the same time, 8 responded that they feel discriminated against based on their sexuality and 8 mentioned being discriminated against based on their disability. Those participants who feel discriminated against in their language live close to the Hungarian border. Participants who reported being a member of at least one group that is discriminated against perceived less social cohesion in their neighbourhood and community than participants who were not members of any discriminated groups. We can conclude that, in general, discriminated people feel more excluded from society.

Surprisingly, the other half (over 50 per cent) of the participants who claimed discrimination based on race or skin colour were white, Christian, heterosexual males with conservative values. This discovery stood out as an anomaly in the discrimination section of the survey. The following observation can explain it. These individuals may have chosen to answer affirmatively to the discrimination question and selected colour and race as the grounds for their perceived discrimination, possibly due to their sense of exclusion from the prevailing liberal discourse, which highlights the experiences of other marginalised groups.

In Hungary, the "Western liberal agenda" has been a prioritised hate-inciting narrative by the governing Fidesz party. Their right-wing characteristics include heightened EU scepticism, anti-LGBTQ sentiments, general xenophobia and strong nationalism. When focusing on the participants who answered positively to being discriminated against on the grounds of colour

and race, we found that further, their answers were in line with the Fidesz narrative; for example, most of them responded negatively on whether they think Russia has caused the war in Ukraine.

This finding can be linked to another attribute in the survey. Contrary to expectations, increased collective narcissism did not predict increased perceptions of migrants as realistic threats. Instead, increased collective narcissism predicted increased support for extremist attitudes. For example, Fromm (1964/2010) understood narcissism as self-admiration and over-evaluation of one's subjective perspective, also marked by a "blindness" to objective reality. From narcissism to collective narcissism, the interpretation (Millon, 2006) was re-written to refer to group-related beliefs rather than the individual (e.g., "I insist upon getting the respect that is due to me" was transformed to "I insist upon my group getting the respect that is due to it"; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). People who score high on the Collective Narcissism Scale believe that others do not sufficiently recognise the importance of their in-group and that their in-group deserves special treatment (Forgas, Lantos 2020).

The other interesting finding includes Online Group Identity and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). A higher social dominance orientation (SDO) predicted increased collective narcissism, decreased anomie, and decreased populism. Higher SDO directly predicted stronger perceptions that migrants pose a realistic threat to Hungary and its resources, rather than SDO being indirectly related to realistic threat through other variables such as collective narcissism, anomie, or perceived individual or group relative deprivation (individual relative deprivation and group relative deprivation). Importantly, higher SDO directly predicted greater support for extremist attitudes. The effect of SDO on extremist attitudes was mediated by collective narcissism, perceptions of migrants as a realistic threat, and populism. An increased SDO predicted decreased populism and decreased populism predicted decreased support for extremist attitudes. Thus, increased SDO indirectly predicted decreased support for extremist attitudes via populism. A stronger online group identity predicted increased collective narcissism, increased feelings of social cohesion in one's neighbourhood and community, and increased social alienation. Increased social alienation is a strong narrative in Hungary, as it is the stronger perceptions that migrants pose a realistic threat to the nation and its resources, which is linked to higher SDO. Participants who did not belong to any discriminated groups showed a higher SDO than people who reported belonging to or more discriminated groups. Also, participants who belonged to one or more groups that were discriminated against had a stronger online identity (mainly Reddit and Facebook) than participants who did not belong to any discriminated groups.

The qualitative data demonstrates the current Injustice-Grievance-Alienation-Polarisation (I-GAP) index in Hungary. To the question asking participants to "Name the most consequential event of extreme-right violence that took place in Hungary in the past twenty years", we were able to measure how each participant responded among those who also felt discriminated. The most mentioned events were in the following topics: violent demonstrations and police brutality taking place in Budapest in 2006 (12), the Roma killings, the rising visibility and threat of the neo-Nazi group called the Hungarian Guards before 2010 (15), general anti-Orbán remarks (6), anti-LGBTQ laws (6) and migration (1). Other than the topics mentioned above, most participants answered with remarks that enable us to conclude that the country has a

general political apathy. While there were many indifferent remarks for political questions, we saw a large portion of the participants who responded positively to taking political actions: 39.31 per cent of participants said that they had signed a petition, 22.01 per cent indicated that they had taken part in a lawful demonstration and 27.04 per cent responded that they have posted or shared anything about politics online in the last 12 months.

The survey on Hungary reinforces the previous D.Rad reports and their findings. In conclusion, the data reveals a deeply polarised society, with the right-wing Fidesz government's policies exacerbating marginalisation. Surprisingly, discrimination is not solely limited to traditionally marginalised groups, as some conservative, white, Christian males also perceive discrimination, potentially due to their sense of exclusion from the prevailing liberal discourse. Collective narcissism predicts extremist attitudes, while social dominance orientation relates to perceptions of migrants as threats. Increased support for populism and extremist ideas correlated with higher collective narcissism scores. The findings highlight Hungary's I-GAP index and citizen engagement in political actions. Addressing media control and discrimination and fostering dialogue are crucial for promoting inclusivity and countering radicalisation in Hungary.

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