DeRadicalisation
in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate

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

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Teuta Avdimetaj

Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS)

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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 Kosovo. 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

Only 0.96% of participants in Kosovo did not know their political attitudes. Thus, these participants were dropped, and the variable was kept, resulting in a sample of *n* = 103.

Descriptives

Breakdown by age and sex.

	Sex					
	Male		Female		Other	
Mean age (SD)	n	%	n	%	n	%
27.28 (7.30)	45	43.27	59	56.73	0	0.00

Breakdown by religious affiliation.

	n	%
Muslim	97	93.27
Agnostic/Atheist	4	3.85
Christian	2	1.92
Other	1	0.96
Jewish	0	0.00
Buddhist	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	15	14.42
No	73	70.19
Don't know	16	15.38

Breakdown of belonging to a group that is discriminated against.

On what grounds is your group discriminated against?

	n	%
Religion	3	20.00
Language	3	20.00
Gender	3	20.00
Other	3	20.00
Nationality	2	13.33
Sexuality	2	13.33

Colour or race	1	6.67
Ethnic group	1	6.67
Age	1	6.67
Disability	1	6.67

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	9	8.65	24	23.08	71	68.27
Sport or recreational organization	14	13.46	27	25.96	63	60.58
Art, music or educational organization	20	19.23	27	25.96	57	54.81
Labour union	13	12.50	28	26.92	63	60.58
Political party	7	6.73	39	37.50	58	55.77
Environmental organization	9	8.65	26	25.00	69	66.35
Professional association	20	19.23	19	18.27	65	62.50
Humanitarian or charitable organization	20	19.23	27	25.96	57	54.81
Consumer organization	8	7.69	30	28.85	66	63.46
Self-help group or mutual help group	11	10.58	27	25.96	66	63.46
Women's group	18	17.31	22	21.15	64	61.54
Other organization	5	4.81	25	24.04	74	71.15

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	20	19.23	71	68.27	13	12.50
Worked in a political party or action group	20	19.23	74	71.15	10	9.62
Worked in another ideological organization	11	10.58	82	78.85	11	10.58
Displayed a campaign badge/sticker	12	11.54	82	78.85	10	9.62
Signed a petition	52	50.00	41	39.42	11	10.58
Took part in a lawful public demonstration	28	26.92	67	64.42	9	8.65
Boycotted certain products	63	60.58	32	30.77	9	8.65
Posted or shared anything about politics online	31	29.81	58	55.77	15	14.42

Predictors of realistic threat

Feelings of anomie were correlated with a greater perceived threat to one's national ingroup from migrants in terms of resources, welfare, and access to power. As for vulnerability, social cohesion was a protective factor in that reporting more social cohesion was linked with less perceived threat from migrants.

Direct predictors of extremism

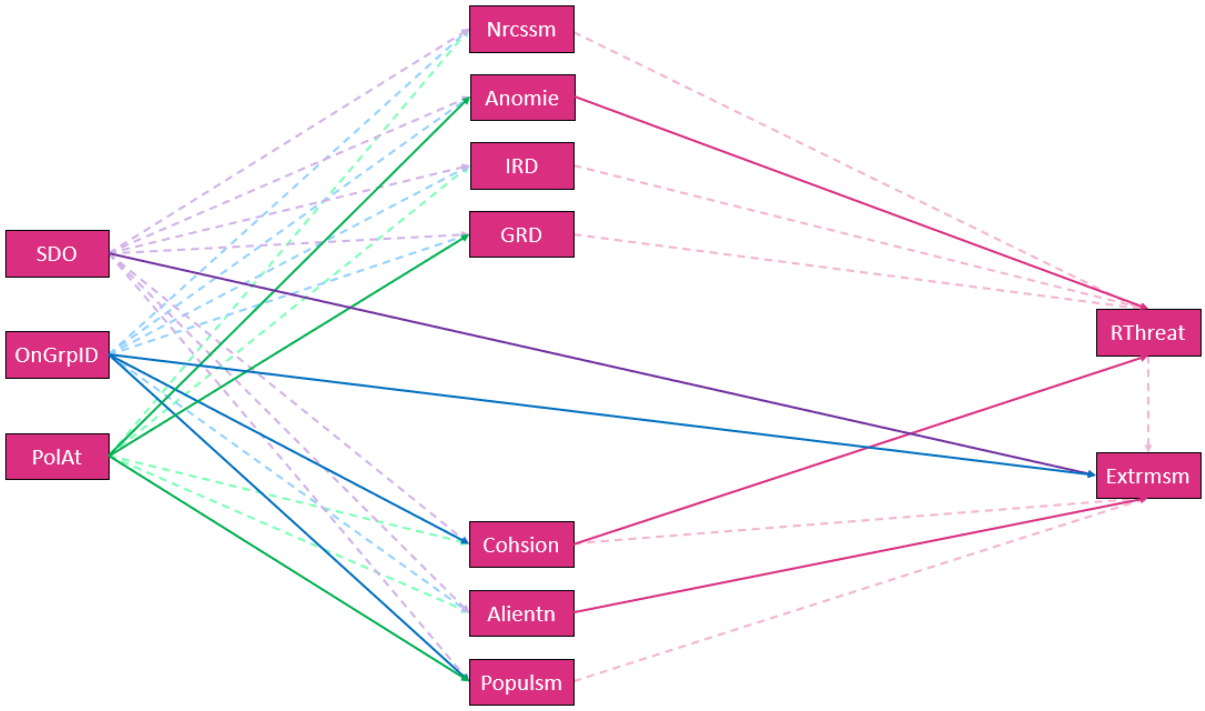
Holding stronger beliefs about inherent group hierarchies (social dominance orientation) was linked directly with greater support for extremist attitudes. A stronger online group identity was

also associated with greater support for extremist attitudes. In terms of vulnerability, experiencing more social alienation was linked with greater support for extremist attitudes.

Predictors of attitudes towards Russian culture, Russian and Ukrainian migrants

A stronger online group identity was associated with more negative attitudes towards Russia and Russian culture, as well as Russian migrants. Holding more extremist attitudes was linked with improved attitudes towards Russian migrants in the past twelve months. Regarding Ukrainian migrants, greater trust in the government predicted improved attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants in the past twelve months.

Figure 12. Respecified model for Kosovo



2. Situating the findings within the Kosovan context

The following chapter analyses the D.Rad findings for Kosovo, contextualising them within the country's socio-political landscape before and during the period when the survey was conducted. During this period, Kosovo experienced a tumultuous political and institutional crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In late March 2020, just after the first case of COVID-19 was registered, the coalition government in Kosovo, composed of the Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination Movement) and LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo), was ousted through a vote of no-confidence in the Kosovo Assembly. Subsequently, a new government led by LDK and its coalition partner was established in early June 2020 (Elshani, Avdiu and Balaj, 2022). However, this coalition government proved short-lived, as new snap elections were declared shortly after that, culminating in the electoral win of the Self-Determination Movement. The latter won a landslide victory, winning over 50 percent of the vote ("Kosovo's left-wing

opposition party sees landslide win", 2021). This marked the first instance where an opposition party secured a substantial win. The Self-Determination Movement is a left-wing party, and its triumph in the elections was propelled by a promise to combat organised crime and corruption, revive Kosovo's economy, and fight the pandemic. The party's roots as a populist movement that began as a youth-driven initiative garnered support from a broad spectrum of groups in Kosovo, including youth, the unemployed and other marginalised population segments (Onorato and Scott, 2021). While negotiations on normalising relations with Serbia did not figure high on the party's agenda, they remained a key and highly debated topic in the months following the election. Unfortunately, reaching a resolution between the two countries, mediated by the EU, has become increasingly challenging, resulting in a protracted stalemate. Meanwhile, inter-ethnic tensions have been on the rise since August 2022, significantly impacting relations between the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian communities (Ozturk, 2023).

The data indicates that Kosovars tend to be more engaged in civil society organisations, such as women's groups or humanitarian and charitable initiatives, rather than displaying significant involvement in political activism, which challenges the conventional belief that there is high political activism among the population. However, it is worth noting that there is a prevalent negative perception of political parties among the people, leading to reluctance to identify with them when questioned ("Kosovo Citizen Perceptions Of Political Parties", 2022). This sentiment arises from the widespread public opinion in Kosovo that views political parties as disconnected from everyday citizens and primarily serving the interests of select groups and loyal members. This perspective may help explain why, as highlighted above, in the 2021 national elections, a political party representing marginalised segments of society achieved an unprecedented 51% of the vote.

This pattern in political engagement may shed light on the age-related correlations observed in the findings, specifically the tendency for older participants to express lower levels of trust in the national political system. The current ruling party predominantly appeals to a younger electorate, while older voters tend to exhibit more traditional voting behaviour and hold political beliefs that align with the previous establishment. Young people's support for a party that advocates for a more balanced position for Kosovo in regional and international arenas further underscores this generational divide in political preferences.

Regarding various political actions participants reported engaging in over the past year, the majority mentioned boycotting specific products as the predominant form of political activism. This aligns with a campaign that emerged in early 2023 in response to heightened inter-ethnic tensions between Kosovo and Serbia. The 'Don't Buy Serbian Products' campaign encouraged Kosovo businesses to stop selling Serbian products. Its goal was to discourage Kosovo citizens from supporting Serbia economically and instead promote buying locally, thereby keeping money within the Kosovo economy (Taylor, 2023).

Regarding participants' responses concerning their attitudes towards Russia and their views on Russian and Ukrainian immigrants, the findings align with the prevailing sentiment in Kosovo, characterised by a pro-European and pro-Ukraine stance. As a collective, participants indicated that their attitudes towards Ukrainian migrants in the past year had improved, while

conversely, they reported a decline in their views towards Russian migrants. This shift can be attributed to the geopolitical context, as Russia is seen as an ally of Serbia, thereby positioning them as a direct adversary to Kosovo. In many ways, Kosovars perceive that the relationship between Russia and Ukraine parallels the historical relationship between Serbia and Kosovo (Nuqi, 2022).

The study also revealed that increased political trust in the government was associated with more favourable opinions towards Ukrainian migrants over the past year. The pro-Ukrainian stance of the current Kosovo government and previous administrations can explain this correlation. The Kosovo government has consistently supported Ukraine since the onset of the war, including by adopting the EU sanctions against Russia, hosting Ukrainian journalists through the Journalists-in-Residence Kosovo Programme, and providing monetary support to the country (Bami, 2022).

Another notable finding of the report is related to online group identity. The finding that a stronger online group identity predicts greater support for extremist attitudes is particularly relevant in the context of Kosovo, where online platforms have played a significant role in the dissemination of radical and extremist views. This trend has been especially evident with the rise of ethno-political radicalisation, exacerbated by online engagement with radical communities. The unresolved dispute between Serbia and Kosovo has created an environment where online narratives promoting ethno-political radicalisation thrive (Ilazi and Orana, 2022).

The D.Rad findings for Kosovo provide a glimpse into the country's socio-political landscape marked by escalating inter-ethnic tensions, exacerbated by a stagnant Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and lingering wounds from the war. The age-related disparities revealed in the study underscore a significant generational shift in perspectives across a range of critical issues, such as migration, trust in public institutions, and more. This shift was prominently displayed during the 2021 parliamentary elections, where the younger generation demonstrated their capacity to hold previous governments accountable and demand a better future. The study's findings underscore the significant role played by the online sphere, serving as a platform for both fostering solidarity and perpetuating divisive narratives of "us versus them," thereby fueling extremist ideologies. Like elsewhere, people in Kosovo increasingly turn to online platforms and social media to seek validation for their viewpoints and amplify their opinions. Social media has become the primary battleground where individuals propagate inter-ethnic hatred and divisive narratives, particularly following increased tensions between Kosovo and Serbia in recent years.

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