BRINGING BACK THE GOLDEN AGE:
HUNGARIAN RADICAL RIGHT NARRATIVES AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES IN LIGHT OF HISTORICAL REVISIONISM
The CARR-Hedayah Radical Right Counter Narratives Project is a year-long project between CARR and Hedayah that is funded by the EU STRIVE programme. It is designed to create one of the first comprehensive online toolkits for practitioners and civil society engaged in radical right extremist counter-narrative campaigns. It uses online research to map narratives in nine countries and regions (Australia, Canada, Germany, Hungary, New Zealand, Norway, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States), proposes counter-narratives for these countries and regions, and advises on how to conduct such campaigns in an effective manner. This country report is one of such outputs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Balša Lubarda completed his MA in Security Studies in the department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University, where his thesis focused on the conceptual development of Green Nationalism. His master’s degree was funded by the Chevening Scholarship Programme. His research focuses on the convergence of right-wing politics, particularly its radical strands, and environmental topics (climate change, biodiversity, energy security, environmentally-friendly forms of agriculture) in post-socialist realms. Balsa’s doctoral Project combines qualitative methods, such as interviewing members of the radical right in Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland, and discourse and network analysis. He also writes about topics concerning environmental security and politics in Central-East Europe and the Balkans.

The views expressed in this practical report are the opinions of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Hedayah, the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right or the European Union.

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INTRODUCTION

June 4, 2020, was not an ordinary day for Hungary. Amid the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, nationalist Hungarians mourned the hundredth anniversary of the Trianon Treaty, a day they consider a ‘national tragedy.’ The Trianon Treaty led to the dismantling of the Kingdom of Hungary, losing more than half of its pre-war territory to newly-formed states, as well as Austria, Czechoslovakia, Kingdoms of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia), and the Kingdom of Romania. This event, seared deeply into Hungarian collective memory, serves as a potent mobiliser of nationalist sentiments, stirring up feelings of injustice and victimhood at the hands of the ‘international community.’ Even though the Hungarian radical right has always championed such narratives, quite often enmeshed with anti-semitism and contempt towards various representatives of national ‘outsiders’ (e.g. oligarchs, Westerners, Roma, migrants, foreigners), the Hungarian case of historical revisionism is fast becoming the official discourse of the ruling nationalist party, known as Fidesz.

The ideological differences between right-wing populism and radical right extremism in Hungary are nuanced and blurry. Yet these differences have, for the most part, not influenced the electoral appeal and overall popularity of the Hungarian radical right. Unlike other European countries, the Hungarian radical right has been effectively mainstreamed ever since the early 2000s (if not 1998, when Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (MIÉP) entered Parliament). With an emphasis on authoritarianism, these organisations have relied upon a well-developed network of local representatives and partnerships for their successes. In the 2018 national elections, the radical right Jobbik party was the strongest opposition party (with almost 18% of the electoral vote), losing only to the right-wing populist Fidesz party (securing 9% of the votes). With two-thirds of the electorate voting for radical right or right-wing populist parties, it is difficult to argue that these actors exist at Hungary’s political fringe, despite their often violent activism. On the other hand, a wide array of extra-parliamentary nationalist groups in Hungary operating independently or in collaboration with these parties have failed to attract consistent support over the years. This has led to frequent transformations and changes in the movements, yet the foundational narratives of the Hungarian radical right have remained largely steady.

These narratives resemble those of the radical right in the surrounding countries — in particular, those of the Visegrád Four region (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) but also of other Eastern European countries (Serbia, Croatia, Romania, and Montenegro) — yet bear their own, distinctive contextual features. First, the Hungarian radical right predominantly rallies around historical revisionism, in particular the rejection of the aforementioned Trianon Treaty for the cessation of the (Austro-)Hungarian Kingdom. Second, there is profound exceptionalism and ‘otherness’ that has heavily informed a sense of national pride, due to some degree to linguistic dissimilarities from surrounding countries. This all ultimately distills seemingly multifarious pathologies, such as anti-Roma sentiments, anti-semitism, and xenophobia, into a single melting pot. Third, such positions underpin a discursive good/evil distinction (or Manicheanism); from opposition to socialism in the light of the experiences of Warsaw Pact communism (in particular the 1956 revolution) to recent staunch anti-EU and anti-migration positions. Finally, the narratives distort and reinterpret political history so that national conservatism appears to be the most prominent political ideology in Hungary since the 1848 revolution.

Given the outcome of the 2018 national elections and the overall popularity radical right extremist and right-wing populist actors enjoy in Hungary, the viability of counternarratives may be questioned. In looking at the attempts in this space, however, this report identifies a range of possible developments, albeit ones continuously shadowed by current political polarisation and the illiberal authoritarianism of the Fidesz government.

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1 While the differences may be blurred in practice, there is a somewhat clear conceptual demarcation between the ‘radical right’, ‘extreme right’, and ‘right-wing populism’ ideologies. All three accentuate a Manichean binary distinction between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, not on the exclusively definitions of ‘the people’, value authoritarian principles of leadership, and disparaging liberal democracy. However, the role of ethno-nationalism is more prominent in the extreme and the radical right, rather than in right-wing populism. The radical right and right-wing populism are primarily anti-liberal, whereas the extreme right is staunchly anti-democratic, calling for the overhaul of the democratic system. Hungary and Poland offer adequate examples of these conceptual nuances via ruling right-wing populist parties such as Fidesz (Hungary) and Law and Justice – PiS (Poland). The right-wing opposition to these parties belongs to the radical and extreme-right strands (Jobbik, Our Homeland in Hungary, or Ruch Narodowy-Konfederacja in Poland).
Despite their turbulent circumstances, radical right groups and narratives in Hungary are highly influential in domestic politics, but also the international radical right landscape. They are able to achieve this through the activism of individual radical right groups as well as through hijacking established narratives from the right-wing populist parties, including those currently in Hungary’s ruling government. Some of these narratives are derived from profound historical resentment rooted in the signature of the Trianon Treaty a century ago, as well as the ethnonationalist understanding of the nation and national identity. To understand their impact, as well as the ways in which they are voiced by particular radical right groups, this section will first outline a typology of 11 radical right groups operating in Hungary, as well as their narrative examples, before identifying a set of shared, overarching narrative themes.
**Table 1: Overview of Hungarian Radical Right Extremist Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTREME NARRATIVE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Immigration Activism</td>
<td>‘Anti-Immigration Activism’ is characterised as views against open immigration policies based on their supposed threat to domestic culture and national identity. In particular, it might involve advocacy for voluntary or even compulsory repatriation of non-native citizens.</td>
<td>“Jobbik was the only one to protect Hungary and reminded the media that it was Jobbik who suggested setting up the border fence, forced the government to stop the residency bond business and Jobbik was the party to call public attention to the clandestine settlement of migrants.” (Jobbik)4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Muslim Populism</td>
<td>‘Anti-Muslim Populism’ is characterised as a fusion of anti-Muslim hostility and populist forms of nationalism, including tropes relating to ‘Islamisation’ and prejudicial depictions of Islam.</td>
<td>“There is a double morality in Islam, which means that different rules apply to Muslims and non-Muslims. There is no room for criticism in Islam, as it overwrites all previous religious sentiments, and in that sense is not a tolerant idea.” (Nikoletta Incze, “Islam expert” frequently providing commentary for the Hungarian (pro-Fidesz) media)5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Roma Activism</td>
<td>‘Anti-Roma Activism’ is characterised as public expressions of hatred or xenophobia towards Roma or Sinti minority communities.</td>
<td>“The emerging number of ghettos because of the unattended gypsy issues is a serious problem also in Slovakia and Romania (in the latter it is beginning to paralyze the function of the state). However, the gypsy crimes are not unknown in Ukraine, Serbia, and Croatia…” (HVIM)6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>‘Authoritarianism’ is characterised as a tendency towards a central government with an anti-democratic figure representing the government.</td>
<td>“HVIM is the only organisation that is convincingly anti-democratic in both its internal structure and its socio-political vision. Our community is built on authoritarianism and merit.” (HVIM)7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauvinism</td>
<td>‘Chauvinism’ is characterised as public forms of aggressive expression of superiority and dominance of a group, often in connection with ideas of virility and racial purity.</td>
<td>“Women love winners, and now that cultural Marxist public education in the West has mentally castrated white men and Hollywood, controlling media who advertise Negroes as Wakanda superheroes…” (Betyársereg)8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Footnotes:

4 See Jobbik, ‘Viktor Orban is unable to protect Hungary, far alone Europe’, online at: www.jobbik.com/viktor_orban_is_unable_to_protect_hungary_far_alone_europe (all websites last accessed 30 October 2020).

5 MTI, ‘The failure of Islamic Integration’, Demokratia.hu, 4 January 2018, online at: https://demokratia.hu/vilag/az-iszlam-integracio-kudarca-103334/.


7 HVIM, ‘About the movement’, online at: www.hvim.hu/post/az-mozgalomrol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianism</td>
<td>‘Christianism’ is characterised as a civilizational and exclusive interpretation of Christianity that views the Christian religion as a defining feature of a given ‘nation’ and/or an allegedly homogenous ‘western civilisation.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decadence</td>
<td>‘Decadence’ (or ‘degeneration’) is characterised as perceived cultural and spiritual deterioration of a nation or society; in Oswald Spengler’s view, it unambiguously points toward modernity as a final, “Faustian” stage of Western Civilisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethno-Nationalism</td>
<td>‘Ethno-Nationalism’ is characterised as the identification with a particular nation and an allegedly homogenous ethnic in-group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnopluralism</td>
<td>‘Ethnopluralism’ is characterised as a right-wing counter-theory to multiculturalism, stressing forms of ‘cultural differentialism,’ such as the right to live in separate and bordered ethnic and cultural regions. It is synonymous with Identitarianism and owes much to the French ‘New Right,’ or Nouvelle Droite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Revisionism</td>
<td>‘Historical Revisionism’ is characterised as an ideological reinterpretation of the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>‘Hungarianism’ is defined as a fascist imaginary entailing a great(ctor) Hungarian state. Coined by the Hungarian fascist leader Ferenc Szálasi, ‘Hungarianism’ refers to the ethnic and racial purity embodied in the concept of ‘social nationalism.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manicheanism</td>
<td>‘Manicheanism’ is characterised as assigning binary moral categories of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ but taking on aspects of an eschatological battle of good against evil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarchism</td>
<td>‘Monarchism’ is characterised as advocacy for a queen or king as the head of state, albeit with many differences between types of rule (from liberal democratic to totalitarian).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palingenesis</td>
<td>‘Palingenesis’ refers to the ideological conception of the rebirth, epitomised in calls for a return to an imagined ‘golden age.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9 Our Homeland, ‘Founding Declaration’, online at: https://mihazank.hu/alapito-nyilatkozat/.
11 Our Homeland, ‘Founding Declaration’, online at: https://mihazank.hu/alapito-nyilatkozat/.
12 Mandiner, ‘Megfontolások a Jobbik ideológiai alapvetéséhez [Considerations for the ideological base of Jobbik]’, 26 February 2012, online at: https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20120226_ory_megfontolasok_a_jobbik_ideologiasalapveteshez/
16 Our Homeland, ‘Founding Declaration’, online at: https://mihazank.hu/alapito-nyilatkozat/.
17 HVIM, ‘About the Movement’, online at: https://www.hvim.hu/a-mozgalomrol.
18 ‘Golden age.’
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 HVIM, ‘About the Movement’, online at: https://www.hvim.hu/a-mozgalomrol.
22 ‘The Hungarian national resistance, which confronts the world and at the same time the forces that are poisoning Hungary and their past and present dark activities.’ (HVIM)”
Radical Right Ecologism

‘Radical Right Ecologism’ is defined as the affinity towards the natural environment based on ‘rootedness’ in a particular geographical area. In radical right ecology, species are perceived as ‘domestic’ or ‘foreign’ to the national ecosystem.22

Turanism

‘Turanism’ is defined as an ethno-nationalist movement based on the alleged ethnic and racial homogeneity of Ural-Altaic peoples (Hungarians, Finns, Turks, Mongols, and others).

White Supremacism

‘White Supremacism’ is characterised as a belief in white dominance over people of other ethnic backgrounds. It is often connected to concerns about ‘white replacement’ or belief in ‘White Genocide’ conspiracy theories.

Vigilantism

‘Vigilantism’ is characterised as the law enforcement undertaken without legal authority, entailing threats of actual or real physical attacks against an individual or people group (in the present context, based upon their racial or religious appearance).

The historical beginnings of the Hungarian radical right can be traced back to at least 1919 and the anti-communist and proto-fascist movement concentrated around “The Szeged Idea” (A szegedi gondolat). Predominantly influenced by the advent of the Trianon Treaty, nationalist radicalism in interwar Hungary peaked with the fascist Arrow Cross Party (Nyilaskeresztys Párt) and the ideology of ‘Hungarism,’ a Hungarian variant of National Socialism. The party was founded in 1939 by Ferenc Szálasi, who was later to become the head of the fascist puppet state after the removal of Miklós Horthy, the long-term regent and de-facto leader of Hungary (1920-1944). While Szálasi’s historical status as a fascist leader is unambiguous and given that Arrow Cross troopers were responsible for the death of more than 15,000 Hungarians and Jews during his 6-month rule, Horthy’s position remains contested in wider nationalist circles. Importantly, the great majority of the Hungarian radical right are not admirers of Szálasi but are instead admirers of Horthy, who they consider to be an exceptional statesman and whose collaboration with Nazi Germany was necessary for Hungary’s survival.23

In socialist Hungary following the end of World War II, Arrow Cross party members and pre-war radical right organisations were purged. After the public execution of the party leadership, including Szálást, the remaining members and supporters fled the country. Angela’s most important event during the history of socialist Hungary was the 1956 revolution, articulated by the radical right as yet another (failed) attempt at reviving the national spirit. The legacy of 1956, moreover, was central to the post-socialist re-emergence of the Hungarian radical right. Gergely Pongrác, the legendary commander of Budapest’s Corvin Köz (Corvín Passage), who survived the revolution and fled to the United States, returned to Hungary in 1991 to become a member of Jobbik in 2004. After his death in the same year, his brother and a fellow fighter at the Corvín Köz, Andráš, remained as an honorary speaker during the commemorations of the revolution held at Corvín Köz, initially organised by Jobbik (until 2018) and since by the Our Homeland Movement.24

A characteristic feature of the post-socialist Hungarian radical right has remained a presence of one relatively strong political party in the Hungarian Parliament, paired with a network of fringe movements and violent, paramilitary organisations. The most dominant radical right force in the 1990s and the early 2000s was the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Hungarian: Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártí, MIEP). Founded in 1993 by the Hungarian playwright István Csarka, MIEP was the main node in the emerging nationalist network, comprised of communist-era disidents, journalists, and skinhead groups. MIEP peaked in the 1998 Parliamentary elections, winning 14 seats and 5.47% of the popular vote. The following dominant radical right party was Jobbik, founded in 2004, which capitalised on a 2006 Hungarian scandal that led to mass protests against the then-Prime Minister from the Socialist MSZP, Ferenc Gyurcsány, but also the tragic murder of a high-school teacher by a group of Roma in the Hungarian town of Olaszló. Péter Krekó and Attila Juhász claim that 2006 marked a revival of the Hungarian radical right, both given its subsequent electoral successes as well as the positions of its narratives in Hungarian society.25

The position of the contemporary Hungarian radical right is greatly conditioned by the ruling Fidesz and its leader, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán. As a national conservative party at the beginning of the century (and even closer to liberalism in the early 1990s), Fidesz has gradually turned to right-wing populism, winning the elections of 2010, 2014, and 2018 on a platform dedicated to a ‘revival’ of Hungarian economy and society, later epitomised in the anti-migration war of words against Hungarian-born

American businessman and philanthropist, George Soros. The binary moral distinctions advanced by the ruling party were originally developed in ultra-nationalist, radical right circles, and their impact has been striking. The crackdown on non-governmental organisations and academic institutions associated with Soros by the ruling Fidesz has been widely reported, particularly after Fidesz’s landslide victory in the 2018 elections. Soros was consistently targeted in these new discursive turns, but also targeted has been the EU, especially its then-Commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker, for “pushing migration plans that threaten Hungary’s security.”

Given such circumstances, the radical right opposition in Hungary found itself in the unfamiliar position of virtually defending its arch-enemy, Soros, against the ongoing “witch-hunt” perpetrated by Fidesz. Of course, Soros’s position of alleged ‘puppet master’ (bearing a distinctive anti-Semitic undertone) within an overarching discourse of the Hungarian radical right has not changed. Yet the electoral dominance of Fidesz over the last decade, partly thanks to a monopolising radical right discourse in some policy domains, has also instigated major upheaval on the Hungarian radical right scene. The first of these major changes saw the shift of Jobbik, the main party of the Hungarian radical right since 2006, towards the centre ground, in keeping with largely familiar positions of ‘national conservatism,’ an established strand in Hungarian politics. Nevertheless, “replacing its paramilitary gear with puppies and kittens” has not enabled Jobbik to become the ruling party, although in winning 19.06% of the popular vote in the 2018 elections it became the strongest opposition party following Fidesz’s sweeping victory.

The second major perturbation in the Hungarian radical right over the last decade occurred in the aftermath of the 2018 elections. Jobbik’s leader, Gábor Vona, stepped down as party chair, while a number of factions within the party started voicing their discontent with Jobbik’s turn to the centre. Later in 2018, this led to the formation of the Our Homeland Movement (Hungarian: Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), soon to become the new leader of radical right forces in the country. This marked a new phase in the history of the Hungarian radical right, which nevertheless continues to be marginalised by the ruling party, and thus unable to obtain significant electoral successes.

33 Jobbik, ‘Fidesz gets a Reminder who was Funded by Georg Soros,’ online at: www.jobbik.com/fidesz_gets_a_reminder_who_was_funded_by_george_soros.
EXTREME RADICAL RIGHT GROUPS IN HUNGARY

THE NATIONAL LEGION (NEZETI LÉGIE)

FOUNDERS
László Toroczkai, László Födelmesi

FOLLOWERS
1,609 (Facebook)

MEMBERSHIP
Unknown

IDEOLOGY
White Supremacism

THE NEW HUNGARIAN GUARD MOVEMENT (ÚJ MAGYAR GÁRDA MOZGALOM)

FOUNDER
István Mészáros

FOLLOWERS
Not present on social media

MEMBERSHIP
Unknown

IDEOLOGY
Vigilantism

LEGION OF HUNGARY (LÉGIÓ HUNGÁRIA)

FOUNDER
Béla Incze

FOLLOWERS
2,800 (Facebook), 143 (Twitter), Instagram - suspended

MEMBERSHIP
c. 50

IDEOLOGY
Palingenesis

THE WOLVES (FARKASOK)

FOUNDER
Gábor Barcsa-Turner

FOLLOWERS
Not present on social media

MEMBERSHIP
Unknown

IDEOLOGY
Turanism

DESCRIPTION

Farkasok is a paramilitary formation founded in 2011 by HVIM’s co-leader, Gábor Barcsa-Turner, aiming to “awaken the Hungarian virtues.” Rooted in Turanian mysticism and the neo-pagan tradition, the organisation hosts outdoor workouts and training using airsoft weaponry. As the Farkasok website makes clear, these activities are “to teach the basics of national defence in both playful and more serious forms, including the simulation of a military environment.” Farkasok accepts only men over age 16, who demonstrate “patriotic character” and “accept the hierarchical structure.” Training consists of regular combat tactics and the basics of self-defence, but also tutorials in providing first aid, navigation, survivalist training, and orientation. Farkasok emphasise that training does not entail firearms and is in full compliance with Hungarian laws. While most of the members of The Wolves are also members of HVIM, there is no record of Farkasok participating in the activities of other organisations.

TURANISM

Turanism: “The ancient knowledge characterising Turani-nomadic people can be found among traditional people, from the North American Indians to the Vikings, to our ancestors, the Scythian-Hun tribes. Identification with different animals was found in each of these traditions…”

-An excerpt from a HVIM post.
The movement has a radio station, a website, and an online blog. It also organizes a range of events, such as public workshops and youth camps, where they are taught survival skills, history, but also some basics of environmental protection. The movement has long been a part of the network of nationalist organizations coalescing around a major party – first Jobbik, and then Our Homeland. The leaders of the movement, Gábor Barea-Turner, and Botond Kónyi-Kiss, frequently appear at events organized by Bétyásrög and the Our Homeland Movement. Importantly, members of HVIM have also frequently been involved in violent incidents, both domestically and outside Hungary. In 2011, 15 HVIM militants armed with clubs attacked five Serbian-speaking teenagers in the town of Temerin, Serbia. Likewise, in 2015, members of the Romanian chapter of the organisation were arrested for plotting a terrorist act. The regional leaders of the organisation, István Beke and Zoltán Szőcs, were each sentenced to 5 years in prison in 2018.

- An excerpt from Hungarian Free Press article.
- An excerpt from a HVIM article.
Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom was formed in 2014 from For a Better Future Hungarian Self-Defence (Sebbi Jeremyő Magyar Önvédelmi; henceforth Better Future). In turn, the latter movement originated from the New Hungarian Guard, which was disbanded in 2014. Both were founded and led by Tibor László Attila. The movement is officially a non-governmental organisation (NGO), defining itself as a voluntary organisation established along the lines of the fight against social injustice and the protection (self-defence) of Hungarian national values and living space. The main scope of activities of the Hungarian Defence Movement is based on vigilantism, self-defence training, and ‘policing’ the neighbourhoods, mostly those with a significant population of Roma. There are records of the group intimidating Roma citizens in Edeleny, although the cases of physical violence are much rarer, as compared to the Better Future. The content on MOM website is suffused with anti-Roma content, such as posts on “Gypsy terror” in Medgyesegyháza and “self-defense community building,” and is also apparent on some of the sports-related activities and ‘spiritual hikes.’ Unlike other groups coalescing around HVIM and Betyársereg, MOM members have not appeared at Our Homeland rallies.

Ethno-Nationalism:
“...we must stand up for each other and for our compatriots in an era when community cohesion and practical action have almost completely disappeared from the everyday life of European societies.”

- An excerpt from Attila László’s New Year Message

Vigilantism:
“On Thursday night, patriots, locals, and police officers raided and chased drug addicts through the housing estate. The problem is now solved.”

- An excerpt from MOM website post

Anti-Roma Activism:
“Another domestic ghetto-story! A Hungarian family had to flee their home due to a series of attacks by gypsies who moved from Romania.”

- An excerpt from a MOM website post

Ethnopluralism:
“Comrades! Patriots! We believe that the biggest problem in Europe at the moment is immigration, which we must put an end to. If such an influx of migrants continues to flood in uncontrollably, it will mean the end of our continent. We see that a human tsunami from Africa and Asia could sweep us all away. We believe that every country has the right to decide who it wants to live with and who it doesn’t.”

- An excerpt from a MOM website post

Historical Revisionism:
“We remembered the occasion of the entry of Vitéz Nagybányai Miklós Horthy into Budapest on November 16, 1919!”

- An excerpt from a MOM website post

### Founders
Tibor László Attila

### Followers
6,059 (Facebook)

### Membership
Unknown

### Ideology
- Ethno-Nationalism
- Vigilantism
- Anti-Roma Activism

### Historical Revisionism

- We remembered the occasion of the entry of Vitéz Nagybányai Miklós Horthy into Budapest on November 16, 1919!

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The New Hungarian Guard Movement was founded in 2009, following the dissolution of The Hungarian Guard, established in 2004 by Gábor Vona, then leader of Jobbik. This paramilitary organisation was envisaged as a “self-defence alliance,” although there is no explicit distinction from established Hungarian political parties. The uniforms of the New Hungarian Guard are black with an Árpád-striped shield as a coat-of-arms, similar to that of previous paramilitary formations in Hungary. The New Hungarian Guard has participated in vigilante patrols and has organised combat training. Like other paramilitary and vigilante organisations in the country, The New Hungarian Guard has also participated in commemorations of important events such as the signing of The Trianon Treaty, Matthias Day, and the 100th anniversary of Horthy’s entering into Budapest.

**Vigilantism and Ethnopluralism:***

“In Ópályi, Szabolcs County, the local OPSz [Országos Polgári Őrző Szövetség – National Civil Guard Association] members asked for help from our guards, as the number of burglaries has increased in this town. Our guards, of course, said yes to the request and served with the civil guards on Wednesday night. After many failures, the joint action ended successfully. An illegal intruder into the local store was apprehended [...] the thief from a different culture quickly informed us of his comrades, who were also captured that night with the help of the Guards.”

*— An excerpt from Post on New Hungarian Guard Website.*

**Historical Revisionism:**

“In the summer of 1920, the country was mourning. To this day, all our true Hungarian brothers carry this pain in their hearts. We shall not forget!”

*— An excerpt from Post on New Hungarian Guard Website.*

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**DESCRIPTION**

The New Hungarian Guard Movement (Új Magyar Bárda Mozgalom) was an anti-Belarusian paramilitary group in Hungary. It was formed in 2009, after the dissolution of the Hungarian Guard. The New Hungarian Guard’s coat of arms is black with an Árpád-striped shield, similar to that of previous Hungarian paramilitary groups. The group participated in vigilante patrols and combat training. They also commemorated important events such as the signing of The Trianon Treaty, Matthias Day, and the 100th anniversary of Horthy’s entering into Budapest.

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**NARRATIVE EXAMPLES (cont’d.)**

**White Supremacism:**
“Racial consciousness and whiteness are extremely important issues, especially in a world where not only national self-awareness but even the issue of gender identity is under brutal siege by certain deviant groups.”

*An excerpt from the Béla Incze interview.*

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**LEGIÓ HUNGRÍA**

**FOUNDER**
Béla Incze

**FOLLOWERS**
2,800 (Facebook),
143 (Twitter),
Instagram - suspended

**MEMBERSHIP**
c. 50

**IDEOLOGY**

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**Palingenesis**

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**Decadence:**
“One of the outcomes of World War II, the modern, left-liberal worldview, has finally shown its destructive effects on culture. The other source of danger, which is partly the result of the gradual intensification of illegal migration from third world countries to our continent.”

*An excerpt from a Légió Hungária article.*

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**Ethno-Nationalism:**
“Cooperation with our neighbours or like-minded organisations and movements in Europe does not mean that we should give up the rights of Hungarians across the border. It does not mean waiving any rights. At the moment, the situation is that the Europe we want to save can dissolve into a large and grey multicultural mass, and then the concept of the Hungarians living here, not only beyond the border, will also make no sense.”

*An excerpt from a Légió Hungária article.*

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**Palingenesis:**
“We need to preserve our customs, our culture, our traditions, we need to preserve the legacy of our ancestors, that is not in dispute. At present, however, the whole framework is in imminent danger, in which our worldviews cannot be interpreted at all. Many times, people have said: there is a war between races and civilisations for a living space. Our movements must also contribute to this struggle, and if we can count on each other as allies in this, it can only increase our chances of survival.”

*An excerpt from a Légió Hungária article.*

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**LEGION OF HUNGARY**

**FOUNDER**
Béla Incze

**FOLLOWERS**
2,800 (Facebook),
143 (Twitter),
Instagram - suspended

**MEMBERSHIP**
c. 50

**IDEOLOGY**

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**White Supremacism**

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Betyársereg is a neo-Nazi organisation formed in 2008, evoking the 19th-century Hungarian highwaymen who were considered social outlaws. The slogan of the organisation is “Ne bántsd a magyart (mert pórul jársz)” (Do not mess with Hungarians (or else)!). The movement is organised into smaller clans and maintains close contact with other nationalist organisations around the country. The official blog of Betyársereg often features interviews with representatives of other extreme-right organisations such as Légio Hungária, HVIM, Our Homeland, and Érő és Elezésígas. In return, Betyársereg’s leader, Zsolt Tyirityán, is a frequent guest on the Holy Crown radio station. The organisation has participated in most major national commemorations (including for the Trianon Treaty and the 1956 Revolution), but also in anti-Roma protests organised in several towns across Hungary. In its official blog, Betyársereg promotes sports (notably powerlifting and combat sports), nationalist music, but also racist content such as the “Antidogma” series of texts by István Gazdag, a columnist at Demokrata.hu, or “A Conference of Racists” held in Budapest in 2019. The group also has its own motorcycle clan.

**NARRATIVE EXAMPLES**

**THE OUTLAW ARMY** (BETYÁRSEREG)

**FOUNDER**
Zsolt Tyirityán

**FOLLOWERS**
Suspended from social networks

**MEMBERSHIP**
c.100 members

**IDEOLOGY**
Ethno-Nationalism

**GENERATION IDENTITY HUNGARY** (IDENTITAS GENERACIO MAGYARORSZÁGI)

**FOUNDER**
Ábel Bódi

**FOLLOWERS**
Accounts suspended (Twitter, Facebook)

**MEMBERSHIP**
Unknown

**IDEOLOGY**
Ethnopluralism

**THE BLACK ORDER**

**FOUNDER**
Kerry Bolton

**MEMBERSHIP**
Unknown

**IDEOLOGY**
Neo-Nazism, Satanism, Aryanism, Violence

**GENERATION IDENTITY HUNGARY** (IDENTITAS GENERACIO MAGYARORSZÁGI)

**FOUNDER**
Ábel Bódi

**FOLLOWERS**
Accounts suspended (Twitter, Facebook)

**MEMBERSHIP**
Unknown

**IDEOLOGY**
Ethnopluralism

**EXTREME RADICAL RIGHT GROUPS IN HUNGARY**

**DESCRIPTION**

**Ethno-Nationalism:**
“Since the moment of its establishment, Betyársereg symbolises a community with a strong racial and national consciousness, upholding the idea of Hungarian self-defence.”

**Decadence and Palingenesis:**
“We also try to set an example in community building, because, with our so-called clan system, we emphasise the need for a fraternal, companion, and peer communities today. Due to consumer idiocy symbolising modernity, the sick egocentric way of thinking is signalling a dying society.”

**White Supremacism:**
“The hateful media hysteria against us was mostly triggered by our belief in the concept of racial consciousness and the love of our national heritage and the fact that we wanted to preserve it.”

**Chauvinism:**
“It is precisely the criterion of right-wingness that it is engaged in a committed and uncompromising struggle against these satanic forces. Being on the right itself is a constant struggle, a kind of knightly journey that serves the idea of human nobility.”
MAINSTREAM RADICAL RIGHT GROUPS IN HUNGARY

**GENERATION IDENTITY HUNGARY**

*Founder* Ábel Bódi

*Followers* Accounts suspended (Twitter, Facebook)

*Membership* Unknown

*Ideology*
- Ethnopluralism
- Decadence
- Anti-Immigration Activism

**HUNGARIAN JUSTICE AND LIFE PARTY (MÁGYAR IGAZSÁG ÉS ÉLET PÁRTJA, MIÉP)**

*Founder* Tibor Nagy

*Followers* More than 4,000 on county pages (Facebook)

*Membership* Unknown

*Ideology*
- Authoritarianism
- Ethno-Nationalism
- Radical Right Ecologism
- Chauvinism
- Christianism
- Manicheanism

**JOBBIK**

*Founder* Péter Jakab

*Followers* 80,902 (Facebook), 923 (Twitter)

*Membership* Unknown

*Ideology*
- Ethno-Nationalism
- Chauvinism
- Christianism
- Historical Revisionism
- Radical Right Ecologism
- Anti-Immigration Activism
- Anti-Roma Activism

**OUR HOMELAND MOVEMENT (MI HAZÁNK MOZGALOM)**

*Founders* László Toroczkai

*Followers* 80,902 (Facebook), 923 (Twitter)

*Membership* Unknown

*Ideology*
- Chauvinism and Ethno-nationalism
- Historical Revisionism
- Radical Right Ecologism
- Anti-Immigration Activism
- Anti-Roma Activism

The Hungarian Chapter of the transnational identitarian organisation is largely detached from other radical right organisations in Hungary. Advocating an “independent, free and strong Europe, not exposed to either Russia or the United States,” Generation Identity Hungary endorses direct action and ethnopluralism, the latter inherited from the French *Nouvelle Droite*. The movement is explicitly non-violent, with its members mostly coming from the student population. Unlike other extreme or/violent organisations, the activism of Generation Identity is less focused on commemorations of historical events (although there are commemorations of the Trianon Treaty or the Siege of Vienna), but rather on protests and reactions to current events (such as the Black Lives Matter movement, refugee crisis, etc.), particularly those relating to Islam or Muslims.

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**NARRATIVE EXAMPLES**

**THE OUTLAW ARMY**

*(BETYÁRSEREG)*

**GENERATION IDENTITY HUNGARY**

*(IDENTITÁS GENERACIO MAGYARORSZÁG)*

**FOUNDER** Ábel Bódi

**FOLLOWERS** Accounts suspended (Twitter, Facebook)

**MEMBERSHIP** Unknown

**IDEOLOGY**
- Ethnopluralism
- Anti-Immigration Activism

- "We want Hungarian culture in Hungary and European culture in Europe. Patriotism and the love of our nation are not sins, and therefore these sentiments should not be smeared or frowned upon e.g. criminalised as racism and fascism. In our view, national cohesion is indeed a virtue. We reject hatred between the peoples of Europe, chauvinism. Our conviction is that we must confront together the international forces that are constantly at war with the preservation, nurturing, and survival of our identity. We reject anti-democratic laws that violate the right to freedom of expression and are unworthy of the traditions of a free, developed European society."

- An excerpt from Generation Identity Hungary Homepage.

- Anti-Immigration Activism [during the refugee crisis]:
  “We are with Greece. No way: you will not make Europe your home.”

- An excerpt from Generation Identity Hungary Homepage.

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90 This figure was current at the time of writing in September 2020.
91 Generation Identity Hungary Homepage, online at: www.generacio.eu/.
93 Generation Identity Hungary, Op Cit.
94 Generation Identity Hungary, Geográfiájuk segítségével / We are with Greece. Online at https://www.generacio.eu/2020/03/05/gorogorszaggal-vagyunk/.
95 Ibid.
**Description**

Founded in 1993 after splitting from the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), MIÉP was the first major post-socialist radical right party in Hungary. The longtime leader of the party, István Csurka, had been a well-known Hungarian playwright who split from MDF after a series of anti-Semitic scandals. Csurka was an outspoken and charismatic figure who brought together the building blocks of radical right discourse in Hungary. The narrative generated by MIÉP was built upon anti-communism, but also an anti-Western narrative of a ‘stolen transition.’ The latter placed the blame upon globalisation and the hidden (Jewish) domestic and international elites, which have allegedly deprived Hungarians of the ‘true’ benefits of the post-socialist transition. However, only in the 1998 national elections did MIÉP enter the Hungarian Parliament, winning 14 seats with 5.5% of the vote (248,901). This marked the party’s peak, for MIÉP subsequently tried to join forces with the then-emerging Jobbik as a part of a ‘Third Way Coalition’ in 2005. Following an electoral defeat in 2006, the alliance broke up. Thereafter, in part due to Csurka’s declining health and the lack of long-term growth, especially in terms of younger voters, MIÉP soon lost its status as the leading radical right party in Hungary – first to Jobbik, and then to the Our Homeland Movement. The coalition with Our Homeland and The Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers, and Civic Party for the European Parliament Elections in 2019 also did not prove successful, and the list did not secure any European parliamentary representation.

**Narrative Examples**

- **Chauvinism:**
  “An entirely separate issue is the ATV channel. This channel is owned by a so-called church, the Church of Faith, but actually run by the Soros Foundation, and serves only Israeli-American and domestic neoliberal interests. It is nothing but a foreign body in the life of the nation: anti-Hungarian, lying and unscrupulous. Its abolition is a prerequisite of Hungarian survival.”
  - An excerpt from MIÉP’s program of Order.

- **Palingenesis:**
  “We shall make the Hungarian State of the 21st century an example of an independent state, much like that of St. Stephen’s Hungary, the state of order.”
  - An excerpt from Betyársereg website.

- **Manicheanism:**
  “The Hungarian economy has fallen victim to a conspiracy-like method developed and applied in America, the “hyenas” of company acquisitions and liquidations.”
  - An excerpt from MIÉP’s program of Order.

**Ideology**

- **Authoritarianism:**
  “A state that is unable to guarantee the rule of law, that tolerates those living in accordance with the established moral values, is sometimes the object of ridicule to those who live in a sinful, careless, anti-communal life, a state that respects freedom, independence and integrity cannot provide a dignified life for its citizens.”
  “We will ensure there is only authentic and all-encompassing information, which will make the values of Hungarian culture a public treasure present in the media.”
  - An excerpt from MIÉP’s program of Order.

- **Ethno-nationalism:**
  “The Hungarian state has a problem, but also a goal, a task, here in the Carpathian Basin: to stop the loss of Hungarians, to support by a meaningful, Christian, Hungarian family capable of passing on the historical values of the nation and raising its children in a proper manner.”
  - An excerpt from MIÉP’s program of Order.

- **Christianism:**
  - An excerpt from MIÉP’s program of Order.

**Founder**

Tibor Nagy

**Followers**

More than 4,000 on county pages (Facebook)

**Membership**

Unknown

**Ideology**

- Authoritarianism
  - Ethno-nationalism
  - Christianism

- **Chauvinism:**
  “An entirely separate issue is the ATV channel. This channel is owned by a so-called church, the Church of Faith, but actually run by the Soros Foundation, and serves only Israeli-American and domestic neoliberal interests. It is nothing but a foreign body in the life of the nation: anti-Hungarian, lying and unscrupulous. Its abolition is a prerequisite of Hungarian survival.”
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It is difficult to assess whether Jobbik should still be considered a radical right party. Founded in 2003 by student radicals as The Movement for a Better Hungary (Magyarországért Mozgalom), Jobbik presented itself as the “radical, patriotic, and conservative” political party. The chief aim was to counter socialism, and in doing so it allied with Víktor Orbán’s Fidesz, which was then an opposition party. For nearly a decade, Jobbik was the leading mainstream radical right organisation in Hungary, alongside an extensive network of alliances both inside and outside of the country. This enabled Jobbik to emerge as an internationally recognised radical right movement, successfully radicalising the younger population in particular. Only several years back, Jobbik was also an openly anti-semitic party, with its officials making statements about the necessity of creating lists for Hungarian Jews. Only once (in 2006) did Jobbik enter an alliance with another party (namely MIEP), with the coalition winning only 2.2% of the vote in national elections. However, winning 16.67% of the votes in the 2010 National Elections, 20.22% in 2014, and 19.06 in 2018, Jobbik has since become one of the strongest opposition parties in Hungary, and is therefore considered as indicating the mainstreaming of the (Hungarian) radical right. However, since the 2014 elections, the party leadership has clearly shifted away from right-radicalism and has reinvented itself as the national-conservative, centre-right political actor to the left of the ruling Fidesz party. This move has led much of the radical and extreme electorate supporting the party to become disillusioned with the reframing of Jobbik’s ideological position. Given that it has been almost six years from the beginnings of this transition – simultaneously witnessing the rise of Our Homeland as the new radical right party – the ideological profile of Jobbik can be more attuned to centre-right than radical right politics in contemporary Hungary.

Radical Right Ecologism: “Green nationalism (Zöld nacionalizmus).” “It is unacceptable to ignore the national issues such as depopulation, the situation of the Gypsies, the sale of national wealth, or the tragic state of our environment!” - An excerpt from Jobbik’s website.

Christianism: “We are a socially sensitive Christian party; the pillars of our policies are the representation of the Hungarian people, Christian ethics, and social principles.” - An excerpt from Jobbik’s Declaration of Principles.

Ethno-Nationalism: “A state that is unable to guaranty the rule of law, that tolerates those living in ‘Jobbik’s political horizons are not defined by the borders of our country but by the borders of our nation. These latter borders do not coincide with the geographical boundaries of the Hungarian Republic […] Our fundamental principles are: thinking in terms of a nation of 15 million souls, establishing ‘protective power’ status for the motherland vis-à-vis Hungarian communities beyond the border, the cultural and economic reunification of the Hungarian nation…”” - An excerpt from Jobbik’s (2010) Political Programme.

Chauvinism: “Our goal is the reincorporation into the national body of both Western and Carpathian-basin Hungarians.” - An excerpt from Jobbik’s Foreign Affairs Political Programme.

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Our Homeland was founded in 2018 by a group of disfranchised Jobbik activists led by László Toroczkai, a well-known figure on the Hungarian radical right scene (he had founded HVIM, and was Jobbik’s mayor in Aszódi). In its founding declaration, the party calls for a radical change in the name of building an “organic society.” As its name suggests, Our Homeland also aims to protect the European “Northern Civilisation.” To date, the party has participated only in the 2019 European Parliament elections, winning 3.31% of the vote through a coalition with MIEP and The Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers, and Civic Party (totaling 113,529 votes). Much like Jobbik, in its more radical phase, Our Homeland Movement leads a network of violent and non-violent radical right movements, such as HVIM, The Outlaw Army, and other, smaller fractions and groupuscules. Our Homeland’s manifesto advocates compulsory military training, progressive taxation, canceling of loans in foreign currency, banning abortions, and investing in “high-budget films that would portray the glorious Hungarian history.” The party also has an ecological section called Green Homeland (Zöld Hazánk), which advocates for “the protection of not only human beings but also the Hungarian nature and wildlife.”

Radical Right Ecologism:
“Environmental protection is usually classified as a left-wing issue and therefore various anarchist movements are trying to monopolise it internationally. In many cases, left-wing parties that call themselves ‘green’ do not represent real environmental solutions, but their goal is to force right-wing governments into a green cloak or try to overthrow them.”

Anti-Roma Activism:
“Mi Hazánk is the only party ‘declaring the existence of Roma crime’.”

This figure was current at the time of writing in September 2020.

- An excerpt from Our Homeland European Parliamentary election programme.

- An excerpt from Our Homeland’s Ideological Declaration.

- An excerpt from Hungary Today.

- An excerpt from Our Homeland Post.

Historical Revisionism:
“A state that is unable to guarantee the rule of law, that tolerates those living in “Our long-term goal and mission must be to retrieve and protect our national self-determination, extending to the millions of our compatriots torn by unjust and unnatural borders.”

Ethno-nationalism:
“We want to create a strong, prosperous homeland and a united nation to serve as an example for other countries.”

Chauvinism:
“This mass of people will head towards an increasingly depopulated Europe. In this situation, Europe is threatened by two major groups. One is the system of bankers represented by French president Macron, which has an interest in transforming Europe into a mass of a mixed population of faceless consumers, and the other is Islamisation; Islam, which has been aggressively expanding ever since its birth.”

- An excerpt from Hungary Today.
The above survey of radical right groups has sought to demonstrate the diversity and eclecticism of the Hungarian radical right activism, both online and offline. Many of these organisations have established expansive contacts in international circles, particularly Jobbik, Our Homeland, and the Hungarian Legion. Although the overall impact of most organisations outlined in this report remains low, the number of incidents related to violent extremism – paired with the continuing historical revisionism in Hungary – signals the potential for a steep rise in support. As noted in the introduction, the position of the Hungarian radical right remains conditioned by the ruling Fidesz, which borrows some of the key narratives of the radical right outlined in this report.

These narratives are centered around the following: Anti-Immigration Activism, Anti-Muslim Populism, Anti-Roma Activism, Authoritarianism, Chauvinism, Christianism, Decadence, Ethno-Nationalism, Ethnopluralism, Historical Revisionism, Hungarian, Manicheanism, Monarchism, Pal ingenesis, Radical Right Ecologism, Turanism, White Supremacism, and Vigilantism. More broadly, these narratives can be summed up according to the following elements:

1. **Historical Revisionist Narrative**: i.e. calling for a return to the pre-Trianon borders of a ‘Greater Hungary’ in order to correct the injustices committed by the international elite. This is also associated with the ‘victimhood narrative’ in which the white, Hungarian majority is presented as endangered by other groups and ethnicities (see Nativist Narrative below).

2. **Nativist Narrative**: i.e. protecting an imagined ‘cultural unity’ in Hungary by rejecting the nefarious influence of outsider ethnic groups, as well as that of ‘domestic’ outsiders (Roma, Jews, Muslims, and foreign elites).

3. **Anti-Establishment Narrative**: i.e. the government hands too much power to global companies and organisations and is out of touch with the ‘people.’

4. **Ethno-Nationalist and Christianist Narrative**: i.e. Hungarian nation and Hungarians are invariably Christian. The ethnic and religious (Christian) identity of Hungary is under threat, elites are complicit in eradicating ‘Hungarianess.’

**SUMMARY**

The above survey of radical right groups has sought to demonstrate the diversity and eclecticism of the Hungarian radical right activism, both online and offline. Many of these organisations have established expansive contacts in international circles, particularly Jobbik, Our Homeland, and the Hungarian Legion. Although the overall impact of most organisations outlined in this report remains low, the number of incidents related to violent extremism – paired with the continuing historical revisionism in Hungary – signals the potential for a steep rise in support. As noted in the introduction, the position of the Hungarian radical right remains conditioned by the ruling Fidesz, which borrows some of the key narratives of the radical right outlined in this report.

These narratives are centered around the following: Anti-Immigration Activism, Anti-Muslim Populism, Anti-Roma Activism, Authoritarianism, Chauvinism, Christianism, Decadence, Ethno-Nationalism, Ethnopluralism, Historical Revisionism, Hungarian, Manicheanism, Monarchism, Pal ingenesis, Radical Right Ecologism, Turanism, White Supremacism, and Vigilantism. More broadly, these narratives can be summed up according to the following elements:

1. **Historical Revisionist Narrative**: i.e. calling for a return to the pre-Trianon borders of a ‘Greater Hungary’ in order to correct the injustices committed by the international elite. This is also associated with the ‘victimhood narrative’ in which the white, Hungarian majority is presented as endangered by other groups and ethnicities (see Nativist Narrative below).

2. **Nativist Narrative**: i.e. protecting an imagined ‘cultural unity’ in Hungary by rejecting the nefarious influence of outsider ethnic groups, as well as that of ‘domestic’ outsiders (Roma, Jews, Muslims, and foreign elites).

3. **Anti-Establishment Narrative**: i.e. the government hands too much power to global companies and organisations and is out of touch with the ‘people.’

4. **Ethno-Nationalist and Christianist Narrative**: i.e. Hungarian nation and Hungarians are invariably Christian. The ethnic and religious (Christian) identity of Hungary is under threat, elites are complicit in eradicating ‘Hungarianess.’
Perhaps as in no other European country, the counter-narratives and campaigns against the radical right in Hungary are conditioned by the hegemonic position of key actors, predominantly the right-wing populist Fidesz. In 2017 the Hungarian government, led by Fidesz, opened a ‘National consultation’ (Nemzeti Konzultáció) aimed at investigating the harmful effects of George Soros on the Hungarian economy and society. In keeping with previous attacks, this anti-Soros campaign bore a distinctive, albeit implicit, anti-Semitic tone, which was effectively built upon by radical right groups in Hungary and elsewhere. Much as these developments do not necessarily point to right-wing extremism per se, they create an atmosphere that fosters and normalises such narratives. In such settings, the space for developing and disseminating counter-narratives is rather limited by the existing monopoly Fidesz has over Hungarian media (e.g. the case of Index). In consequence, those attempting to counter the radical right, xenophobia, or anti-Semitism often end up being labelled as ‘left-liberal traitors’ and exposed to not only public criticism but outright threats.

Amidst these constraints, there have been numerous attempts at developing counter-narratives tailored to the Hungarian radical right. Existing programs focus on establishing normative standards, such as the Hungarian police’s Hate-Crime Protocol, which rests on the use of prejudice indicators, the monitoring of the activities of hate groups, and the use of communication supporting the victim. Other NGOs and think tanks have also pointed to the need for innovative approaches to radicalisation, accounting for the contextual complexities in addressing radicalisation. One research centre that deals with radical right narratives and developing counter-narratives is Political Capital, a domestic think tank. This organisation has suggested and implemented a number of practical strategies that can be applied in countering “prejudice, radicalisation, and extremism,” such as the educational packages on radicalism prevention in cooperation with the UK-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue and The Tim Parry Jonathan Ball Foundation for Peace, a guideline to counter extremist argumentation and the accounts by former members of these organisations.

One of the initiatives is also the “Do One Brave Thing,” an initiative aiming to engage youth (aged 18-26) to speak out against violent extremism and address both online propaganda and offline rhetoric in Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Romania. The organisation has also developed a count-
extremist speech, and prepared education material to raise awareness about the negative effects of radicalisation among high school students (Extreme Dialogue project). Examples of specific counter-narratives developed in these projects include the framing of “silent majority” against the “load minority,” as well as urging social activism through letters to public officials (e.g. mayors)⁴⁰ and placing an emphasis on the individual and their grievances instead of assuming totality and homogeneity of a radicalised group.

There are also other organisations engaging more or less directly with the subject of radicalisation (not necessarily right), such as Subjective Values Foundation, Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention, Diverse Youth Network, and CEU Center for Policy Studies. However, it is difficult to pinpoint the specific counter-narratives developed by these organisations and initiatives, as they are hardly ever framed as such. Another important element in radical right anti-Roma and anti-immigrant narratives is the idea of “no-go zones,” which projects hateful misinformation upon an entire ethnic group. Efforts here should be focused on intercultural dialogue, facilitating collaboration in order to jointly develop “solutions to local phenomena that contribute to the division and possible radicalisation of the community.”⁴¹

Greater focus in information and disinformation is also urgently needed in the Hungarian context. Attempts at countering radical right narratives must also be situated online, where a lot of radical right mobilisation occurs. Focusing on innovative communication strategies on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), but also permeating networks particularly popular in radical right circles (e.g. Telegram) is vital to identifying the motivations of those who are becoming radicalised. Perhaps surprisingly, and except for anti-Soros myths, the Hungarian radical right does not appear particularly inclined towards conspiracy theories (unlike their Slovakian counterparts, for instance).

Accordingly, it is vital to continuously revisit the normativity assumed in countering such narratives: what exactly “ouš” countering standpoints are. The perceived standards for a “good debate” are far from being monolithic, but this should not be discouraging: pluralism, after all, is an intrinsic value of democratic societies. However, assuming moral superiority in defence of pluralism is equally harmful to the prospects of countering radical right narratives. For instance, presenting aspects of human and identity rights (e.g. LGBTIQ⁴²) as “normal” or “natural,” thus using the very own frames of the radical right, may appear to be counterproductive in the increasingly far-rightward shift of Hungarian politics. What is necessary is shifting the debate through the operationalisation of different and intentionally loose narrative frames.

The transnational context is another central consideration in understanding the impact of radical right narratives in Hungary. Despite the tense relationship with radical right organisations in the region due to territorial disputes arising from the Trianon Treaty (most notably Slovakia, Romania, and Serbia), most Hungarian radical right organisations cooperate with various ultra-nationalist and even fascist organisations across Europe (most notably in Poland, Italy, and Croatia). For instance, first Jobbik and then Our Homeland Movement had an excellent relationship with the Polish National Movement (now a part of Konfederacja), attending the annual March of Independence (11th November) in Warsaw, which also presents an informal gathering of European nationalist groups.⁴³ At the same time, Légio Hungária maintains a close relationship with the Italian extreme right organisation Lotta Studentesca, as well as with the former members of The Carpathian Sich (Ukraine).⁴⁴ Likewise, HVIM and the Italian Casapound also have a long relationship established through informal, personal contacts. Identifying the patterns of interaction between these groups may also prove conducive to examining the interplay of different narratives operationalised by the radical right. When there is a better grasp of processes at stake and the actors underpinning them, there is a greater chance of realising the potential of developing counter-narratives.

The mere fact that even mainstream radical right parties, such as Our Homeland, attend international events (e.g. the Independence March in Poland) alongside representatives of neo-Nazi organisations from countries such as Poland or Germany, is important for situating some of these actors and their narratives.

Building on the wide array of radical right narrative examples and the patterns of their dissemination, below are some key counter-narratives that could be deployed to address radical right extremism in Hungary:

1. Anti-Immigration Counter-Narrative: geopolitical conceptions of a putative “clash of civilisations” have fed a dangerous myth of the “Hungarian island” surrounded by potential enemies. Combating these narratives through a different approach to history and sociology is a prerequisite in tackling widespread anti-immigrant sentiments. An example is focusing on microhistories instead of “national” histories, or learning history through (carefully selected) anecdotes and success stories rather than through the act of periodisation and historical events as revolutionary thresholds which immediately induced social change. Crucial here is identifying the positive contribution of migrants to society (including those who identify as Muslim): not only those who arrived in Hungary, but also Hungarians who became famous abroad, as “immigrants” are conducive to developing a successful counter-narrative.

2. Anti-Roma (‘Gypsy crime’) Counter-Narrative: the problem of essentialising an entire ethnic community can be addressed through fostering encounters with the representatives of the Roma community through school visits and similar cultural exchanges. It is important to identify the ‘positive’ examples: the contribution of the Roma community to Hungary. Moreover, it is important to emphasise the rather blurred lines of identity and the “cultural” boundaries of the Hungarian nation— as visible once taken to the level of more personal stories.

3. Historical Revisionism Counter-Narrative: while acknowledging the role of the Trianon Treaty as a difficult moment in Hungarian history, it is necessary to emphasise the problematic role of historical myths prolonging divisions, thus leading to a perpetual circle of regional disputes. The perceived injustice committed in the near or more distant past is a potent mobiliser for nationalist sentiments, and therefore it is important to situate such events in their historical contexts. This can be done through artistic forms (such as seeing how the world would look like if all countries were within its ‘Great borders’ form), but also through education and the emphasis on the role of context, both spatial and temporal in approaching these historical developments.

4. Ethno-nationalist Christian Counter-Narrative: ethno-nationalism has proven to be profoundly problematic in fuelling radical right narratives, as it monopolises the conception of the “people” which is relevant to both Hungarian nationalism and religion. The role of the Catholic Church is paramount in addressing these issues, albeit through public opinion pieces and interaction with the people on the ground. Here, it is very important to bear in mind the geography of these groups: the Hungarian radical right is particularly popular in rural areas and Eastern Hungary. Therefore, developing counter-narratives is ultimately dependent on targeting these geographic, no less than contextual, settings.

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⁴⁰ De One Brave Thing. Counter-Narratives Campaign. online at https://onebravething.eu/
⁴¹ Ibid.
⁴⁴ Do One Brave Thing. online at https://onebravething.eu/.
⁴⁵ 3.  Historical Revisionism Counter-Narrative: acknowledging the role of the Trianon Treaty as a difficult moment in Hungarian history, it is necessary to emphasise the problematic role of historical myths prolonging divisions, thus leading to a perpetual circle of regional disputes. The perceived injustice committed in the near or more distant past is a potent mobiliser for nationalist sentiments, and therefore it is important to situate such events in their historical contexts. This can be done through artistic forms (such as seeing how the world would look like if all countries were within its ‘Great borders’ form), but also through education and the emphasis on the role of context, both spatial and temporal in approaching these historical developments.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While it may be difficult to estimate the Hungarian radical right's trajectory, there can be little doubt that this phenomenon is here to stay. With the right-wing populist government firmly in power, any endeavour at developing counter-narratives to extremism in Hungary can easily fall into the often-deployed trap of being 'overly ideological' or 'endangering freedom of speech.' It is impossible to escape the world of ideologies when countering the radical right — what is important, however, is that the premises from which the radical-right ideology departs are at odds with a society that upholds the values of human dignity. When adjusting and framing such a (relatively basic) argument, one needs to keep in mind also the populism of the radical right groups amongst swathes of the younger population. The role of 'geographies' in the generation of resentment is also significant in driving radicalisation. The perceived symbolic (but also very material) division between Budapest and the rest of Hungary, the neglected rural population are all contributing to the Articulations of a 'stolen transition' point to alternative interpretations of the post-socialist era as not only characterised by democratisation and liberalisation, but also by rising inequalities and the inability to account for these problems amongst opinion-leaders (such as the press and academia). Thus, to construct plausible and successful counter-narratives to radical right extremism, it will not prove sufficient to just copy strategies from other countries with notably divergent contexts.

For instance, developing protocols and establishing verifiable standards through 'measurements of political violence,' establishing thresholds of the 'acceptable' radicalism through a set of indicators that can be scored may seem a good way to address the issue of radicalisation (and the radical right in particular), but these also run the risk of falling short of sufficiently addressing the grey zones of these processes. However, what is even more important is that these standards and procedures become a part of institutional memory — the mundane practices through which organisations and institutions operate, enforced, and continuously revisited. For this to happen, Hungary will have to adhere to the rule of law within the European Union. The visibly tense relationship between the current Hungarian government and the EU may render future 'national' advancements in this field inapplicable to the EU criteria, particularly with regard to the independent judiciary and respect for human rights.

As stressed throughout this report, the political situation in Hungary renders holistic approaches to radical right extremism an enormous challenge. The role of authorities, such as the police and judiciary, remains paramount in preventing the dangers of radical right political violence. In contrast with other European countries, for example, 'lone-wolf' actors are uncommon in Hungary, as there is nearly always some affiliation with one of the main right-wing extremist groups. To counter the mainstreaming of the radical right, it is not enough to rely on the repressive apparatus of the state but to be prepared to address the subtle nuances in framing which lead to normalisation of exclusionary ideas and principles, such as that of 'cultural' racism and xenophobia. Here, the role of education becomes ever more important, as the basic idea of tolerance for other views becomes significantly affected by the need to address perceived (and some very real) injustices. The emphasis upon community programmes and greater interaction of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds is a prerequisite to fully embracing Hungary as a multicultural yet complex and delicate mixture of traditions, cultures, and histories.

With this in mind, combating violent extremism from radical right actors requires a far better preliminary understanding of how these organisations operate 'on the ground.' Given the organisational networks presented in this report, we can see how radical right actors have been able to attain significant grassroots successes. As many of their extremist narratives were made palatable to a broader electoral base, there is likewise a need for non-governmental organisations (political parties, educational institutions, and civil society) countering radical right extremism to be accessible to smaller communities and non-urban areas. The troubling distinction between the realities of Budapest and the rest of Hungary continues to haunt Hungarian society concerning a potential rise in radical right violence, paralleling the anti-elitist and chauvinist sentiments that are fuelled by the emphasis on urban-rural demarcations. What seems to be missing incountering radicalisation in Hungary today are (real) alternatives for members of radical right organisations. The politics of alternative and, even more importantly, hope, need to be developed in recognition of the inevitably complex nature of identities. At the same time, such politics require careful navigation through the existing political rifts — ex nihil nihil fit.
