

Proposed U.S.-Hungarian Collective Security Goals for Future Regional Stability

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Executive Summary

The election of President Donald Trump to a second term presents an opportunity to the United States and Hungary to reorient their bilateral relationship towards issues concerning mutual interests in regional security policy. The affected sectors of energy, industry, telecommunications, and business all stand to gain from future policy proposals. Previously, these affairs faced obstacles and challenges resulting from punitive measures enacted by the Biden administration such as expired tax treaties, the current chaotic nature of the Russo-Ukraine War, and a degradation in the tone of public diplomacy which led to estrangement between Washington and Budapest. With the advent of a second Trump administration however, the strong personal relationship between the U.S. and Hungarian heads of state offers potential for the development of policies that ensure the interests of both nations are addressed.

Currently, the greatest challenge to the collective security of the U.S. and Hungary is the lack of a common strategic understanding that addressed each country's concerns regarding regional stability. For Budapest, the primary issues are the collateral risk to Hungary and Central and Eastern Europe resulting from ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War, preserving stability in the Balkans amidst potential EU economic expansion into the region, and the growing tensions between the United States and China over global influence and security. Meanwhile, Washington's concerns include regional Russian energy dominance, telecommunications and information security with regards to Chinese investments into Hungarian state infrastructure, and future security cooperation with China such as the recently signed joint policing MOU.

Three key elements will serve as the foundation for restoring a friendly spirit between Budapest and Washington regarding security: a clear energy security strategy, an agreed-upon approach regarding Chinese investment and cybersecurity assurance, and a cooperative approach on ensuring regional stability. Developing a joint strategy based on these three elements ensures commitment from both parties due to mutual benefit of both nations and dismisses the divisive diatribe of the previous relationship under the Biden administration. Each element ensures that the concerns of both countries are addressed and results in benefits for the relationship and the larger region. This report will focus upon these key elements and what is necessary for their fruition and maintenance.

The Current State of the U.S.-Hungarian Relationship

The U.S.-Hungarian relationship is one that has shown more confrontation than cooperation for the past four years. The primary criticisms repeatedly pushed by the Biden Administration focused on continued solicitation of Russian energy, cooperation with China on critical infrastructure such as telecommunications. There were also claims of “democratic backsliding” from alleged corruption and restrictions on personal freedom such LGBTQ representation and media independence. These divergences in outlook and policy by Hungary and the United States have resulted in a trade of public spats between official high-level leadership figures of both countries.

These criticisms, and the ensuing confrontation between Washington and Budapest, have been very public in their presentation through social media spats and statements to the media. The U.S. Ambassador under the Biden Administration, David Pressman, was the most visual executor of this tone, with regular back and forth spats with Hungarian officials over social media as well as in official foreign policy actions. The Biden Administration, and its allies in the European Union, have focused on securing Hungarian political cooperation with its tenets through coercive means that primarily targeted financial mediums. Such cases have included allowing the U.S.-Hungarian double taxation treaty to expire in response to Budapest’s objections to a global tax minimum by Washington.¹ Meanwhile, the European Union leadership has pressured Budapest through withholding EU funds entitled to the nation as a member state, over what the European Commission claims to be 17 “democratic reforms.” Issues that Brussels has claimed to be concerned over include “judiciary independence, corruption, and human freedoms.” By the end of 2024, the funds that the commission will have held back from Hungary will total to over one billion Euro.² This spat between Hungary and the United States, along with the rest of Europe has resulted in a disharmony that malicious actors have taken advantage of such as Russia and China.

Russian and Chinese investments and loans have been welcomed by Hungarian leadership both as a means to make up for lost capital, along with the resulting rising public debt and budget deficit of 6.7 percent of the GDP,³ due to disagreements with the West. It also has served as a method to balance influence from Washington and Brussels. These investments have primarily been directed towards critical infrastructure, to include energy, telecommunications, manufacturing, and logistics. While most of the rest of Europe has decoupled from Russian energy sources in response to the Russo-Ukraine War, and Chinese investment capital over fears of security risks, Hungary has taken the opposite approach on both

accounts. Budapest has continued to court Russian energy for the sake of stabilizing prices and markets. It has also criticized the decoupling and de-risking actions taken by both the U.S. and the European Union regarding Chinese investments, stating that such actions drive the world towards a cold war between blocs in which NATO is starting to look like an “anti-China bloc.”⁴ This fracture in Western harmony has presented opportunity for the introduction of Chinese and Russian influence into the Central European region. The result is an unstable security situation both in the present, as is the case with fallout from the Russo-Ukraine War, and potentially the future with regards to NATO integrity.

The restoration of stability requires a joint strategic outlook concerning three key elements: energy security, a renewed focus on respect towards national sovereignty, and ensuring regional stability with concerns to critical infrastructure and territorial integrity. In each of these issues, both the U.S. and Hungary have interests that impact the stability of the Central and Eastern European region.

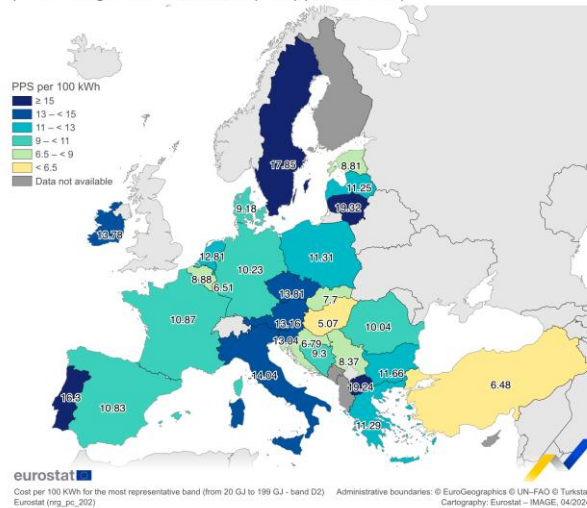
The First Element — Energy Security

Energy affairs has become one of the cornerstone issues of influence and stability in present-day Europe; with the Russo-Ukraine War exposing the danger of over-reliance on Russian energy sources. The support for Russian-European energy infrastructure ventures, such as the Nord Stream pipeline, originated from the affordable prices as a result of Russia’s proximity. In 2018, President Donald Trump had advocated for Europe to favor U.S. imports instead, arguing that the while more expensive, the deal with Moscow that was orchestrated by the Germans, would ultimately turn Berlin into “Russia’s captive.”⁵ Five years later in 2022, President Trump was proven right. Once the war began, the energy dominance Russia held over Europe’s nations proved to be an Achilles heel. Following the political and trade divorces between Moscow and Europe’s various capitals, energy costs saw a dramatic rise due to the cut from Russian LNG and oil, which led to fears of potential rationing. However, Hungary diverged from the trend of ending reliance on Russia and instead continued the relationship, much to the chagrin of the rest of Europe and the U.S. The motivation for Budapest’s continued relationship with Russia was based in realism rather than in the ideological foundations of the European Union to deny Russia funds for its war campaign. As a result, Hungary maintained a certain level of stability when it came to its energy prices. In 2023, at the height of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Hungary had some of the lowest rates for gas, which was

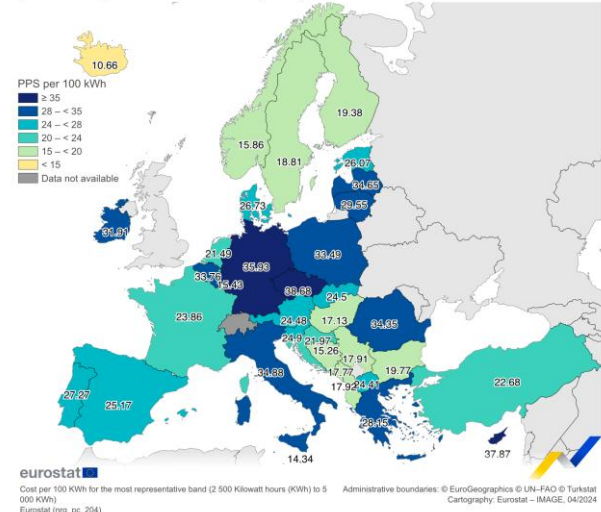
calculated at 3.3 Euro per 100 kilowatts, and electricity was 11.3 Euro for 100 kilowatts. Both prices were well below the average rate for European Union nations, as noted by Eurostat below.

While Hungary suffered from political backlash and isolation from the rest of the European

Gas prices for household consumers, 2023 second semester
(Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) per 100kWh)



Electricity prices for household consumers, 2023 second semester
(Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) per 100kWh)



Union and the Biden administration, it was able to maintain a measure of control over its energy affairs while the rest of the continent faced chaos. Russia also maintained a certain level influence thanks to its position in terms of sowing chaos into the relations of its adversaries. This situation demonstrates the impact of energy as a tool of influence and stability. It is a lesson that the new American President has shown an intention to be focused on in the future.

Before the war began, President Trump had warned German Chancellor Merkel of the dangers that hung over Europe from its over-reliance on Russian energy during his first term. The issue is still a priority for the President today. A key tenant of Trump's second term in the White House has been the exporting of American energy to Europe. In particular, the announced establishment of the National Energy Council by Trump on November 15th last year included a special reference to European affairs: "The Radical Left's War on American Energy has hurt our Allies by forcing them to buy from our adversaries, who in turn use those profits to fund Wars and Terror. Energy dominance will allow us to seek energy to our friends, including all European nations, which will make the world a safer place."⁶ The specific attention paid to Europe, and the situation of "forcing them to buy from our enemies," proves Trump's focus on the continent's reliance on international energy imports and the intention to secure stability

through a sound strategy. It is through this strategy that the United States and Hungary can find common ground.

The primary motivation for Hungary's continuance of normalized Russian relations is through energy exports. A U.S. proposition to replace lost energy imports at an equal or cheaper price would likely influence Hungarian leadership in changing their energy deals from Russia to the United States, thus securing Washington's influence and further pressuring Moscow to pursue negotiations. LNG options specifically would most likely require subsidies or similar accessories to be financially enticing for Hungarian leadership to switch from Russian sources to American ones. What Budapest gains from such a position is continued energy security as well as ending a point of contention with its security allies.

Second Element — Collective Regional Security and Stability

The relationship between the United States and Hungary has the potential of fraying with regards to common security outlook. While both nations recognize the threat of regional destabilization emanating from the Russo-Ukraine War, there are also issues that each nation recognizes that the other does not share. The primary concerns of Washington have been the continued Russian energy exports and accompanying influence as well as increasing Chinese investment into local critical infrastructure such as telecommunications. Meanwhile, Hungary continues to monitor the Balkans region with concern with issues such as growing regional instability. The issue at hand for the U.S.-Hungarian relationship is the hostile dynamic that was perpetrated largely on the part of the Biden administration, resulting in the contemporary estrangement between the two countries.

Hungary's continued energy relations and dialogue concerning the war with Russia was the most potent point of discontent between Washington and Budapest previously under Biden. To U.S. policymakers, Hungary's position of attempting negotiations with Moscow for an immediate ceasefire has been at best a disposition of naïveté and at worst a sympathy for Putin.⁷ Meanwhile, the Hungarian leadership classified the U.S. strategy as one that perpetuates war that has the potential to bring ruin to Europe. In the case of Chinese investments, both the Biden and Trump administrations view that such ventures are potential security risks while Hungarian leadership has expressed the viewpoint that such investments are more of a benefit to Europe without acknowledging a risk in security. In both cases, Hungary seems to regard the conflicts as having more to do with geopolitical competition between the U.S. and either Russia or China while Europe is caught in between rather than a collective threat to both the U.S. and Europe.

The situation with Russia demonstrates a common goal between Hungary and the U.S. of resolving conflict but having different roadmaps to the goal. With China, there is a complete divergence in goal regarding whether to embrace that nation or to push it away.

The Biden Administration's strategy had two key weaknesses when it came to security affairs: lack of a clear end-state vision when it came to the Russo-Ukraine conflict, and no strategy for replacing lost investments should Budapest eject Russian and Chinese investments as Washington desires. Both of these flaws need to be addressed in order to secure Hungarian support for U.S. intentions. Ensuring regional stability requires that policy be oriented towards two key objectives that both Budapest and Washington will very likely agree on: the first objective being ensuring that conflict does not escalate between Russian and Ukraine while the second objective is to contain and diminish Russian and Chinese influence, thus preventing the potential seeds of another conflict.

Resolving the Russo-Ukraine Conflict

President Trump has made clear that a primary U.S. goal in Europe will be to see an end to the conflict, which in turn raises the question of what the end will look like. Two primary elements have been at the forefront of what an answer will entail: Ukraine's relationship with NATO, and the status of Russian occupied territories in eastern Ukraine. Ensuring that the war does not become active again requires a balance between deterring and placating Moscow. Vladimir Putin's government has made clear through peace offerings to Kyiv that Moscow seeks to maintain control over the regions it has occupied and annex them into Russia while also demanding Ukraine forgo membership into NATO.⁸ Ukrainian leadership has responded with refusing to meet these demands on account of nothing ensuring their security in the future. Each side is in need of a demonstrable gain to justify the conflict to their respective populations, which have suffered in blood and finances for the war's execution. Should either side of the conflict gain nothing at all, peace will very likely not be appealing to the leadership.

Additionally, the recent proposal put forward by President Trump for Ukraine to utilize its rare mineral resource deposits to repay U.S. war contributions acts as a kind of security guarantee for Kyiv due to the presence of American companies and workers that would execute the mining of these resources.⁹ As the President explained himself, Russia would be less likely to attack due to the possibility of Americans becoming collateral, thereby bringing U.S. forces into the conflict. Additionally, these mineral resources are considered strategically important to the United States for their application in defense and other technological developments, which

would make maintaining Ukraine's sovereignty a matter of U.S. national security. Given Hungary's geographical proximity to Ukraine, Budapest would be able to support such through logistics, energy, and other related sectors. Such investments would also demand some sort of security measure to ensure regional stability.

Given these circumstances, three likely scenarios exist for resolving the conflict:

- The first and most likely scenario is that a peacekeeping force of primarily European troops with American support is deployed to Ukraine to enforce a ceasefire of peace agreement. The Korean Demilitarized Zone is a comparable example to what may develop between sovereign Ukraine and the Russian-occupied eastern regions. This contingent being a non-NATO force, and European rather than American-led, would be the most politically acceptable to Russian President Putin for Russian security interests while also ensuring Ukraine's territorial security as Kyiv desires.
- The second most likely scenario is Russia to return occupied territories to Ukrainian control in exchange for assurance that it does not join NATO. This would ensure that Russia has a border state that is neutral and Ukraine restores full territorial integrity. While this would meet Russia's demand that Ukraine not join NATO, giving up occupied territories would be politically dangerous to President Putin as they are the assets that justify the financial and human cost endured by the Russian people and military.
- The third and least likely scenario is that Russia maintains control of the occupied territories and Ukraine joins NATO to deter further incursions by Russian forces. While ensuring Ukrainian security, this scenario is the least likely one due to the fact President Putin has previously stating that is unacceptable for Russian interests, thus making an active conflict between NATO and Russia very likely.

In each of these scenarios, there is a clear sacrifice and benefit to each party and demonstrates to the world that engaging in conflict for the sake of political or territorial gain will not result in a net benefit for the aggressive party. Should Russia has all of its demands

pass while Ukraine has none, the U.S. will likely have to contend with other conflicts around the world that seek to replicate Russia's results should their territorial gains be accepted without serious consequences.

Hungary's potential role in this matter is acting as a mediator for the conflict which would likely be accepted by both sides considering its status as a NATO member state as well as demonstrating the ability to gain access to Vladimir Putin for negotiations on both the conflict itself as well as other affairs such as energy. Putin has publicly demonstrated a level of cordiality with Hungary, further supporting the political weight Hungary would potentially have in discussions. Given this status, Hungary has the potential to support the process as a good faith actor which will likely increase the confidence of Putin in the viability of negotiations.

The China Situation — Differing Viewpoints

The greatest consequence of the Hungary's alienation from the European Union and other western platform of dialogue has been the opportunity presented to China to invest in Hungary for manufacturing and logistics as well as critical infrastructure. The new Trump administration, which has clearly communicated to the world its wariness of China's global ambitions, is now faced with a nation that has utilized Chinese finances and knowledge in its telecommunications, manufacturing, and logistics infrastructure as well as begun to integrate them into law enforcement and other security functions. The recent signing of a policing agreement between Budapest and Beijing demonstrates the level of cooperation that has developed between the two countries.¹⁰ In official releases by the Hungarian government, the relationship is characterized as being one that is focused on Chinese tourism and local communities concerning language barriers. However, the combination of telecommunications infrastructure being built by Chinese firms, such as the national emergency communications management system constructed by Huawei, and this policing agreement has led to concerns about potential compromises to Hungary's security and defense structures. Foreign Affairs Minister Péter Szijjártó has insisted that no such risks exist, and that to turn away Chinese investment would be "economic suicide." It is this divergence in perspective that makes developing a common approach to China more difficult than that of dealing with the Russo-Ukraine War. In the case with Russia, in which a common goal of peace is clearly desired by both Washington and Budapest but how to achieve it differs. Meanwhile, the situation with China demonstrates a difference in not only the threat perception, but also what the desired

outcome is for Washington and Budapest. Reconciling this divergence relies upon a shared understanding of how each party views China's and what is at stake for each country.

For the United States, what is at risk is regional security and information assurance. For Hungary, what is at risk is its economic development. Currently, China is the top foreign direct investor into Hungary over taking South Korea, Germany, and the United States. This plays into the American fears of security compromises should China's money and influence remain. The new U.S. political leadership is likely to gain a stronger, warmer relationship with Budapest due to its conservative orientation in culture and governance. However, both American conservative and liberal political dispositions have expressed concern over security and civil rights issues. The presence of Chinese-built telecommunications infrastructure and now a memorandum of understanding expiating between the security agencies of Hungary and China are pieces of evidence both sides cite as support for their concerns as part of a previously established malicious pattern by China. U.S. politicians as well as international defence and security experts point to incidences of Chinese hackers targeting European governance platforms, using Chinese-built infrastructure to spy on African Union officials in Addis Ababa Ethiopia,¹¹ and other similar incidences. Meanwhile, Hungary fears China's departure for the loss of capital investment into its economy and the technological benefits. For the United States to successfully negate the potential risks posed by Chinese investments and security relations, both the threat requires clear detailing and the potential losses the Hungarians may incur must be addressed. With public discourse from Budapest being one that characterizes the stand off between the U.S. and China as being only economic or influential in nature, it is strongly implied that Washington and Budapest do not have a common understanding of the situation. A closer bilateral security relationship necessitates sharing information that ensures both parties operate from a common understanding. With the primary concerns of the United States being collective security in nature, the U.S. should approach Budapest with the disposition of ensuring security that doesn't necessarily require the sacrifice of economic relations and prosperity. Furthermore, a strategy that compensates for potential losses from Hungary's distancing from China would further relieve the burden on Budapest while emphasizing that such a strategy would ensure Hungary's collective security with the rest of Europe and the United States.

Third Element — Respect for Sovereignty, Focus on Cooperative Stability

The characterization of policy debate between the United States and Hungary, on the part of Budapest, has been one of sovereignty versus over-reaching global powers. A combination of the European Union's over-reaching bureaucracy and the Biden Administration's heavy-handed approach to force Hungarian support on international political objectives have made its leadership wary of global powers and cooperating with them. Over the past two years, Hungary has seen its own participation forced into numerous international ventures, such as a global tax plan concocted by the U.S. and the European Union, through coercive methods. In 2022, the "Global Minimum Tax" was envisioned by Washington and Brussels leadership figures as a 15% taxation on all corporations in the United States and European union member states. However, the Political Director of the Hungarian Prime Minister Balasz Orban penned an Op-Ed to the Wall Street Journal in which he detailed how the plan could devastate Central and Eastern European nations, in which low taxes was one of their greatest assets in attracting business to help develop their post-Soviet economies.¹² Additionally, this scheme came at a time when the global economy was not doing well and a war was on Europe border between Ukraine and Russia. The response by the Biden administration was to pressure the Hungarian into accepting the tax program without addressing or acknowledging their concerns.

The result of actions taken such as these has been that Hungary has come to regard the U.S. and the European Union as seeking to infringe on Hungarian sovereignty for the sake of imposing their own will. This disposition has been expressed through public statements in which Prime Minister Viktor Orban has characterized then Ambassador Pressman as a "Press man" and a "colonial overlord." The public spat between Pressman and Orban has also spilled into other issues such as LGBTQ rights and representation affairs, which have been a personal issue for Pressman with him being a homosexual himself. The push back by the Hungarian government over LGBTQ was characterized by Brussels and the Biden administration as totalitarian and bigoted, with former Dutch Prime Minister and current NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte claiming that Hungary "should have no place in the European Union" with its stance on the issue.¹³ The U.S. and European Union have also leveled accusations of corruption, with the outgoing Biden administration going as far as to enact sanctions against Antal Rogan, who serves as the Minister of the Prime Minister's office.¹⁴ The European Union has also continued to threaten punitive measures such as enacting Article 5 of the European Union Treaty, which would suspend rights of Hungary as a member state, in addition to the

funds it has withheld over claims of “democratic backsliding.” While the changing of U.S. political leadership will have positive impact on Budapest’s regard for U.S. leadership, how the Trump administration approaches the matter will still have weight as to how much Hungary is willing to cooperate. The transactional nature of the current Hungary-China relationship offers an insight to what potential strategies may work to win Hungarian support for U.S. interests in the region: offering a path for shared benefit and clearly contributing to regional stability.

The key to restoring Hungarian faith and engagement with the United States is through increased bilateral engagement on issues concerning mutual interest rather than ideological orientation. In short, a more realist ethos is needed for successful dialogue and cooperation. To its credit, the new Trump administration has signaled its intention to focus the relationship on practical issues and review the outgoing Biden Administration’s “vindictive measures” against Hungary, while prioritizing energy and defense affairs, as signaled in the first phone call between U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Hungarian Foreign Affairs Minister Péter Szijjártó.¹⁵ In terms of security and energy, a cooperation between Hungary and the United States would not only be beneficial to these two nations directly, but to the wider region.

In the case of energy affairs, Hungary has made strides in remaking the regional landscape when it comes to relations. While Budapest has been criticized for its continued relations with Russia despite the war in Ukraine, it has also developed new platforms and relationships to diversify its portfolio, as well as those of other nations. For example, endeavors to develop new infrastructure include projects the Black Sea Submarine Cable, which is a submarine cable transferring energy from the Caucasus to the Eastern Europe. Ventures such as this have been a self-initiation on the part of small nations such as Hungary, Romania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and others in an effort to establish energy security following the Russo-Ukraine conflict and its impact on energy affairs.¹⁶ Hungary’s efforts have included new pipeline efforts for both renewable and non-renewable sources through its relations in Central Asia and Turkey due to the historical and cultural connection from former states of the Ottoman Empire as well as Turkey’s efforts to counter Russian influence. Additionally, Hungary has also signed an MOU with China to explore opportunities in nuclear energy source. Hungary’s openness to pursue alternative energy sources and relations demonstrates not only an opportunity for American energy to pursue new ventures in the area, as Secretary Rubio’s call to Minister Szijjarto pressed upon, but also one to further stabilize the region.

Joint Strategy and Ventures in Energy Needs

Partnering with Hungary to export American energy throughout the Central and Eastern European region would intertwine the future success and influence of both nations. The primary benefit for the U.S. in implementing such strategy would be countering the influence of adversarial nations such as Russia and China while for Hungary the primary benefit would be a reversal of its deteriorating European relations regarding energy affairs. While Hungary became a political pariah among the left-leaning political leadership of the European Union when the Russo-Ukraine War broke out in 2022, the politics of Europe and America have now changed to a much more favorable landscape for Prime Minister Orban and the country. Along with the election of President Donald Trump in the United States, Europe has also seen a political wave of conservatism sweep the continent with Germany, Italy, France, and number of other European nations election conservative parties to power.¹⁷ This change of political winds provides Hungary a more receptive environment to its interests and efforts. Budapest's designs for the Caucuses demonstrates its desire for moving itself and Europe beyond the Russia-dominated energy regime. Should it further this strategy through importing American energy resources, Hungary will see its influence and status as a broker of European energy needs continue to grow. Cooperation with the United States through importing and facilitating American energy would mutually benefit both nations and further solidifies their bilateral and multilateral relations.

Joint Strategy and Ventures in Defense Needs

Budapest's role as a hub of security strategy and resources also is a position that benefits both the United States and Hungary and would be strengthened through closer bilateral relations. President Trump's goal for Europe to shoulder greater responsibility for their own defense needs through NATO is likely to find a pathway to realization through stronger cooperation with Hungary. Budapest's regional defense efforts have included acting as a major supporting nation in multiple peacekeeping in Central and Eastern Europe such as the KFOR initiative in Kosovo¹⁸ as well as leading the aerial defence of the Baltics in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.¹⁹ Additionally, it has also been building its military industrial base with the most prominent example being the Rheinmetall factory that manufactures the Lynx fighting vehicle.²⁰ Budapest also has courted a number of small arms manufacturers to establish factories in Hungary. Such assets will be highly valuable to NATO.

Hungary's efforts at regional peacekeeping and advocacy of ensuring peace in case of the Russo-Ukraine conflict are, in part, motivated by the existence of ethnic Hungarian communities outside of its national borders in Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia, as detailed on the map below.

Map. The borders of the Kingdom of Hungary before World War I overlaid on a contemporary map of the region, with areas where Hungarians currently constitute the majority highlighted



Sources: B. Nagy, *Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia felosztása*, www.1914-1918.btk.mta.hu; national censuses of 2001 (Ukraine) and 2011 (Romania, Serbia, Slovakia).

The existence of these communities is a motivator for Hungary to invest long-term relationships and assets throughout the region to ensure Budapest wields a level of influence to protect these communities in times of crisis. As an example, Hungary's contentions with Ukraine and the rest of Europe and the U.S. over the war with Russia was in part motivated by the Hungarian minority populations living eastern Ukraine, which Budapest feared would be drawn into the conflict. It also feared Ukrainian cultural policies, such as Hungarian language education, towards this minority community in the midst of this war due to Ukrainian efforts to bolster its national identity and patriotism in the face of enemy that sought to destroy it.²¹ Because of this inherent interest in ensuring regional stability, the United States developing regional policy that utilizes Hungary as a key partner would ensure both a regional partner with local interests and assets as well as one that at a direct interest in ensuring success. What Hungary gains from the relationship is an increase in international and regional legitimacy in pursuing their interests which coincide with those of the United States as well as potential resource and strategy support. This material and political aid, along with the more friendly

cultural sympathies that the conservative Trump administration espouses, will very likely incentivize Budapest to invest and maintain its relationship with the United States.

Conclusion

The increased prominence of Central and Eastern Europe over Russian territorial ambitions as well as the security risks with Chinese investments into local critical infrastructure necessitates a comprehensive and clear U.S. strategy that incorporates local partnerships. The key to success will be forgoing the focus on intrusive bureaucracy and social issues that estranged the Biden administration and European Union leadership from Hungary's political leadership. Instead, placing prominence on hard geopolitical issues such as regional energy assurance, security cooperation, and approaching it from a disposition of a partnership rather than attempting to dictate orders, will make the best use of the initial fondness the new U.S. administration enjoys with the Hungarian leadership. Success will depend upon the strategy incorporating opportunities for partnership with mutual benefits that entice cooperation rather than dictate it. American success be synonymous with Hungarian success will lay the foundation for a long-term partnership that ensures future stability for both nations and the wider region.

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