

A photograph of Donald Trump and Viktor Orbán standing in front of the White House. Both men are wearing dark blue suits and are giving thumbs up. Trump is on the left, wearing a red tie, and Orbán is on the right, wearing an orange tie. The background shows the White House entrance with its iconic columns and arched doorway.

U.S.-Hungarian Relations in Trump's Second Term: Prospects and Promises

Paul du Quenoy



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Image: Picture of U.S. President Donald J. Trump and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister of Hungary.



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About the Author



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Abstract

This policy brief explores the swift revitalization of U.S.-Hungarian relations following Donald J. Trump's return to the American presidency in January 2025. Under the Biden administration, bilateral ties deteriorated due to ideological divergences, diplomatic friction, and punitive policy measures. By contrast, Trump's second term has inaugurated what both governments herald as a "golden age" of cooperation, grounded in mutual respect, realist principles, and shared national-conservative values.

The brief traces developments in four key areas of alignment—Ukraine policy, defense cooperation, migration control, and trade—while acknowledging potential friction over Hungary's economic ties to China and Russia. It also offers practical recommendations to deepen the bilateral partnership, including diplomatic appointments, cultural exchange, direct air travel, and the conclusion of a comprehensive economic agreement. With Hungary emerging as Washington's most reliable partner in Europe, the brief argues that the new transatlantic alignment may serve as a model for rethinking U.S. alliances in an era of geopolitical competition and ideological realignment.

Introduction

Donald J. Trump's reelection to a second term in office in November 2024 augured a reevaluation of U.S.-Hungarian relations. In 2023, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who visited Trump at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach during the election campaign and at other times when Trump was out of office, called the U.S. President "the man who can save the Western world."¹ Trump returned the compliment, saying, "There's nobody that's better, smarter, or a better leader than Viktor Orbán."²

During Joe Biden's presidency, Hungary was vilified for alleged lapses in democratic governance, supposed corruption, a foreign policy based on realistic assessments of national interests, and a reluctance to accept the structures and mores of neoliberal globalist politics.³ At the same time, the "Hungarian model" of "illiberal democracy"

emerged as an inspiration and interlocutor for national populist movements worldwide, including the "national conservative" ideology now ascendant on the American Right. American conservatism shares many of the values that Orbán's government has advanced in recent years, particularly in the active exercise of state power, but also in social and cultural values.⁴ Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts has said, "modern Hungary is not just a model for conservative statecraft but *the* model."⁵

This paper will review the renovation of U.S.-Hungarian relations during the first six months of Trump's second term. It seeks to identify areas of positive collaboration between the United States and Hungary, identify potential challenges, and make recommendations for further progress and strategic partnership.

¹ Hülsemann, Laura. "Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán: 'Ukraine's Victory Is a Lie,' Says Trump Is West's Only Hope." *Politico Europe*, August 30, 2023. <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungarian-pm-viktor-orban-donald-trump-ukraine-victory-over-russia-lie/>.

² CNN Staff. "Trump Hosts Far-Right Putin Ally Viktor Orbán at Mar-a-Lago." CNN, March 8, 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/03/08/politics/trump-orban-mar-a-lago/>.

³ See, for only one example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/sep/18/hungary-us-ambassador-david-pressman-orban-west>.

⁴ See Thibault Gibelin, *How Viktor Orbán Plays To Win: The Resurgence of Central Europe* (Academica Press, 2024). For an early survey, see Elizabeth Zerofsky, "How the American Right Fell in Love With Hungary," *New York Times*, October 19, 2021. For an alarmist view of the relationship by an anti-Trump conservative, see Jacob Heilbrunn, "Behind the American Right's Fascination With Viktor Orbán," *Atlantic*, August 27, 2022.

⁵ Orbán, Tamás. "'Politicians Don't Like Doing the Right Thing' — Interview with Kevin Roberts." *Hungarian Conservative*, December 5, 2022. <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/interview/politicians-dont-like-doing-the-right-thing-interview-with-kevin-roberts/>.



A New Beginning: Welcome to the “Golden Age” of U.S.-Hungarian Relations

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was the only European Union head of government to favor Donald J. Trump's 2024 reelection openly. Orbán has suggested that Trump was “cheated” out of reelection in 2020, and that Trump's departure from office and replacement by Joe Biden the following January ushered in “four bitter years” in U.S.-Hungarian relations, which were “painful and full of failure.”⁶

Orbán foresaw improved relations between Hungary and the United States in the hours leading up to President Trump's reelection on November 5, 2024. As the voting results came in, Orbán posted that Trump was “on the road to a beautiful victory. It's in the bag!”⁷ In an address to the American Chamber of Commerce in Budapest on November 22, Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó announced that “with the upcoming inauguration of Donald Trump, Hungarian-American relations may again enter a new dimension, a ‘golden age’ after the ‘hostile relations’ of recent years and the current low point,” reached during the Biden presidency.⁸ On January 17, 2025, just three days before Trump's second inauguration, Orbán used the same phrase, saying in his regular weekly address on Kossuth Radio that he expected a “fantastic, great golden age” in relations between the two countries once Trump returned to office.⁹ In his address to CPAC Hungary in May 2025, Orbán reveled in what he called “a real civilizational turnaround” that occurred because

“Donald Trump has won ... He has given hope back to the world. We are no longer drowning in a sea of woke. We are not overrun by migrants. He gave us back the hope of a normal life. He gave us back the hope of peace ... Congratulations to those who were there for this fantastic American victory. It is the greatest comeback the Western world has ever seen: the one, big, beautiful comeback.”¹⁰

U.S. officials have enthusiastically embraced the concept of the new “golden age.” Robert Palladino, a career diplomat who served as a State Department and White House official during Trump's first term, arrived at the American embassy in Budapest as interim chargé d'affaires on March 7, 2025. Palladino has hailed the “golden age” concept on multiple occasions, including in an interview at the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs shortly after his arrival.¹¹ At the U.S. embassy's Independence Day celebrations in Budapest on July 2, 2025, Palladino praised “the enduring strength of U.S.–Hungarian relations” and confidently predicted a “bright future ahead.”¹² Szijjártó, who spoke at the event immediately after the interim chargé, declared that “stable foundations have been laid for a new golden age in U.S.-Hungarian relations.”¹³ According to U.S. State Department bulletins, Szijjártó has met or spoken with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio at least twice since Rubio entered office in January, among other high-level contacts, with the goal of identifying points of common action.¹⁴

⁶ “Orban: Trump's Victory Was Stolen from Him in 2020, Now He Will Begin a New Era.” *Republika*, January 17, 2025. <https://english.republika.mk/world/orban-trumps-victory-was-stolen-from-him-in-2020-now-he-will-begin-a-new-era/>.

⁷ Chastand, Jean-Baptiste. “Orban Rejoices at Trump's Election: ‘On the Road to a Beautiful Victory.’” *Le Monde*, November 6, 2024. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/11/06/orban-rejoices-at-trump-s-election-on-the-road-to-a-beautiful-victory_6731809_4.html.

⁸ Insight Hungary. “US–Hungarian Relations to Enter a ‘Golden Age,’ Orban's Foreign Minister Says.” *Insight Hungary*, November 22, 2024. <https://insighthungary.444.hu/2024/11/22/us-hungarian-relations-to-enter-a-golden-age-orbans-foreign-minister-says>.

⁹ Hungary Today. “Viktor Orbán Expects a Golden Era under Trump's Presidency.” *Hungary Today*, January 17, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/viktor-orban-expects-a-golden-era-under-trump/>.

¹⁰ Orbán, Viktor. “Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the Opening Event of CPAC Hungary 2025.” Transcript of speech delivered on May 29, 2025. <https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-opening-event-of-cpac-hungary-2025/>.

¹¹ MTI-Hungary Today. “A ‘Golden Age’ Coming in Hungarian-American Relations, Says US Chargé d’Affaires.” *Hungary Today*, April 10, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/a-golden-age-coming-in-hungarian-american-relations-says-us-charge-daffaires/>.

¹² Palladino, Robert. “Remarks by Chargé Palladino at the Independence Day Reception 2025.” Transcript of speech delivered on July 2, 2025. <https://hu.usembassy.gov/news-remarks-by-charge-palladino-at-the-independence-day-reception-2025/>.

¹³ Scheffer, Joakim. “‘Sky Is the Limit’ — Szijjártó Praises US–Hungary Relations at Independence Day Reception.” *Hungarian Conservative*, July 3, 2025. <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/us-hungary-relations-szijjarto-independence-day-palladino/>.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State. “Secretary Rubio's Meeting with Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijjártó.” Press release, March 4, 2025. <https://www.state.gov/secretary-rubios-meeting-with-hungarian-foreign-minister-szijjarto> ; U.S. Department of State. “Secretary Rubio's Call with Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijjártó.” Press release, April 15, 2025. <https://www.state.gov/secretary-rubios-call-with-hungarian-foreign-minister-szijjarto-2> ; About Hungary. “Foreign Minister Holds Talks with US Deputy Secretary of State.” Press release, June 4, 2025. <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/foreign-minister-holds-talks-with-us-deputy-secretary-of-state>.

Points of Common Action

Bilateral relations between the United States and Hungary have swiftly moved forward and improved considerably since Trump returned to office on January 20, 2025. At times, developments have come so fast that they have, in some cases, overtaken expected or predicted timeframes or appeared to occur spontaneously.

1) *Repairing Relations*

Repairing U.S.-Hungarian relations was a necessary first step. The Biden administration's policy toward Hungary vacillated between moralistic admonitions urging Orbán's government to adopt principles of "democracy" as defined by the international Left and unabashed antagonism when Orbán's government declined to embrace those principles. Sometimes the former president expressed his disappointment in baseless slights, saying, for example, that Orbán was "looking for a dictatorship."¹⁵ Foreign Minister Szijjártó denounced Biden's comment and similar statements during his administration as "lies" that placed "a heavy burden on our bilateral relationship."¹⁶

The Biden administration's disdain for Hungary also came in policy. Hostile measures included the administration's unilateral decision in July 2022 to terminate the countries' bilateral treaty to avoid double taxation.¹⁷ That agreement, which considerably eased financial matters for individuals and corporations operating in both countries and aided Hungary in significant revenue collection, had stood since 1979, when Hungary was a communist country at the height of the Cold War. Biden's decision to terminate the treaty arose from Hungary's refusal, on grounds of national sovereignty, to impose the global minimum corporate tax, a 15 percent corporate levy devised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Participation in this globalist project would have forced Hungary to increase its standing corporate tax rate from its

current low rate of nine percent – an important part of the country's economic strategy to draw foreign investment – and thus reduced its international competitiveness.¹⁸

Less than two weeks before Trump returned to office, the Biden administration also controversially sanctioned Orbán's cabinet office minister, Antal Rogán, under the Magnitsky Act, legislation that allows the U.S. government to target foreign officials it believes to have engaged in corrupt practices or human rights violations. This punitive measure, for which the U.S. government identified virtually no supporting evidence, appears to have been based simply on spite over Trump's victory and the prospect of improved relations with Orbán's government under his resumed leadership.¹⁹

Personnel is also a form of policy. For much of Biden's term, his ambassador in Budapest was David Pressman, an openly homosexual human rights activist, attorney, and former Obama administration official who had little or no prior experience in or connection to Hungary or Central or Eastern Europe generally. In a dramatic departure from standard diplomatic practice, Pressman used his office to criticize Hungarian society and his host government's approach to traditional values, LGBTQ issues, perceived corruption, and interest-driven foreign policy. Pressman's abrasive personality and often tactless critiques were poorly received and accomplished virtually nothing of benefit to either country, their relationship, or the wider world, including the leftist causes he advocated.

Foreign Minister Szijjártó described Pressman as "practically" the "leader of the opposition" and accused him of having "produced all kinds of lies, all kinds of bad news and possible fake news about Hungary."²⁰ Prime Minister Orbán, who purposely did not meet Pressman during his tenure in Budapest, later said that "Pressman's job was to press Hungary into the liberal, democrat 'gender camp,'

¹⁵ Giordano, Elena. "Biden–Orbán Feud Heats Up as Hungary Summons Envoy Over 'Dictatorship' Diss." *Politico Europe*, March 12, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/joe-biden-viktor-orban-feud-escalates-hungary-summon-america-ambassador-envoy/>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ KPMG LLP. "United States – Update: U.S. Treasury Terminates Tax Treaty with Hungary." *GMS Flash Alert*, no. 2022-141, July 27, 2022. <https://kpmg.com/xx/en/our-insights/gms-flash-alert/flash-alert-2022-141.html>.

¹⁸ Scheffer, Joakim. "US–Hungary Relations Already Healing as New Double Taxation Treaty Looms." *Hungarian Conservative*, January 27, 2025. <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/double-taxation-us-hungary-relations-donald-trump/>.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of the Treasury. "Treasury Sanctions Corrupt Hungarian Official." Press release, January 7, 2025. <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2773>.

²⁰ Hungary Today. "Foreign Minister Says US Report Contains the Opinion of Former Ambassador David Pressman." *Hungary Today*, April 8, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/foreign-minister-says-us-report-contains-the-opinion-of-former-ambassador-david-pressman/>.

ready to spread the word with war,” adding that “‘Hungary is not that kind of country, we have a mission of our own.’”²¹ Hungarian parliamentary speaker László Kövér derided Pressman as “one of the least classy ambassadors ever to set foot on Hungarian soil.”²² Construction and Investment Minister János Lázár, whose portfolio includes promoting foreign investment, suggested that Pressman should never return to Hungary after his posting ended.²³ Pressman, for his part, unhelpfully accused Orbán’s government of “dangerously unhinged anti-American messaging” and an alleged spirit of non-cooperation, essentially because it declined to meet his or the Biden administration’s expectations that it would accommodate leftist social causes and adopt neoliberal foreign and economic policies.²⁴ True to his unfortunate form, Pressman delivered these specific remarks in a highly critical speech at Central European University (CEU), a neoliberal-oriented institution founded by George Soros, a major opponent of Orbán’s, that had mostly relocated to Vienna due to its non-compliance with Hungarian higher education reform law.²⁵

With Trump’s return, both countries have affirmed that relations going forward will and must be based on mutual respect. This is consistent with Trump’s emerging second-term foreign policy, which focuses overwhelmingly on realist engagement with foreign governments to secure positive cooperation based on shared interests. As Trump told an investment conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, during his highly successful official visit to the Middle East in May 2025, he has no intention of “giving you lectures on how to live and how to govern your own affairs,” a message that was warmly received there, around the world, and among his supporters at home.²⁶

Ideological affinity, conservative institutional collaboration,

and the friendly personal relations between Trump and Orbán have accelerated their governments’ move to restore amity and cooperation based on mutual respect and domestic noninterference. On November 10, 2024, just five days after Trump’s reelection, Orbán stated that he would pursue restoration of the double taxation treaty, a move he codified in instructions to Hungary’s Foreign and National Economy Ministries on January 27, 2025.²⁷ A week earlier, on Trump’s first day back in office, the U.S. president issued an executive order declaring that the OECD’s global minimum corporate tax, the issue behind Biden’s abandonment of the U.S.-Hungarian double taxation treaty in 2022, would no longer have effect in the United States. Like Orbán, Trump phrased his opposition to the global tax policy in terms of national sovereignty.²⁸

Shortly after interim chargé Palladino arrived in his post in March 2025, Szijjártó announced – following just one meeting with the American diplomat – that “finally, mutual respect once again defines our relationship with the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.”²⁹ On April 15, Secretary of State Rubio informed Szijjártó that the U.S. had lifted the sanctions on Rogán, imposed by the Biden administration just three months earlier, declaring that continuing them was “inconsistent with U.S. foreign policy interests.”³⁰

At the Independence Day celebrations on July 2, Palladino remarked:

In our partnership with Hungary, we are turning the page – and turning it together. The return of President Donald J. Trump to the White House has brought new energy and clarity to American foreign policy. The Administration’s approach – rooted in strength, realism, and mutual respect – is already revitalizing our

²¹ Hungary Today. “Viktor Orbán Expects a Golden Era under Trump’s Presidency.” *Hungary Today*, January 17, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/viktor-orban-expects-a-golden-era-under-trump/>.

²² Garamvolgyi, Flora. “Viktor Orbán’s Political Allies in Hungary in Sights of US Sanctions.” *The Guardian*, April 13, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/13/viktor-orban-political-allies-in-hungary-in-sights-of-us-sanctions>.

²³ Nagy, Bálint. “Lázár: Kiállunk Rogán mellett, David Pressman pedig messze kerülje majd el Magyarországot.” *Telex*, January 8, 2025. <https://telex.hu/belfold/2025/01/08/lazar-janos-david-pressman-messze-kerulje-majd-el-magyarorszagot>.

²⁴ Ahmatović, Šejla. “US Ambassador Condemns Hungary’s ‘Dangerously Unhinged’ Postures under Orbán.” *Politico Europe*, March 14, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/u-s-ambassador-viktor-orban-hungary-for-unhinged-anti-american-messaging/>.

²⁵ Walker, Shaun. “‘Dark Day for Freedom’: George Soros-Affiliated Central European University Quits Hungary.” *The Guardian*, December 3, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/03/dark-day-freedom-george-soros-affiliated-central-european-university-quits-hungary>.

²⁶ Harb, Ali. “Five Key Takeaways from US President Donald Trump’s Middle East Trip.” *Al Jazeera*, May 16, 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/16/five-key-takeaways-from-us-president-donald-trumps-middle-east-trip>.

²⁷ Scheffer, Joakim. “US–Hungary Relations Already Healing as New Double Taxation Treaty Looms.”

²⁸ The White House. “The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Global Tax Deal.” Press release, January 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/the-organization-for-economic-co-operation-and-development-oecd-global-tax-deal-global-tax-deal/>.

²⁹ MTI-Hungary Today. “New Horizons in U.S. Relations Focus on Economic and Energy Ties.” *Hungary Today*, March 25, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/new-horizons-in-us-relations-focus-on-economic-and-energy-ties/>.

³⁰ U.S. Department of State. “Secretary Rubio’s Call with Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijjártó.”

*relationship with Hungary. From now on, the United States will engage with our Hungarian allies the way true partners should: privately, respectfully, and constructively. No more public scoldings. No more moralizing from podiums. That era is over. We believe in diplomacy grounded in dignity. And we believe in values that transcend politics or geography – values shared by both our peoples: faith, family, nation, and freedom. These aren't slogans. They are the pillars of the civilization we are trying to preserve—for our children, and for theirs.*³¹

Szijjártó agreed, adding in his subsequent speech:

*Across the ocean, they say 'America First.' On this side of the ocean, we say 'Hungary First.' And the principles of 'America First' and 'Hungary First' give us the opportunity to raise our friendship to a level where the sky is the limit ... God bless the wonderful nation that loves freedom and fights for freedom, the United States, and God bless the American–Hungarian friendship, for which we will continue to make tremendous efforts in the coming period.*³²

2) A Common Sense Approach

In his January 23, 2025, video address to the World Economic Forum, President Trump announced a “revolution of common sense” across institutions of the U.S. government – and indeed the world – in his second presidential term.³³ Trump’s “common sense” rhetoric, which he often juxtaposes to the American Left’s tendency toward theory, abstraction, and ideals, has strong origins in American conservative thought. Orbán has also notably appealed to “common sense” to describe elements of his political program, which influential figures of the American Right have carefully studied, as well as to praise Trump. At the NATO summit in The Hague in late June 2025, Orbán called the returned U.S. President a “man of common sense” and expressed his hope that the international order would, from then on, follow common sense diplomacy.³⁴ In his U.S. Independence Day celebration speech on July 2, Foreign Minister Szijjártó reiterated that “a revolution of common sense has begun. We Hungarians are proud to be among the standard bearers of this revolution.”³⁵

³¹ Palladino, Robert. “Remarks by Chargé Palladino at the Independence Day Reception 2025.”

³² Scheffer, Joakim. “‘Sky Is the Limit’ — Szijjártó Praises US–Hungary Relations at Independence Day Reception.”

³³ Trump, Donald J. “Davos 2025: Special Address by Donald J. Trump, President of the United States of America.” Transcript of speech delivered on January 23, 2025. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/davos-2025-special-address-donald-trump-president-united-states/>.

³⁴ About Hungary. “PM Orbán: International Order Is Based on Common Sense.” Press release, June 26, 2025. <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/pm-orban-international-order-is-based-on-common-sense>.

³⁵ Scheffer, Joakim. “‘Sky Is the Limit’ — Szijjártó Praises US–Hungary Relations at Independence Day Reception.”



U.S. Chargé D'Affaires Robert Palladino (left) and Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó (right) at the 2025 4th of July Reception. (U.S. Embassy Budapest)

Areas of U.S.-Hungarian Agreement

But where has, and where can, common sense work toward improving bilateral relations? Where can the United States and Hungary agree?

1) *The War in Ukraine*

Ending the war in Ukraine is a shared priority for both the United States and Hungary. Trump's realist approach to foreign affairs regards the conflict as regrettable for its heavy human costs but outside the national interests of the United States, which has no alliance obligation or security guarantee to Ukraine and no tangible position jeopardized by any possible conventional military outcome of the conflict.³⁶ Both before and since Trump's reelection in 2024, he has consistently called for a peace deal to settle the conflict and end the bloodshed. Trump has also vociferously argued that any expansion of the conflict to include the U.S., its NATO allies, or their advanced weapons systems could potentially result in a much larger war, in his words, a devastating "World War III," possibly including nuclear weapons, which Russian President Vladimir Putin has periodically threatened to use.^{37 38}

During Trump's reelection campaign, he pledged to broker negotiations to end the war, promising a quick path to peace. Since his return to office in January 2025, he and senior members of his administration have engaged in the first high-level peace talks with both Russia and Ukraine since the first weeks after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Trump's goal is to make a deal that would end the conflict while also materially compensating the United States for the military support it has provided to Ukraine since the invasion began.

Uniquely among European Union member-states, which otherwise favor supporting Ukraine until the unlikely event of its complete military triumph over Russia, Hungary openly shares Trump's desire for a negotiated peace. Prime Minister Orbán has praised the returning U.S. president as a "man of peace" who he believes can resolve the conflict. Like the United States, Hungary does not identify defending Ukraine with its national interest. To the contrary, as a country bordering on Ukraine, Hungary has a far more acute sense of danger from the conflict spreading than do the more removed nations of "Old Europe" farther to the West. Hungary also relies heavily on Russia for energy imports, including 80 percent of its hydrocarbons and, currently, all of its nuclear energy, without which domestic energy prices would likely spike to unsustainable levels.³⁹

Hungary has approved, sometimes reluctantly, numerous EU aid packages to Ukraine, accepted some Ukrainian refugees, and supported no fewer than seventeen international sanction packages against Russia.⁴⁰ In 2024, however, it effectively negotiated with the Atlantic Alliance to secure a national recusal from participation in NATO programs supporting Ukraine, arguing that the alliance and Hungary's role in it should primarily be deterrent in character.⁴¹ Orbán has been clear in his conviction, which he stated plainly at NATO's June 2025 summit, that "NATO has no business in Ukraine."⁴²

Trump's return to office offers a solid basis for coordinated action to stop the war. In his July 2 Independence Day celebration remarks, Foreign Minister Szijjártó observed that "new wars have become shorter, and old ones seem to be running out of steam." Thanks to Trump's return,

³⁶ Some commentators erroneously claim that the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 constituted a U.S. security guarantee to Ukraine, but in fact the agreement – signed for the U.S. by professional diplomat and one-time U.S. Ambassador to Hungary Donald M. Blinken, father of President Joe Biden's Secretary of State Antony Blinken – only promised non-aggression by the United States and humanitarian aid in exchange for Ukraine's voluntary de-nuclearization. Ironically, given future events, a security guarantee was then thought too provocative to Russia and therefore omitted.

³⁷ McArthur, Tom, and Jaroslav Lukiv. "Vladimir Putin Says Ukraine Is 'Ours' and Threatens Nuclear Strike." *BBC News*, March 1, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9dejdyynngo>.

³⁸ Sky News. "Putin Says 'All of Ukraine Is Ours' and Threatens Nuclear Strike." *Sky News*, June 21, 2025. <https://news.sky.com/story/putin-says-ukraine-is-ours-and-threatens-nuclear-strike-13386697>.

³⁹ Bortoletto, Francesco. "Hungary to Buy Even More Gas from Russia in 2025." *EU News*, October 15, 2024. <https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/10/15/hungary-to-buy-even-more-gas-from-russia-in-2025/>.

⁴⁰ Sanctions SOS. "Hungary and Slovakia Oppose EU's Proposed 18th Sanctions Package." Sanctions SOS, July 2, 2025. <https://sanctionssos.com/recent-developments/f/hungary-and-slovakia-oppose-eu%E2%80%99s-proposed-18th-sanctions-package>.

⁴¹ Simon, Zoltan. "NATO Chief Agrees to Let Hungary Opt Out of Alliance's Support for Ukraine." *Time*, June 12, 2024. <https://time.com/6987761/nato-hungary-ukraine-support-stoltenberg-orban/>.

⁴² APT. "Orban: 'NATO Has No Business in Ukraine'—Clashes With Reporters at Summit | APT." Published June 25, 2025. YouTube video, 3:02. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOz83d9nNAg>.

he continued, “terms such as ‘peace,’ ‘peace negotiations,’ and ‘ceasefire’ can once again be used legitimately” after a long period during which EU and NATO politics favored militant long-term support for Ukraine and discouraged even discussing peace negotiations as appeasement or “giving Putin everything he wants.”⁴³ Due to the United States’ leading role in NATO, years of bloody yet inconclusive fighting, and Europe’s recent failure to guarantee Ukrainian security on its own, Trump’s arguments are beginning to carry more weight. “Those who attacked us for more than three years for using these words are now using them, too,” Szijjártó confidently concluded.⁴⁴ Working collaboratively for a negotiated peace augurs on the horizon for U.S.-Hungarian relations.

2) Defense Policy

Hungary and the United States have been NATO allies since Hungary joined the Atlantic Alliance in 1999, but there is ample room for closer cooperation in defense policy. As noted previously, Orbán’s government views NATO primarily as a deterrent, a view that the Trump administration shares and that accurately reflects NATO’s founding terms and principles, which were and remain exclusively defensive in nature. Hungary’s geography complements both this shared vision and NATO’s renovated security architecture, which for nearly a decade has involved advanced deployments of multinational military assets to member-states on NATO’s eastern edge.⁴⁵

Trump and Orbán both believe NATO should be strengthened for this enhanced deterrent purpose. During Trump’s first term, he routinely castigated NATO member-states that failed to spend at least two percent of GDP on their militaries, a legally non-binding but symbolically significant threshold established by the Wales Pledge of 2014. Throughout Trump’s first administration, some of the backsliding governments committed to eventual increases to the two percent threshold. Trump returned to office in January 2025 with a desire to go further. At the June 2025 NATO summit, all member states agreed to his proposal

to meet the two percent threshold in 2025 and then increase national military spending to five percent of GDP (3.5 percent on defense and 1.5 percent on related infrastructure and support facilities) by 2035.⁴⁶ Hungary, which was one of the few NATO members to have reached the two percent threshold before Trump’s return to power, accepted the five percent commitment ahead of the summit, with Orbán citing the country’s potential vulnerability to conflicts in Eurasia and the Middle East as the motivating factor.⁴⁷

Broad agreement on NATO could augur other forms of U.S.-Hungarian defense cooperation. In recent years, Hungary has sourced most of its military hardware from Germany, its overall largest trading partner, becoming one of that country’s biggest customers for military exports.⁴⁸ Building the Hungarian military for deterrent value would, however, benefit more from arms purchases from the United States, which is second to none in advanced military industries (e.g., aerospace, precision munitions, drone technology, artificial intelligence) and therefore better situated to provide Hungary with top-line equipment.

Hungary’s reluctance to engage the United States as an arms supplier has been rooted in its suspicion that American authorities might predicate arms sales or deal fulfillment on unrelated policies that are important to Washington politicians but contrary to Hungary’s interests and sovereignty. Such occurrences are rare but have happened in the recent past in ways that adversely affected Hungary. In June 2023, a Republican Senator then serving as ranking member (i.e., minority leader) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suspended a \$735 million sale of state-of-the-art M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) units to Hungary due to Hungary’s then-hesitant policy on Swedish admission to NATO.⁴⁹ Hungary subsequently cancelled the order altogether despite approving Swedish NATO admission only eight months later.

With Trump’s commitment to noninterference in issues guided by national sovereignty, however, there is far less

⁴³ Kagan, Robert. “Why Trump Is Giving Putin Everything He Wants.” *The Atlantic*. April 29, 2025. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2025/04/trump-putin-ukraine-deal/682626/>.

⁴⁴ Scheffer, Joakim. “‘Sky Is the Limit’ — Szijjártó Praises US–Hungary Relations at Independence Day Reception.”

⁴⁵ NATO. “NATO’s Military Presence in the East of the Alliance.” NATO. Last updated June 6, 2025. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm.

⁴⁶ NATO. “Defence Expenditures and NATO’s 5 % Commitment.” NATO. June 26, 2025. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm.

⁴⁷ MTI-Hungary Today. “NATO Summit Sees New Push for Higher Military Spending.” *Hungary Today*, June 25, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/nato-summit-sees-new-push-for-higher-military-spending/>. As a special note: Hungary’s military budget reached two percent of GDP in 2023.

⁴⁸ Hungary Today. “Hungary Among Top Buyers on German Arms Market.” *Hungary Today*, June 30, 2023. <https://hungarytoday.hu/hungary-among-top-buyers-on-german-arms-market/>.

⁴⁹ Hudson, John, and Loveday Morris. “GOP Senator Blocks Arms Sale to Hungary for Stalling Sweden’s NATO Bid.” *The Washington Post*, June 14, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/06/14/hungary-sweden-nato-james-risch-himars/>.

cause for concern that arms deals with the U.S. could fall through. To the contrary, in April 2025, the Hungarian media reported Trump's "expectation" that Hungary will increase its arms purchases from the United States and further claimed that ongoing trade negotiations include opening a U.S. defense industry manufacturing center in Hungary.⁵⁰ Greater defense cooperation has also entered bilateral economic discussions as a potential means to offset the cost to Hungary of Trump's recent tariff diplomacy.⁵¹ In addition to magnifying the Hungarian military's deterrent value, increasing Hungary's arms purchases from the United States would bind the countries more closely together, enable closer military cooperation, prove a boon to the U.S. defense industry, and, if the projected arms plant in Hungary opens, to the Hungarian economy as well.

Closer defense cooperation could also come in increasing direct deployments of American forces on Hungarian soil. In March 2025, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Trump was considering the relocation of the largest deployment of American military personnel in Europe – some 35,000 servicemen – from Germany to Hungary, in part out of frustration with Germany's lack of cooperation on ending the war in Ukraine.⁵² These reports remain unconfirmed beyond general State Department responses that American redeployment options are always under consideration. If such a move were to happen, however, U.S. forces now stationed mainly in the western part of Germany – close to the Cold War frontlines of two generations ago but far removed from today's conflicts – would be relocated hundreds of kilometers eastward. Response times to address crises in Eurasia and the Middle East, which Orbán specifically identified as loci of concern when accepting increased NATO defense spending in June 2025, would be considerably reduced, and their deterrent value would correspondingly increase, in line with the eastern push in the recent renovation of NATO's security architecture.

Hungary – which has since 2022 hosted a NATO multinational divisional center, including American servicemen

at Székesfehérvár – has already proved able to accommodate NATO forces on its territory.⁵³ Accepting relocated American forces on a larger scale would also infuse billions of dollars into the Hungarian economy in the form of direct U.S. capital investment and, for years to come, billions more in annual consumer spending by well-paid American servicemen and their dependent family members.

3) Migration

Trump and Orbán are both pursuing a hard line on the security of national borders – a fundamental feature of national sovereignty – and on blocking or severely limiting migration. In both countries, conservative politicians and thought leaders identify mass migration from the developing world as a destabilizing challenge to their societies, a drain on resources intended for native populations, an undesirable form of global wealth redistribution, an opportunistic attempt to tilt their countries' demographic balance permanently in favor of leftist political parties and ideologies, a cynical ploy to keep workforces artificially large and labor costs correspondingly low, a deliberate act to weaken and ultimately destroy Western values and institutions, an exercise to assuage a collective leftist sense of moral guilt, and even a racist conspiracy to replace native-born white populations with non-whites.

American and Hungarian publics alike support their leaders on the issue. In 2024, 85 percent of Hungarians opposed the forced distribution of migrants in their country, while in early 2025, some 66 percent of Americans favored the deportation of illegal immigrants already present in the United States, a figure that rose to 87 percent concerning illegal immigrants who had committed additional crimes while present there.^{54 55 56} In his July 2 Independence Day remarks, Foreign Minister Szijjártó emphasized Hungary's "sovereign right to make sovereign decisions about whom we allow into our country and with whom we are willing to live" and observed the commonalities in U.S. and

⁵⁰ Hetzmann, Mercédesz. "Donald Trump's High Expectations for PM Orbán: Buy American Arms and Gas, Curb Chinese Deals." *Daily News Hungary*, April 17, 2025. <https://dailynewshungary.com/trumps-expectations-for-orban-arms-gas-china/>.

⁵¹ Demony, Catarina. "Hungary Discussing Business Deal with US to Counter Tariff Impact." *Reuters*, June 18, 2025. <https://www.reuters.com/business/hungary-discussing-business-deal-with-us-counter-tariff-impact-2025-06-18/>.

⁵² Stringer, Connor. "Donald Trump Considers Pulling Troops Out of Germany." *The Telegraph*, March 7, 2025. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/us/politics/2025/03/07/donald-trump-considers-pulling-troops-out-of-germany/>.

⁵³ NATO. "NATO's Military Presence in the East of the Alliance."

⁵⁴ About Hungary. "Századvég: European and Hungarian Public Oppose Forced Relocation of Migrants." Press release, June 14, 2024. <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/szazadvég-european-and-hungarian-public-oppose-forced-relocation-of-migrants>.

⁵⁵ Newall, Mallory, and Johnny Sawyer. "Majority of Americans Support Deporting Immigrants Who Are in U.S. Illegally." Ipsos, January 19, 2025. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/majority-americans-support-deporting-immigrants-who-are-us-illegally>.

⁵⁶ Peters, Jeremy W., and Ruth Igielnik. "Support for Trump's Policies Exceeds Support for Trump." *The New York Times*, January 18, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/18/us/politics/trump-policies-immigration-tariffs-economy.html>.

Hungarian border and migration policies now that Trump is back in office.⁵⁷

Prime Minister Orbán, who regards the migration issue as “existential” for the entire EU and has bluntly stated that his policy on migrants is “We don’t let them in,” has consistently defied EU calls for Hungary to “share the burden” of supporting migrants fleeing to Europe.^{58 59} The issue has become so contentious that in June 2024, the European Court of Justice fined Hungary 200 million euros with an accruing liability of an additional one million euros per day for continuing noncompliance.⁶⁰ Orbán has doubled down, however, maintaining strict border security and the frontier barriers he constructed from 2015.⁶¹ More recently, his government reformed Hungarian residency and immigration policies to exclude all but the most serious and capable applicants.⁶²

While Trump was unable to complete the construction of a similar barrier (“the Wall”) along America’s southern border due to Congressional opposition in his first term, he campaigned heavily on the border and migration issue in 2024.⁶³ Election polling frequently identified that issue as the American electorate’s leading concern, sometimes even outscoring the economy as its top issue.⁶⁴ Despite challenges from leftist U.S. federal judges and complaints from aggrieved Democrats, Trump’s second term has already seen illegal border crossings drop nearly to statistical insignificance alongside increasingly ambitious efforts to detain and deport illegal migrants.⁶⁵

A common U.S.-Hungarian front on migration and border control will not only unite the two nations on an important international policy issue but also offer effective working examples of border control and migration policies for other nations and political leaders who wish to promote national sovereignty and take measures to reverse illegal immigration into their own countries. In Spain, for example, the populist right-wing Vox party pledged in July 2025 to deport up to eight million individuals who had not adopted national customs, while UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has pledged to work “day and night” to secure his country’s borders.^{66 67} Further U.S.-Hungarian cooperation could form the nucleus of a coordinated, transnational policy resisting open migration and buttress an increasingly united front to reverse its deleterious effects throughout the West.

4) Trade

The issue of trade presents a potential challenge to U.S.-Hungarian relations. While Hungary offers a favorable and highly incentivized foreign investment environment and maintains a major trade relationship with the United States, its largest trading partner outside the EU is China, the U.S.’s greatest strategic adversary.⁶⁸ Russia, which considers NATO a hostile and adversarial alliance, resents past U.S. and EU support for Ukraine, and has taken umbrage at other geopolitical slights, simultaneously sells Hungary 80 percent of its hydrocarbons and all of its nuclear energy.

⁵⁷ Scheffer, Joakim. “‘Sky Is the Limit’ — Szijjártó Praises US–Hungary Relations at Independence Day Reception.”

⁵⁸ Skujins, Angela. “We Never Let Them In: Hungary’s PM Viktor Orbán Demands New Laws Tackling Migration.” *Euronews*, September 6, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/09/06/we-never-let-them-in-hungarys-pm-viktor-orban-demands-new-laws-tackling-migration>.

⁵⁹ RFI. “EU’s New Migration Pact Hopes to ‘Share the Burden’ and Ease Divisions.” *RFI*, September 23, 2020. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/europe/20200923-eu-new-migration-pact-hopes-to-share-the-burden-and-ease-divisions-borders-ursula-von-der-leyen>.

⁶⁰ Court of Justice of the European Union. “Asylum Policy: Hungary Is Ordered to Pay a Lump Sum of 200 Million Euros and a Penalty Payment of 1 Million Euros per Day of Delay for Failure to Comply with a Judgment of the Court of Justice.” Press release no. 99/24, Luxembourg, June 13, 2024. <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2024-06/cp240099en.pdf>.

⁶¹ Bráder, Ádám. “Hungary’s Southern Border Fence Reinforced.” *Hungarian Conservative*, July 6, 2023. https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/border_fence_hungary_protection_defence_reinforcement_migration/.

⁶² IST Hungary. “Immigration to Hungary: Important Changes from July 2025.” IST Hungary, June 30, 2025. <https://isthungary.hu/en/news-en/hungarian-immigration-law-en/>.

⁶³ Hopkins, David A. “Why Trump Didn’t Build the Wall When Republicans Controlled Congress.” *The Washington Post*, January 25, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/01/25/why-trump-didnt-build-wall-when-republicans-controlled-congress/>.

⁶⁴ Oppenheim, Oren. “Immigration Is at the Center of the 2024 Election for Many. Why?” *ABC News*, February 29, 2024. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/americans-feel-biden-trump-immigration-issues/story?id=107687552>.

⁶⁵ The White House. “ICYMI: Illegal Border Crossings Hit New Record Low in March.” Press release, April 1, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/04/icymi-illegal-border-crossings-hit-new-record-low-in-march/>.

⁶⁶ Badcock, James. “Spanish Right-Wing Party Vows to Deport Eight Million People.” *The Telegraph*, July 8, 2025. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/07/08/spain-vox-deport-8-million-people-pedro-sanchez-pp-feijool/>.

⁶⁷ Starmer, Keir. “Keir Starmer to Crack Down on Illegal Immigration.” *Daily Express*, July 12, 2025. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2081081/keir-starmer-illegal-immigration>.

⁶⁸ CGTN. “Chinese-Hungarian Trade Cooperation Expands Steadily.” *CGTN*, November 25, 2024. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-11-25/Chinese-Hungarian-trade-cooperation-expands-steadily-1yOFDAxiCha/p.html>.

These contradictions are far from insuperable, however. Trump's general foreign policy of noninterference in matters of national sovereignty should in principle raise no objection to Hungary's economic relations with any country it decides to trade with, including Asian economies as part of its lucrative "Eastern Opening" strategy, or Russia, particularly if the ongoing peace talks on Ukraine are successful and obviate any continuing sanctions. Hungary's geography as a landlocked country in Central Europe offers no obvious benefit for either Chinese or Russian military or strategic considerations.

China's economic interest in Hungary, moreover, rather closely resembles its economic interest in the United States and most other developed countries – as a market for Chinese exports rather than as a source of strategically important and potentially monopolized imports, such as the raw materials that Beijing extracts from African and other Asian countries. There is no evidence that China seeks, as it sometimes does in the developing world, to alter Hungary's domestic politics – a gambit Orbán's strongly pro-sovereignty government would undoubtedly resist – or undermine Budapest's alliance relationships with NATO or the United States, which have no bearing on China's geopolitical goals. Chinese exports to Hungary are mainly inexpensive consumer goods sold via e-commerce platforms, and even then, most are not bound for Hungarian markets but rather shipped to other European destinations after arriving in Hungary, which serves as a transit hub.⁶⁹ China's other exports to Hungary are decidedly in the civilian realm, focusing on the automotive, battery, and solar energy industries.⁷⁰ The Trump administration is reportedly encouraging Hungary to curb its trade relationship with China, but it is unlikely that even an outright refusal from Orbán on that point would cause any lasting harm to bilateral relations.⁷¹

Russia's energy sales to Hungary suggest a dependency that Russia could potentially weaponize and exploit, but

numerous other EU countries were dependent on Russian hydrocarbons until quite recently, with some continuing to buy them from third parties outside the EU despite Union-wide sanctions.⁷² Yet none ever succumbed to Russian "energy blackmail" in the way that Orbán's critics have suggested he might. Nevertheless, the U.S., which is now increasing domestic energy production for both energy independence and export, is reportedly working to increase European, and specifically Hungarian, purchases of rival American oil and gas exports, both to reduce dependency on Russia and to make up long-term trade deficits that Trump wants to close.⁷³

In the realm of nuclear power, in late June 2025, the Trump administration lifted sanctions that Biden had imposed on American participation in the construction of the Paks II nuclear power plant.⁷⁴ The plant's construction is an international effort, including U.S. companies, to create a domestic supply for most of Hungary's electricity by the mid-2030s, a development that will eventually break the Russian monopoly on Hungary's supply of nuclear energy.

Uniquely within the EU, Hungary has maintained a cooperative and understanding attitude toward the Trump administration's heightened economic nationalism, including its attempts to balance unequal trade relationships by raising tariffs. When Trump increased tariffs on all EU member states in April 2025, Hungary was the only one not to retaliate by raising tariffs on the United States.⁷⁵ As such, it was in the group of countries granted a pause on tariffs pending negotiations, though Trump later extended that privilege to the entire EU. Orbán admitted that the tariffs would impose some cost on the Hungarian economy, but almost immediately announced that negotiations for a comprehensive business deal with the United States, which he expects to have in place by October 2025, were underway and would prove a corrective measure offsetting any tariff-related losses.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Woods, John. "What Will Trump Say? Budapest Airport: China's E-Commerce Gateway to Central Europe." *Daily News Hungary*, November 16, 2024. <https://dailynewshungary.com/budapest-airport-has-become-centre-for-china/>.

⁷⁰ Xiao, Tianyi. "China-Hungary Bilateral Relations: Trade and Investment Outlook." China Briefing, June 27, 2024. <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-hungary-bilateral-relations-trade-and-investment-outlook/>.

⁷¹ Hetzmann, Mercédesz. "Donald Trump's High Expectations for PM Orbán: Buy American Arms and Gas, Curb Chinese Deals."

⁷² UBN. "How Much Russian Gas Is Passing through Turkey to Europe?" *Ukraine Business News*, July 1, 2025. <https://ubn.news/how-much-russian-gas-is-passing-through-turkey-to-europe/>.

⁷³ Hetzmann, Mercédesz. "Donald Trump's High Expectations for PM Orbán: Buy American Arms and Gas, Curb Chinese Deals."

⁷⁴ MTI-Hungary Today. "U.S. Government Lifts Sanctions Tied to the Expansion of Paks Nuclear Power Plant." *Hungary Today*, June 30, 2025. <https://hungarytoday.hu/u-s-government-lifts-sanctions-tied-to-the-expansion-of-paks-nuclear-power-plant/>.

⁷⁵ Insight Hungary. "Hungary Breaks EU Unity on Trump Tariff Retaliation." *Insight Hungary*, April 11, 2025. <https://insighthungary.444.hu/2025/04/11/hungary-breaks-eu-unity-on-trump-tariff-retaliation/>.

⁷⁶ Demony, Catarina. "Hungary Discussing Business Deal with US to Counter Tariff Impact."

The Great Market Hall or Central Market Hall in Budapest, Hungary (Siddharth Govindan/Unsplash)



Concluding Recommendations

In the first six months of Trump's second term in office, U.S.-Hungarian relations are strong and rapidly improving across multiple axes of cooperation, including trade, defense, migration, national sovereignty, NATO, energy, the war in Ukraine, and restoring a general comity of relations disrupted by the Biden administration. It is no exaggeration to say that Hungary is America's most reliable ally in Europe and that, as Foreign Minister Szijjártó said at the U.S. Embassy's recent Independence Day celebration, the "sky is the limit" in terms of what can be achieved going forward. Indeed, this may even be an understatement since a Hungarian astronaut was at that very moment in orbit on an American outer space mission conducted jointly by NASA, SpaceX, and Axiom.

The pace of improving the bilateral relationship is so fast and so comprehensive that any recommendations offered here may, by necessity, seem modest. But they are offered in a positive and constructive spirit.

1) Appoint a well-qualified U.S. Ambassador to Hungary.

Interim Chargé d'Affaires Palladino has done excellent groundwork in restoring relations, but his interim appointment is by definition limited and not on par with the role of a credentialed ambassador equal to the ambassador Hungary has posted to the United States. While Palladino could fill that role if President Trump and Secretary Rubio wish to appoint him to it, recent U.S. ambassadors to Hungary have tended to be political appointees rather than career Foreign Service Officers. One exceptionally well-qualified candidate is Susan Hutchison, a Trump supporter and former Washington state Republican Party chair who also served as executive director of the Charles and Lisa Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences, the largest Hungarian-American philanthropic foundation, and who is thoroughly familiar with Hungary and the leading figures of its government.

2) Restore direct airline service between the United States and Hungary.

For a time, direct airline service operated between the two countries, but Americans traveling to Hungary must now either change planes in other European airports or fly privately. Restoring one or multiple direct commercial routes between Budapest and major American cities will

reduce stress and travel time, make tourism and business travel easier and more accessible, and generally improve communications. China currently operates 38 weekly cargo and 21 weekly commercial passenger flights between Budapest and nine Chinese cities. There is no reason the United States should lack even a more modest connection schedule.

3) Encourage more cultural and intellectual exchange.

Much of the groundwork for Trump's return to office in 2024 and, more importantly, the strengthening and nationalist reorientation of the Republican Party and MAGA movement under his leadership – and of many European parties and organizations of the Right – resulted from the work of conservative intellectuals, many of whom (myself included) spent time in Hungary during the intervening Biden administration or before. In addition to being a pleasant place to visit, in Budapest the exchange of ideas is free and open compared to the obstacles and harassment conservatives often experience in leftist-dominated North American and European cities. Institutions such as the Danube Institute, the Mathias Corvinus Collegium, and the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs, among others, provide amenable and highly successful forums for discussion and research. Both governments have the resources to promote the valuable work of these organizations, create larger and more ambitious study and public diplomacy programs, and foster environments where the International Right can convene for free and open discussion and action.

4) Conclude the comprehensive economic deal.

Both countries will benefit from the comprehensive economic deal currently under negotiation. In ideal form, it will stimulate U.S. investment in Hungary, foster cooperation in the defense industry, restore the dual taxation treaty, and, possibly, reduce Hungary's dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, all to the financial benefit of both countries.

5) Schedule an official U.S. visit to Hungary.

Prime Minister Orbán has made five official visits to the United States since he first entered office in 1998, including one to President Trump during his first term, in 2019, along with multiple unofficial visits. President Trump, how-

ever, has not made any visit to Hungary while in office, nor has any U.S. president made an official visit since George W. Bush in 2006. In addition to being long overdue, the reciprocity would go a long way toward demonstrating

mutual respect and potentially boost Orbán's standing at home, where he faces elections in April 2026, and within the EU, where the United States could support Hungary to the mutual benefit of both countries.



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