## Aff AT Democracy QPQ

### Say No - Hungary

#### Hungary says no – anti-democratic backsliding and blockage

Andrew Desiderio et al, Alexander Ward, and Quint Forgey, 06/28/2022, [Andrew Desiderio is a congressional reporter for POLITICO, covering the Senate, national security and foreign policy. He is a graduate of The George Washington University’s School of Media and Public Affairs, where he studied journalism and Italian language and literature.] "Hungary is being another NATO Budapest," [https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2022/06/28/hungary-is-being-another-nato-budapest-00042773 //](https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2022/06/28/hungary-is-being-another-nato-budapest-00042773%20//) bfu

MADRID — Turkey isn’t the only “problem child” of the NATO family at this year’s annual summit. The Hungar[y]ian government is the lone objector blocking the establishment of a Center for Democra[cy]tic Resilience within NATO, a yearslong effort by Rep. GERRY CONNOLLY (D-Va.), who serves as president of NATO’s Parliamentary Assembly. It can sound like a tale out of the U.S. Senate, where one member can grind the chamber’s business to a halt. In NATO, all member-nations must consent to a decree in the Strategic Concept or expansion of the alliance. The center, as billed, would advise governments on best practices for maintaining and building a 21st-century democracy. Hungary’s anti-democratic slide is no secret, so it’s not necessarily a surprise that its government is objecting to the creation of such an entity within NATO. VIKTOR ORBÁN, Hungary’s DONALD TRUMP-endorsed prime minister, has engineered crackdowns on the press and undermined election laws and the independent judiciary, leading critics to dub him an authoritarian. “With the horror we’re witnessing in Ukraine, how could you not want to build democratic architecture within NATO to counter what we are experiencing in Ukraine?” Connolly told NatSec Daily here on day one of the summit. “You can’t argue the two aren’t related. Of course, they’re related. What do you think Putin is fighting against?” Connolly, who leads what is effectively NATO’s legislative body, is pleading with Hungary to harken back to its roots — specifically, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which was an effort to push back against Soviet influence. “1956 was in some ways eerily like Ukraine in the aspirations being represented in the revolt of Soviet occupation in Hungary. There had been an uprising in East Germany prior to that, but that was the first big break in the Soviet bloc,” said Connolly, who once worked for then-Sen. JOE BIDEN on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “So my hope is Hungary will remind itself of its own history [and] return to its own struggle for freedom over many generations.” The purpose of a Center for Democratic Resilience is “to serve as a resource and a clearinghouse of best practices and cross-fertilization on democratic benchmarks available to member, partner, and aspirant states, upon request,” according to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. Connolly has referred to it as NATO’s “sin of omission,” and has cited the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and efforts by pro-Trump forces to overturn the 2020 election as evidence that democracy is fragile. Back home, Connolly and Rep. MIKE TURNER (R-Ohio) led House passage of a resolution supporting the establishment of such a center within NATO, though 63 Republicans opposed the effort. But in order for it to actually happen, Hungary needs to drop its opposition. Connolly declined to describe the nature of Budapest’s objections, but noted that the rest of NATO’s members were skittish about his proposal when he first unveiled it and eventually came around. “I’m ever the optimist. But I’ll tell you this, we will not give up,” Connolly said. “We will stick with this and pursue this until it comes to fruition.”

#### Hungary says no to democratic reforms – CFDR proves.

Andrew Desiderio et. al. 22, 6-28-2022, a congressional reporter for POLITICO, covering the Senate, national security and foreign policy. He previously covered House investigations and oversight of the Trump administration. He joined POLITICO from The Daily Beast, where he covered Congress with a focus on national security, foreign affairs and Senate campaigns. He previously worked at BBC News and RealClearPolitics; Alex Ward is a national security reporter and anchor of “National Security Daily.” Before joining POLITICO, Ward was the White House and national security reporter at Vox. He was also an associate director in the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security where he worked on military issues and U.S. foreign policy. And he previously wrote the #NatSec2016 newsletter for War on the Rocks where he covered the 2016 presidential election and the candidates' views on national security; Quint is a breaking news reporter for POLITICO, Hungary is being another NATO Budapest, https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2022/06/28/hungary-is-being-another-nato-budapest-00042773, HKeef

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### AT Russia/Say No

#### Hungry says no – their economy is completely dependent on Russia imports.

Tim Gosling, 7-24-2022, Tim Gosling is a Prague-based journalist who has covered the Central European region for several years. He has contributed to Politico Europe, Deutsche Welle and the Financial Times, among other publications, and also provided analysis on the region for the Economist Intelligence Unit and IHS Markit.,Hungary’s energy dalliance with Russia, POLITICO,https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-energy-dalliance-with-russia, jkap

Many Central and Eastern European countries are trying to cut their energy ties to Russia, but not Hungary, which is chasing a new gas deal. The reason? It's crucial to the ruling Fidesz party's hold on power. “Low energy prices for households are a key plank for this government,” said Pál Ságvári, Hungary’s ambassador-at-large for energy security. He confirmed that Budapest is preparing to discuss a new long-term gas contract with Moscow, adding: “It’s now a buyers’ market. It’s a good time to start talks.” Government officials in Budapest said that Russia, which is facing increased competition from liquefied natural gas, is keen to do a deal. Moscow is also widely viewed as sympathetic to the Hungarian government’s need for a bargain. “Cheap energy was a central focus of Orbán's first term” — Ákos Hadházy, independent MP Cheap energy prices are a key political buttress for Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Ahead of Hungary’s 2014 parliamentary election, energy bills dropped into household post boxes included how much cash Fidesz policies had saved consumers. The government had just implemented price cuts that reduced household energy bills by a third — a step that prompted many foreign-owned energy companies to sell their Hungarian assets to the state. Fidesz won a thumping majority in the election. “Cheap energy was a central focus of Orbán's first term,” said Ákos Hadházy, a former member of Fidesz who is now an independent MP. “This caused big losses for providers but of course it was very popular.” The price cuts didn’t end in 2014, and Hungarian household gas and power prices are now the lowest in the EU. “The government’s priority goals include maintaining the security of energy supply and preserving the results of the cut in utility costs,” Zoltán Kovács, state secretary for public diplomacy and relations, told POLITICO. “The energy expenditure of families must not increase.” Russia's helping hand Maintaining this system requires competitively priced imports, and Russia's assistance is crucial. Russia is Hungary's dominant supplier of both gas and nuclear — together accounting for about half of its energy mix; by 2030 they are expected to grow to about 60 percent, according to the government’s energy strategy. “The logic is that Russia provides cheap energy and Orbán causes trouble for the EU and NATO,” said Tamás Pletser, an energy analyst at Erste Bank in Budapest, explaining why Russia would be interested in a relationship with a country often at odds with most of its fellow EU members. Russia supplies practically all of the 8 billion to 10 billion cubic meters of gas Hungary consumes annually. In 2015, Gazprom cut Hungary's gas import price by about 25 percent, said Attila Holoda, who was deputy secretary of state for energy in 2012 and now runs Aurora Energy, a consultancy. That wasn’t the only sweet deal from Russia. With Hungary’s long-term gas delivery contract expiring, Gazprom in 2013 waived take-or-pay clauses — which require a client to pay for a certain volume of gas whether used or not and which have been a source of tension with other customers in the region. That allowed the Russian energy giant to continue delivering gas to Hungary under the contract until the end of 2018. Fidesz remains acutely aware that its cap on household bills is a vital component of its political success A temporary deal has kept supplies flowing since, but Budapest now needs to open talks on a new permanent agreement, Ságvári said. However, any long-term agreement with Gazprom would go against the grain in a region where most countries are looking for other energy sources to reduce their dependence on Russia. Hungary remains focused on price, and analysts expect Budapest to secure a bargain; Fidesz also has fewer geopolitical worries about Moscow's intentions than other former communist countries in Central Europe. Facing increased competition from LNG, Gazprom is scrambling to secure market share in Europe. The coronavirus crisis and oil price crash will likely only strengthen the customer’s hand. Critics still worry that Hungary will be dependent on Moscow for a major chunk of its energy mix. The new contract will ensure stable prices for households, said Ságvári. The less politically sensitive commercial sector will depend on the liberalized market, where suppliers are free to negotiate prices with customers. Political cash Cheap Russian gas has also helped fund Fidesz’s political campaigns. In 2015, state-owned utility MVM’s net profit was 14.7 billion forints (€42 million). When Russia’s price cut took effect the following year, earnings boomed to 48.4 billion forints. Ahead of the 2018 election, MVM donated 500 million forints to Civil Unity Forum, a government-linked NGO that had attacked opposition politicians and the EU. The Kremlin is also involved in MVM’s nuclear operations. Russian state nuclear agency Rosatom is the lead contractor on the €12 billion project to expand the Paks nuclear plant, where Moscow is providing 80 percent of the financing. Ságvári said the government plans to deepen its reliance on Paks. “Nuclear is an important backbone of the energy mix, and the strategy is to push it to 40 percent as part of the decarbonization drive,” he said. “We believe we got a good deal from Russia.” Critics, including Brussels and the U.S., still worry that whatever the price tag for Paks and for Russian gas, Hungary will be dependent on Moscow for a major chunk of its energy mix. But Fidesz remains acutely aware that its cap on household bills is a vital component of its political success, and insists it will continue to do whatever it takes to keep cheap energy flowing to voters. Low power bills are an implicit bargain with voters, said Michael Labelle, Jean Monnet Chair in Energy and Innovation Strategies at Central European University. "A change in government will result in more expensive gas.”

#### Hungary will not escalate against Russia

Coakley 22

[Amanda Coakley ; 3-22-2022; "The Exception to Europe's United Front Against Russia"; Time; https://time.com/6159342/european-union-russia-hungary/; accessed 7-22-2022; MT]

In a European Union that answered Russia’s invasion of Ukraine with an economic war against Moscow, Hungary stands apart. While Orban stopped short of vetoing E.U. sanctions on Russia, he has said Budapest will block any E.U. sanctions on Russian oil and gas, and refuted calls to stop the expansion of the Paks Nuclear Plant, which is being funded by Russia’s nuclear power company, Rosatom. Arguing that Hungarians should not be faced with higher bills because of energy sanctions, Orban believes he is skilled enough to navigate a relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

That irks the European Union—which in many ways is nothing new. Over the course of Orban’s 12 year tenure, Brussels has been at odds with Hungary for its increasingly undemocratic tendencies, including weakening the country’s free press and undermining its independent judiciary. So fraught was Budapest’s relationship with the E.U. that in December 2020 the European Parliament approved a new “rule of law conditionality” mechanism that linked E.U. funds to member states’ respect for democracy.

But the Ukraine invasion brought a new measure of Orban’s defiance: Hungary now finds itself isolated even from Poland, the country that joined it in wreaking havoc on the E.U.’s fundamental values, including by jointly launching a legal challenge against the rule of law mechanism (their case was rejected by the European Court of Justice, the bloc’s top court, in early February).

Russia has long tested the limits of Poland and Hungary’s “illiberal alliance.” While Orban has courted Putin since before his return to power in 2010, the man often called Poland’s most powerful politician, Deputy Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczynski, has never ceased to wax lyrical about the threat the Kremlin poses to the West. When Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014, Orban offered no strong opinions on the conflict and only reluctantly supported the E.U.’s sanctions on Moscow, arguing that “Russia’s exclusion from Europe is not reasonable; security in the region can only be achieved with Russia.” Meanwhile, Poland stood firm in its support for Ukraine and called on Europe to take the Russian security threat seriously.

In the infamous Transylvania speech announcing Hungary in 2014 as an “illiberal state,” Orban also called Russia—along with China, Singapore, India, and Turkey—a model for Hungarian society. None of this sat well with Warsaw but it wasn’t until Putin himself visited Budapest in 2015 and was allowed to state his position on Ukraine that tensions between the two came to boiling point. When Orbán later visited Poland, Kaczynski, whose Law and Justice Party (known by the Polish initials PiS) was still in opposition, refused to meet him. Over time these frustrations faded as the focus between the two moved to undermining the E.U. But they were never forgotten—and now demonstrate how much of an outlier Orban has made Budapest in the largest European conflict since World War II.

Though Hungary has thrown open its eastern frontier to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion, unlike Poland it has refused Kyiv lethal aid and prevented weapons to Ukraine from being transported via its territory. Once again Orban has framed Russian aggression in Ukraine as an issue beyond his jurisdiction and promoted so-called “strategic calmness.” With elections on April 3 and the Prime Minister likely to win his fourth consecutive term in office, his Fidesz party is campaigning on keeping Hungary “out of the war.” Hungary’s six-party united opposition has highlighted Fidesz’s close affiliations to the Kremlin, but that may not matter in Hungary’s rural heartlands where both support for Orban and fears of regional instability run strong.

“Every step Orbán takes ahead of the elections is focused on winning,” Pál Dániel Rényi, a Hungarian journalist and author tells TIME. “Hungary is heading into a massive recession, the Prime Minister is power obsessed, and he isn’t going to do anything that won’t work in his favour.” If the price is isolation even from Poland that appears to be fine with Orban. On March 23 Hungarian President János Áder was due to unveil a statue in the southern Polish town of Bochnia to mark Polish-Hungarian friendship day. His trip was reportedly postponed because Poland’s President Andrzej Duda didn’t want to appear alongside him, given Hungary’s ambiguous stance on the Russian invasion.