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## **Hungary: The pro-Russian Far-Right is Reinforced by the Orbán Regime**

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Russia's basis for seeking influence over the Hungarian public was weak at best after the democratic transition in 1989. Hungary is not a Slavic country; the population does not speak Russian, and the two nations do not share a common border. The two revolutions that happened in Hungary, in 1848 and 1956, respectively, were crushed by Russian troops. Consequently, the Hungarian far-right scene has had a long history of hostility, if not hatred, towards Russia.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Kremlin employed a threefold strategy. Primarily, it focused on influencing the mainstream political elite politically and economically.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Viktor Orbán's government has been strengthening ties with Russia and strained Hungary's relations with NATO and EU allies. Secondly, the case of Béla Kovács, a former MEP of the far-right Jobbik party, is also indicative of the totality of the Russian outreach to the Hungarian far-right. Having him spying and lobbying within the European Parliament for years, the Kremlin has managed to create a pro-Russian network of far-right actors in the heart of the EU.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, the Kremlin put great emphasis on exploiting historical grievances related to the lost territories of Hungary after WWI to win the hearts and minds of the Hungarian far-right scene.<sup>4</sup> Our Homeland is leading the charge in this regard as it is the most ardent supporter of territorial revisionism while spreading pro-Russian narratives. According to interviewed experts,<sup>5</sup> the uniqueness of the Hungarian scene stems from the fact that although paramilitary organisations like the Hungarian National Front (MNA) were aiming to strengthen cooperation with Russian secret services, the Kremlin was not taking them seriously and operated through other channels.

## Hungarian REMVE – Strategies and Ideological Tenets

The dominant strategy of the Hungarian far-right is that they traditionally mobilised against historical minorities, such as the Roma, the Jews, and national or ethnic minorities.<sup>6</sup> However, the scope has been largely extended towards external enemies.

Drawing on the Great Replacement theory, the Hungarian far-right claims that societies are facing a twofold threat: externally, it is represented by the Muslim immigrants who are allegedly threatening the ethical and cultural basis of the Christian civilisation. Internally, the threat is represented by what the scene terms *decadent* leftist-liberal forces that are pursuing feminist and gay rights. It fits the approach of the global far-right populism where gender serves as a symbolic glue<sup>78</sup> that holds the extreme right-wing scene to fight the onslaught of modernity both domestically and internationally. They perceive it as accelerating the collapse of the fundamental, God-given difference that makes society function in a *normal way*: that between men and women. The long list of components of gender includes the issue of divorce, gay marriage, social acceptance of promiscuity, abortion, and the demise of the traditional family, in which the main role of women is to have children.<sup>9</sup> In this context, Russia served as an example of *normality* where LGBTQ+ rights are not tolerated.

The Hungarian far-right also claims to defend common sense against the migration policy of the EU.<sup>10</sup> It is embedded into a very pessimistic and consistently anti-modernist narrative about the West's intellectual, cultural, and social history. In their narratives, the West is portrayed as being degenerated under the influence of Marx, Engels, Freud, the Frankfurt School, feminism, and postmodernism. In contrast, Russia has become a beacon of *normality* that “does not want to unleash aberration” by fighting off LGBTQ+ rights.<sup>11</sup> Their rejection of the EU and NATO is embedded into an antisemitic, xenophobic conspirator approach against George Soros, often copy-pasting Kremlin narratives.

The far-right scene in Hungary has its own identity stemming from historical grievances that are centred around the territorial losses of Hungary. Arguably, the biggest and most important yearly gathering of the Hungarian extreme right is the so-called Day of Honor to commemorate the alleged breakout of the German and Hungarian soldiers during the siege of Budapest on 8 February 1945.<sup>12</sup> The Hungarian far-right organisations have also traditionally supported the idea of a Greater Hungary, and advocated for reclaiming territories inhabited by Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, and Croatia.<sup>13</sup> These

grievances date back to the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which reduced Hungarian land by two-thirds, leaving a quarter of the Hungarian population outside of the country's borders.<sup>14</sup> Far-right groups, therefore, fostered openly revisionist narratives while vocally supporting Hungarian minorities in other countries. Consequently, the past is always a reference point in terms of organisational meetings, commemorations, and political speeches.

This is an opportunity for the Kremlin to exploit historical grievances by supporting territorial claims. Part of its broader effort after 2014 was to undermine the region's stability in general and bilateral links with Ukraine in particular via supporting local enablers: secessionist, revisionist, and far-right organisations. With secret service and hybrid warfare tools, Russia was fuelling disputes between Central Eastern European countries and local extremist organisations.<sup>15</sup> The Hungarian extreme-right scene is particularly interesting to study and a fertile ground for the Russians because of the above-mentioned historical grievances, thanks to which the Kremlin has revitalised its traditionally limited linkages within these organisations as of 2010.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the most prominent extreme-right (paramilitary) groups operate under some form of Russian influence. These organisations are currently centred around Our Homeland, a far-right party openly supportive of Russian geopolitical efforts in the Hungarian National Assembly. Riding the wave of territorial revisionism has been further strengthened since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Moreover, this is not happening in a domestic vacuum. The political and institutional framework provides an increasingly favourable environment for Pro-Russian activities in Hungary up until today. The pro-Kremlin efforts of the Hungarian far-right are being reinforced by Viktor Orbán.<sup>17</sup> The ruling party, Fidesz, deliberately disseminates anti-Ukrainian, anti-Western, and pro-Russian narratives in its top-down centralised, robust propaganda machinery both in mainstream and social media.<sup>18</sup> What is more, national security authorities lack the will to act against the local enablers of the Kremlin, which has increased national security threats in Hungary over the last decade.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the central questions addressed in this chapter are: What are the structural and political contextual features of the Hungarian far-right scene that operates under Russian influence? What type of direct or indirect Russian influence can be observed in the selected case studies?

## Research Methodology and Case Selection

This chapter builds two cases: one representing a direct, and another an indirect instance of Russian influence within the broader Hungarian far-right scene. As for the direct case, the chapter explains how the MNA, became the venue point for the operation of Russia's military intelligence service, the GRU. The case of MNA is indicative of the pro-Kremlin environment provided by the Orbán government. It allowed MNA an undisturbed collaboration with Russian secret services. As a result, no other far-right organisation has been confirmed to be so directly linked to and influenced by the Russian secret services in Hungary. It directed public and scholarly attention to the efficiency of the Kremlin in influencing paramilitary and extremist organisations operating in Hungary. Another empirical case is the story of Béla Kovács (with a nickname KGBéla), a former MEP of Jobbik, a far-right Hungarian party that has been spying within the EU on behalf of Russia. Accounting for the indirect linkages, the chapter investigates the pro-Russian narratives of Our Homeland and the paramilitary organisations centred around it. Studying these latter cases is warranted on multiple grounds: one of them is that they co-jointly agree with Vladimir Putin's characterisation of the *nihilistic* and *decadent* West contrasted with Christian-conservative Russia. Another feature of these organisations is that they have the most ardent anti-Ukrainian approach in the Hungarian political scenes.

The empirical evidence for this study was collected from multiple sources. It combines extensive primary and secondary sources, a wealth of data provided by investigative journalists and policy reports, as well as expert interviews undertaken by the author. The desktop research will collect the necessary information and note the sequence of events and their evolution. In-depth interviews with experts of scientific life and the media allowed the analysis to move beyond reliance on open-source information and acquire a deeper understanding of the background of the Pro-Russian extreme-right scene and its events.

### Case Study 1: The MNA in Cahoots with the GRU

Before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian secret service's overarching goal in Hungary seemed to have been to obtain as many local potential enablers as possible: "They traditionally aimed at recruiting a huge

number of local contacts, regardless of their effectiveness and capabilities. In other words: the quality of these contact persons were less relevant and useful idiots also qualified as valuable ties just to fulfil a “yearly quota” – argued one of the interviewees, Andras Dezső, a Hungarian investigative journalist. Moreover, in his view, such outreach did not automatically equal an attempt to recruit a given individual to the ranks of the Russian secret service agents. This was allegedly more of an operation to build bridges with proverbial open-minded local actors.<sup>20</sup>

MNA, a small but violent outfit of the Hungarian far-right, seemed to have come into Russia’s orbit precisely through such connections. Officers of Russia’s military intelligence service, the GRU, have been in contact with the organisation; Russian “diplomats” have participated in airsoft exercises organised by the group. The organisation was led by István Györkös, one of the most well-known figureheads of the Hungarian neo-Nazi scene, who was sentenced to life imprisonment on a charge of murdering a Hungarian policeman in 2016.<sup>21</sup>

Known to be an extremist and dangerous figure of the neo-Nazi scene, Györkös has been on the radar of the Hungarian secret services since the beginning of the nineties. He established MNA first under the name of the Hungarian National Socialist Action Group in 1989. Györkös first drew the attention of the Hungarian police in 1991 when he distributed neo-Nazi leaflets with a swastika in the cities of Győr, Budapest, Devecser, and Székesfehérvár. The membership of the organisation mostly consisted of the Györkös family and their friends under the umbrella organisation called Peregrine Falcon Hiking Association – also founded by Györkös in 1990.<sup>22</sup> The total number of members of the MNA had grown to 250 by the end of the nineties. It centred its activities around self-defence and combat training with airsoft drills, paintball, and various legally available tools necessary for military training, such as: military maps, practicing with grenades, etc. Their camps operated across Hungary, the largest of which was located on private land in the outskirts of Bőny called Sashegy. Photography documented that on one occasion, the participants greeted each other with a fascist salute and studied neo-Fascist documents published in the US.<sup>23</sup> Having built a well-connected neo-Nazi network since the beginning of the 1990s, Györkös also established the Day of Honor commemoration in 1997, which became the most important yearly event of the neo-Nazi scene. It commemorates the purported breakout of German and Hungarian soldiers during the siege of Budapest on 8 February 1945.<sup>24</sup> Together with a number of European extreme-right and neo-

Nazi groups, the entire Hungarian right-wing extremist scene gathers every year to march and participate in memorial tours of the breakout all over the country.

Györkös also started the newspaper called New Order, which disseminated Nazi symbols as well as racist and anti-Semitic writings. He had been seeking the opportunity to establish a Nationalist-Socialist political system in Hungary by building a web of violent radicals.<sup>25</sup> In order to achieve his goal, he built relationships with the leader of the Austrian neo-Fascists and maintained contact with other foreign Nazi organisations. According to the investigative documents of the time, Györkös and his sympathisers received their inciting propaganda materials from the head of the Foreign Reconstruction Organization of the German National Socialist Workers' Party operating in the US. The New Order's newspapers were also financed by this organisation.<sup>26</sup>

The party, although far-right in content, also developed links with far-left and what is key to the analysis, the pro-Russian Hungarian Workers' Party (the ideological heir to the pre-1989 Communist Party), led by Gyula Thürmer. The party disseminates pro-Russian politics and seeks to strengthen diplomatic relations with Russia.<sup>27</sup> The marginalised organisation has held numerous public events with Györkös's organisation, although Thürmer refused to confirm their relationship in the past.<sup>28</sup> According to Index.hu, this collaboration eventually resulted in a split between Hungarian neo-Nazi groups.<sup>29</sup>

Russian diplomats and members of the Russian military intelligence have been around the and the Hungarian militant subculture for years. The situation started before Russia annexed Crimea, as the Russians were trying to do it in a smart, less ostentatious way.<sup>30</sup> The National Security Committee of the Hungarian Parliament confirmed that the Hungarian counter-intelligent services were aware of collaborative trainings between the MNA and the Russian services. In fact, the Committee revealed that MNA has been "begging for financial support"<sup>31</sup> for the GRU that was not taking the organisation seriously.<sup>32</sup> Russia was primarily interested in a website co-created by Györkös, called Hídfő.ru, that became most prominent Hungarian-language Russian propaganda portals around 2012.<sup>33</sup> It indicates that MNA was already under Russian influence and the portal became an instrument for active measures for the Kremlin. It manifested in August 2014, when the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused Hungary of shipping arms, including T-72 tanks, to Ukraine, referring to fake content on the website, Hídfő.ru. The website published three photos, allegedly taken by readers, showing T-72 tanks transported on a train in Nyíregyháza, a town in East

Hungary. The Hungarian government denied the existence of the tanks and called the “Kremlin’s accusation an unfriendly gesture.”<sup>34</sup>

Russian secret services are well-known for identifying the interests of potential contacts and using them as a venue point of communication.<sup>35</sup> In the case of MNA, it was the airsoft drill since it resonated well with the personal interest of Györkös. MNA openly organised its trainings on the internet. Activities like relic hunts for World War II weapons were also proven to be useful for strengthening bonds with MNA. Private hunters and collectors from both the radical right and left were frequent guests of these events, along with the agents of GRU.<sup>36</sup> According to Ferenc Katrein,<sup>37</sup> a high-ranking former counter-intelligence officer of Hungary’s Constitutional Protection Office (AH), the main goal was to “gain influence over an organization with a huge potential of violence that is suitable to facilitate subversive domestic and international activities.”<sup>38</sup> This refers to a wide range of activities, including fuelling ethnic tension, organising large-scale neo-Nazi events like the Day of Honor, and building an international network of like-minded organisations on the basis of the breakout by besieged Nazi forces in occupied Hungary during WWII. “They have had logistical importance in terms of destabilisation—as a potential tool to use when needs be to destabilize the country” explained Katrein.<sup>39</sup>

This had been ongoing for years before the National Bureau of Investigation (the Hungarian FBI) was supposed to search István Györkös’s house for illegal weapons in 2016. When the two officers showed up at his home, the leader of MNA opened fire and killed a 46-year-old police officer. According to Katrein, the GRU must have been careless; they contacted MNA despite the fact that it was already on the radar of the Hungarian intelligence services. “It means that they simply did not care about a potential breakdown of the organisation, which indicates huge arrogance, showing how much the Russians have looked down on their Hungarian counterparts”, argued the former intelligence officer.<sup>40</sup>

Dezső agreed that putting such effort into MNA was a strategic blunder for the GRU. The murder of a Hungarian police officer directed full attention to the organisation; law enforcement authorities together with the secret services put great efforts into demolishing MNA completely. Russian activities have been halted and Hidfo.ru ceased to operate as of 2018. After the police detained Györkös, the National Investigation Agency and the Anti-Terrorism Centre ousted twelve members of the Hungarian National Front in Bőny, Budakalász, Budapest, Jászberény, Mosonmagyaróvár, Rád, Sajókeresztúr, and Vác. Weapons



of Russian and Slovak manufacture and explosives were seized by the police. These twelve people were interrogated as suspects for violence and misuse of firearms,<sup>41</sup> out of which eight were arrested in 2022.<sup>42</sup>

There was no consensus among the interviewees as to whether the MNA were aware of being infiltrated by the GRU. In this regard, one argued that even if Gyórkös was not aware of the true identity of the GRU undercover officer, the younger generation of the organisation (e.g. his sons) must have known whom they were collaborating with. Katrein argued that “It is simply unrealistic that the leadership did not know what they got themselves into”. There is also no publicly available information about the former members of the MNA and if they joined other platforms after 2016. According to Katrein, “Most neo-Nazi, paramilitary people ‘grow out’ the membership above a certain age. Beyond 30, you do not want to put your family at risk, especially after such an institutional failure”.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of the aforementioned events, the MNA was banned in late 2016, and to date, no other organisation has been confirmed to be directly linked to and influenced by the Kremlin in Hungary. The fact that such common exercises with the GRU were happening under the watch of the Hungarian intelligence services, including military counter-intelligence, indicates the lack of political will to undercut Russian services operating in Hungary.<sup>44</sup> Alfahír (a website close to Jobbik) confirmed that former president János Áder and István Gyórkös Jr. are related, which was first reported by Hídfő.ru.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, the second aunt of János Áder is the wife of Gyórkös Sr., and Áder’s second cousin is István Gyórkös Jr. Although President Áder’s office has denied this relationship before, Gyórkös often referred to the fact that thanks to their family relationship, the organisation enjoys a so-called “protection” in Hungary. The Russians also knew about this family relation, which was confirmed by several sources.<sup>46</sup>

## **Case Study 2: The Curious Case of KGBéla**

KGBéla’s case is indicative of the distinctive features of Russian influence in Hungary. He not only influenced the domestic far-right but also catered to an international network of like-minded actors within the European Parliament and spied and lobbied on behalf of Russia. He largely contributed to turning Jobbik into a pro-Kremlin party and became the party’s Russophile MEP in Brussels in 2009.<sup>47</sup> According to Dezső, he has been known to the KGB for a long time; the

organisation recruited him through his wife in the 1980s, and his political career started in the early 2000s.<sup>48</sup>

Kovács never denied his Russian ties and the frequent trips he took to Moscow. Gábor Vona, Jobbik's leader, accompanied him on at least one occasion in 2008. This trip happened before pro-Russian traces became very prevalent in the party's rhetoric.<sup>49</sup> He established his influence in the party by becoming a top financial supporter of Jobbik.<sup>50</sup> Although his Russian connections were well-known within the party, he could have achieved a career due to his generous "donations" to the party and often to its members in an individual manner. Another notorious example of his contribution was the Youth Section of Jobbik, which organised various events during the 2000s with the direct financial support of Kovács.<sup>51</sup>

Sources of his wealth remain a mystery. Béla Kovács started as a businessman living in Russia when he returned to Hungary in the 2000s to open a salad bar. On several occasions he claimed that he spent the period between 1988 and 2003 in Russia working in the leadership of diverse trading companies.<sup>52</sup> However, investigative journalists revealed that there is no trace in Russian company records in that either Kovács or his wife had owned Russian companies,<sup>53</sup> let alone obtained any (high-level) position in one.<sup>54</sup> He is famous for his high-level international connections; in 2007, he invited one of his party members to the inauguration of Ramzan Kadyrov Czechen president. He travelled on his own account, not using party finances.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of all this, he has been on the radar of the Hungarian counter-intelligence services (along with other European services) since 2009. Kovács rather acted as an agent of influence than a classic Russian spy, and he was quite efficient in this regard. He reported to Russian diplomats in a conspiratorial way and lobbied on behalf of Russia within the EU. According to the accusation, between 2012 and 2014, Kovács's task was to form groups in the EU to strengthen Russia's interests specifically and weaken EU policy.<sup>56</sup>

Kovács first convinced the formerly anti-Russian Jobbik<sup>57</sup> by invoking his fringe contacts in Polish politics. Since the Hungarian far-right is known to traditionally admire Poland for its strong nationalist scene, Kovács was putting emphasis on the pro-Russian Mateusz Piskorski,<sup>58</sup> the former leader of the far-right Zmiana party.<sup>59</sup> While the relationship has been established between the two parties, Piskorski was arrested on suspicion of spying for Russia ten years later.<sup>60</sup> Kovács started as an MEP only in 2010 only, when he took the seat of Zoltan Balczo,

another Jobbik member in the European Parliament. Despite that there have been numerous conflicts between him and the previous staff of Balczo, the party never withdrew him, most likely because of his financial power. As stated by Szabolcs Panyi, an investigative reporter at Direkt36, during an interview, “His real task was not to meddle in Hungarian politics but to organize a pro-Kremlin network of far-right MEPs and parties: the Alliance of European National Movements (AENM)”.<sup>61</sup> The group was established in 2009 with the declared aim of forming a faction in the European Parliament. Kovács first served the role of a treasurer and later as president of the organisation. As part of an international group observing the referendum held in the Crimea in 2014, he took a position on the Russian/Ukrainian conflict, arguing that “the vote would be absolutely free and fair”.<sup>62</sup> Panyi added that “it is indicative of the success of the AENM that it even included Marine Le Pen’s National Front<sup>63</sup> and members from Nick Griffin’s British National party in 2014.” Kovács’s activities in Brussels strongly indicate that he must have been working for Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, the SVR.<sup>64</sup> It seems that the alleged financial support from these services must have significantly increased his means of mobilisation, recruitment, and activity within the EU institutions.

Kovács’s moderate, bureaucratic image indicated that he was interested in building international relations on an intellectual level, rather than engaging with radical extremist paramilitary groups. However, Investigative VSquare has confirmed that Kovács was also in touch with István Györkös and the MNA. Not only did they reveal that their families once had a close relationship in the early 2010s, but also that Györkös’s wife was hired to do household work for the Kovacs family.<sup>65</sup>

Although the AH was secretly investigating Kovács, just before the European parliamentary elections in 2014, it terminated the ongoing investigation and subsequently initiated a criminal case against a far-right politician.<sup>66</sup> In the spring 2014, Kovács’s espionage story was leaked to Magyar Nemzet, a pro-government daily newspaper. In this way, it could be used against the far-right Jobbik party, which turned out to be the governing Fidesz main rival in the election campaign.<sup>67</sup> Serious accusations were put against him, such as spying against the bodies of the EU on behalf of a third country.<sup>68</sup> However, the AH did not have a chance to make sure he could not escape justice and that his web of contacts would be fully discovered. It could not finish the ongoing investigation and collect enough evidence against Kovács, allegedly because the government interfered in

revealing the story at an early stage for political reasons. Therefore, Kovács could escape to Russia after 2017 without any difficulties.<sup>69</sup>

Information about the financial linkages between Kovács and Russia were not disclosed in the official indictment, either. Currently, he lives in Moscow and teaches international relations at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. The Hungarian Supreme Court ruled on 27 September 2022 that Béla Kovács had indeed spied for Russia and sentenced him to five years in prison in Hungary. He was also sentenced for budget fraud and falsification of documents.<sup>70</sup> Since June 2023, he has been the subject of an international arrest warrant, and since November 2022, he is also the subject of a Hungarian arrest warrant.

The story of KGBéla is indicative of the complicated nature of Russian influence in Hungary.<sup>71</sup> His connections and spy activities were revealed by a pro-Russian government for power political reasons, to undermine the credibility of Jobbik who turned out to be Fidesz's main rival in the election campaign. For almost 10 years, the same party in power provided smooth sailing for Kovács to avoid proper scrutiny and jail. According to Dezső, the "Hungarian authorities [let] him off the hook, which must have been a decision of the Hungarian Prime Minister himself, Viktor Orbán. What's more, no measures were taken against Kovács' Russian handlers or Russian diplomats; there is no word of [any] Russian diplomat being extradited from Hungary."<sup>72</sup> After his spy case was revealed, he quit the Jobbik party, which started to take a more moderate direction and eventually split. Currently, most of the former pro-Russian politicians of Jobbik belong to its splinter party, Our Homeland.

### ***The New Pro-Russians of Hungary***

Our Homeland Movement and its satellite organisations, Our Homeland (MHM) is a Splinter party of Jobbik, itself the formerly dominant far-right party. It was founded after the parliamentary elections in 2018 under the leadership of László Toroczkai, former mayor of the village of Ásotthalom in South Hungary and a current leaders, Dóra Dúró and Előd Novák, former members of Jobbik and an influential power couple of the Hungarian far-right scene.<sup>73</sup> Toroczkai became an inspirational figurehead of the Hungarian far-right scene over time. He co-created relevant paramilitary organisations and youth movements: the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (HVIM), the Army of Outlaws, and the Wolves,

among others. It is mainly formed by ex-Jobbik members, who were disappointed with the party's drift to the centre, itself a reaction to a rightward shift in power of the Viktor Orbán's government since 2010. The splinters announced their desire "to go back to [...their] radical, anti-establishment roots",<sup>74</sup> which effectively meant they would be free to pursue a racist, antisemitic, anti-EU, anti-NATO, and openly pro-Russian narrative.<sup>75</sup> During the 2022 general elections, while the more moderate Jobbik suffered a significant loss in seats, from 26 in 2018 to nine, Our Homeland won six seats in the parliament.<sup>76</sup> Besides disseminating blatant irredentism and xenophobia against migrants, refugees, and "others", the party was successfully channelling public frustration over COVID-19 restrictions and anti-vaxxer sentiment.<sup>77</sup> It resonated well with the pro-Russian narratives that Western democracies are not capable of handling the crisis. Since no other party has been touching upon this issue, it significantly helped them to reach the parliamentary threshold in 2022.<sup>78</sup> It also nicely fits the global trend in which anti-vaxxer extremist organisations shifted their focus towards anti-Ukraine narratives, which provided a huge opportunity to exploit conspiracy theories.<sup>79</sup>

Most of KGBéla's former Jobbik party members split away and now belong to the Our Homeland party, pushing a pro-Kremlin and anti-Ukrainian position, in particular Novák and the deputy chair of the party, Dúró. When Kovács's ties to Russia were revealed in 2014, Novák defended himself against accusations of spying for a long time. Years later, the pro-Russian and radical wing (like Novák) left Jobbik to form the Our Homeland party.<sup>80</sup> The party espouses a vehemently anti-Ukrainian approach as it advocates for the suspension of all support towards Ukraine until the situation of the Hungarian minority inside the country is not handled.<sup>81</sup> The party also opposes Hungary's participation in NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission – currently, Hungary's JAS-39 Gripen fighter jets are patrolling there to intercept Russian military aircraft.

The Hungarian far-right contextualises the war in Ukraine in accordance with its antisemitic, anti-Western and in particular, anti-US and pro-Russian approach. Our Homeland, the HVIM and the Army of Outlaws are known to be very vocal about their anti-Ukrainian approach. They also contextualise the conflict with regard to the protection of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries, being the most ardent critics of Ukraine.<sup>82</sup> It strove to condemn President Zelenskyy, the US, and NATO for provoking the war which they see as an opportunity to reclaim Transcarpathian territories from weakened Ukraine. Our Homeland and

its partner organisations (closely collaborating and sharing agenda with the Army of Outlaws, HVIM) are the most vocal about it.<sup>83</sup> Toroczkai, who was once one of the most outspoken on demolishing the Soviet monument in Budapest, took a strong pro-Russian turn after 2014. As the former mayor of Ásotthalom, he inaugurated a Yuri Gagarin<sup>84</sup> statue and a renovated street named after the Russian astronaut in 2016. According to Péter Krekó, the director of Political Capital Research Institute, this symbolic act must have been pursued both by the Russian embassy and Toroczkai and indicates the presence of Russian soft power in the Hungarian countryside.<sup>85</sup>

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Our Homeland has been condemning sanctions against Russia, rejecting support for Ukraine and its accession to NATO and the EU. After Putin indicated in 2022 that Hungary, Romania, and Poland might have territorial claims towards Ukraine,<sup>86</sup> Toroczkai claimed that Transcarpathia should belong to Hungary. He posted photos from 1938 and 1939 of Polish and Hungarian troops shaking hands on the common border. It clearly underscores the party's revisionist aim that sees Russia as a force thanks to which these territorial claims could be realised.<sup>87</sup> Another recurring argument is that Ukraine does not deserve Western support because of its “mistreatment<sup>88</sup> of minorities”.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, stakeholders within the Hungarian extreme right-wing milieu advocate that all support towards Ukraine should be suspended until the situation of the Hungarian minority inside the country is not addressed appropriately by the Ukrainian government.<sup>90</sup>

The vice president of the National Assembly and deputy chair of Our Homeland, Dóra Dúró underlined on state-owned *Russia Today* the Kremlin's propaganda and conspiracy theories about Ukraine. She argued that “Ukraine's accession to NATO poses a huge national security risk”, and that the Hungarian government would only approve it “if Putin did”. The party stipulates that “Ukraine hides in the shadow of the US and the West”, “cannot be seen as independent”, and is led by a leader who is “anti-peace and anti-democracy.” According to Dúró, Ukraine should “hand over all its occupied territories because it is the only way to achieve peace”.<sup>91</sup> Based upon the investigation of the Hungarian fact-checker website Lakmusz, these include the following disinformation and conspiracy theories:

- Ukraine has never existed; it has been “put together” in the 20th century by “territorial charities” provided by Poland and Hungary. The country has always been dominated by the Russian-speaking population and there has never been a Ukrainian majority. Furthermore, Crimea has been a personal

“donation” to Ukraine by Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party.<sup>92</sup>

- The war is not primarily about Ukraine; it serves the special interests of the US, which is mostly responsible for the war. According to this narrative, bioweapons are being developed in Ukrainian laboratories upon the request of the United States. It embeds into the alleged context that the American deep state is fighting to maintain the unipolar world order by weaponising Ukraine against its contender, Russia.<sup>93</sup>
- The Ukrainian Army has been committing genocide in Donbas since 2014 with the support of the West.<sup>94</sup>
- Ukraine deserved the attack from Russia. In a YouTube video entitled “The hidden truth about the war in Ukraine”,<sup>95</sup> Toroczkai argued that Vladimir Putin had to start “Special operation” as an act of self-defence. In other words, Russia acted legitimately in response to a threat posed by the Nazi regime in Kyiv.

Our Homeland also seeks cross-regional collaboration with other far-right parties in Europe like the Forum for Democracy (FvD)<sup>96</sup> in the Netherlands, which manifests in mutual visits and support with regards to their anti-Western, pro-Russian, and xenophobic messages.

### ***The Party’s Satellite Organisations: HVIM and the Army of Outlaws***

Currently, the most relevant pro-Russian paramilitary organisations of Hungary are closely collaborating with Our Homeland. HVIM, the Army of Outlaws, and the Wolves are all affiliated with the party in terms of human composition, ideological approach, and activities, centred around László Toroczkai. What makes it difficult for them to cooperate with other far-right platforms in Central Eastern Europe is that they have a very strong territorial revisionist approach and claim to restore Greater Hungary. Advocating for reclaiming territories inhabited by Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, and Croatia creates a huge amount of tension between these two Hungarian organisations. Another key feature to mention is that HVIM and Army of Outlaws are openly rejecting democracy as a system.<sup>97</sup>

Currently, HVIM is led by György Gyula Zagyva, former Jobbik MP and Gábor Barcsa-Turner. The movement depicts itself as an ultraright-ultraconservative platform, and the central element of its worldview is traditionalism and rejecting

modernity. HVIM is not only active in Hungary but also recruits members in various parts of Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine with a significant number of ethnic Hungarians in these countries being members or sympathisers. The heroisation of the glorious past and territorial irredentism is prominent in their worldview. The group's name, HVIM (name also refers to idealised historical periods), stems from the administrative design of Hungary before the Treaty of Trianon, which constituted 643 counties. To demonstrate this, the movement's badge also outlines the territory of historical Hungary.<sup>98</sup>

The paramilitary dimension of HVIM is mostly represented by the Wolves, an organisation affiliated with HVIM, focusing specifically on this (para)military activities, aspect by teaching (semi)military and martial arts skills to its male and female members with the help of veteran soldiers.<sup>99</sup> It is led by HVIM co-chair Gábor Barcsa-Turner, who also held martial arts training sessions. During such sessions, visitors could take part in airsoft games, and the Wolves members presented unarmed weapons to participants.<sup>100</sup> The group provides basic military training to its members, who, among others, use airsoft replicas of weapons. One of their unofficial trainers, Zsolt Dér, was a veteran of the Balkan wars and was in direct contact with separatists fighting in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. He admitted that he had been approached by pro-Russian forces to join them in Ukraine.<sup>101</sup> Dér said he ultimately refused to do so because he was employed by the Jobbik-delegated former deputy speaker of parliament and a member of Jobbik, Tamás Schneider, and preferred to remain at his disposal. The group's motto, *Ancient content, new form*, points to the acquisition of, in part, skills of modern warfare.<sup>102</sup> The movement has close ties with Betyársereg (Outlaw Army), the largest and most violent paramilitary far-right platform since it was established by Toroczkai in 2008. Its formation was triggered by the domestic political crisis that erupted in 2006.<sup>103</sup>

The black-clad self-defence force has a motor club as well and is also present at the HVIM youth camps, teaching kids survival skills, as well as Hungarian history. The organisation prioritises physical strength and coordinates training or self-defence. The platform group has a long history of violence against the Roma minority and advertised itself as helping with problems with the Roma. It primarily means that the group engages in the intimidation of the Roma community in smaller Hungarian settlements. Its leader, Zsolt Tyirityán, served a prison sentence on a charge of a vicious attack on a Roma citizen earlier,<sup>104</sup> and was a member of the Pax Hungarica Movement (abolished in 2017) that evolved



from the Hungarian Blood and Honour organisation. The organisation prioritises physical strength and coordinates training. The organisation is mostly active in Miklós Horthy commemoration,<sup>105</sup> national holiday events (23 October, 15 March), intimidation at LGBTQ+ parades, and demonstrating force through motorcycle tours, joint training sessions, and strength and sports competitions. While Betyársereg is considered a rather self-involved organisation that aims to reach out only to its core membership, and prefers not to put emphasis on external networking, it often collaborates with Our Homeland on the ground.<sup>106</sup> During their latest intimidating action, they were “patrolling” a “dangerous” settlement in Budapest, claiming to undercut “local gypsy crime” in public spaces.<sup>107</sup> The Army of Outlaw has co-jointly patrolled with two other extremist organisations in Sopron, a Western-Hungarian city, to “deter violent Ukrainians” who are “threatening public security”.<sup>108</sup>

These groups – along with Our Homeland – use online and social media as an effective mobilising tool, in particular Facebook, where they announce the details of their most important events. Online media platforms like Kurucinfo, Barikád, Alfahír, Hunhír, and Szent Korona Radio are among the most popular websites to disseminate their Pro-Russian and anti-American narratives. The HVIM, the Army of Outlaw, and the Wolves mostly present these ideas through their websites or via interviews they occasionally give to the mainstream media. The most active fringe platforms that would normalise pro-Russian narratives are individual accounts on social media along with Számok and pro-Kremlin sites (Orosz Hírek, Newsfront, and Balrad), among others.<sup>109</sup>

### **Security Threat: Russia Exploits Territorial Grievances**

Russia has been fuelling disputes between CEE countries and their extremist organisations by secret service and hybrid warfare tools since 2014.<sup>110</sup> Besides exploiting irredentist grievances, the overarching goal of the services is to fuel interethnic tensions and deteriorate bilateral relations with Ukraine.<sup>111</sup> One of the latest notorious examples was an SMS campaign in Transcarpathia, with a large number of Hungarian minorities.<sup>112</sup> The message from 2022 claimed that “Ukraine is for the Ukrainianians! Glory to the Nation! Death to the enemy! Let’s dip a knife into Hungarians!” It reached a significant number of local residents in the surroundings of Beregszász. The fact that such a campaign required a huge contact resource indicates that it was an active measure of the Russian secret

services. Another indicative factor is that the slogan “Let’s dip a knife into Hungarians” has appeared in previous Russian disinformation measures as well.<sup>113</sup>

Politicians in Our Homeland, the HVIM, and the Army of Outlaws have traditionally been very vocal about their anti-Ukrainian standpoint. They also contextualised it with regard to the protection of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries. In 2015, the platforms organised a boycott against Roshen sweets, which were produced by the firm of the former President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko. They claimed that “buying these products is a contribution to the assassination of Hungarian minorities in Transcarpathia, for which Poroshenko is responsible”.<sup>114</sup> In the same year, the extreme right Ukrainian paramilitary organisation Karpatska Sich<sup>115</sup> threatened to annihilate Jobbik and HVIM activists<sup>116</sup> for undermining the Ukrainian state and destabilising the region along ethnic fault lines in Western Ukraine and Subcarpathia.<sup>117</sup> The reasoning behind this approach was that the more historical debates over the borders are resurrected, the more fear and distrust are spread into the region, and the better it is for the Kremlin.<sup>118</sup> The radicalisation of HVIM became prominent in 2017 when two members, István Beke and Zoltán Szócs, were charged with attempting violent acts in Romania with revisionist intentions. According to charges filed by attorneys of Romania’s Directorate for the Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT), Beke and Szócs had wanted to blow up a section of a natural gas pipeline leading to Bucharest near Târgu Secuiesc.<sup>119</sup>

### **Foreign (Hungarian) Fighters in Ukraine**

Having such a diverse and active pro-Russian radical scene, the question arises whether the paramilitary flank of these organisations is supporting Russia on the ground in Ukraine. There is no indication that HVIM and the Army of Outlaws have supported Russian separatists on the ground with foreign fighters.<sup>120</sup> So far, four Hungarian citizens have been investigated for illegal recruiting and potentially joining the Russian forces in Ukraine. One of them is Krisztián Lehóczki, a former policeman who joined the separatist armed forces in Eastern Ukraine in 2014. He received a four-year suspended jail sentence for committing a war crime. The police have investigated four other similar cases since 2014. The most recent case occurred in September 2022, when the National

Investigation Agency revealed that a security guard, B. Richárd, was planning to establish a Hungarian private military company. The man's apartment in Budapest was searched and a number of documents and computer equipment were seized. In addition, the police were still looking for two other men on charges of illegal recruitment: Csaba Zsédely, 25, and Lajos Deme, 48, were arrested four years ago.<sup>121</sup> "Our investigation came to the conclusion that the Saint Stephan Legion was established by Russian citizens. In case Hungarians or Hungarian minorities in Ukraine were joining it, transposing Hungarian identity was an applied strategy only", said Szilvia Németh, an investigative journalist at a fact-checker portal Lakmusz.hu.<sup>122</sup>

### **Lack of Policy Responses - Live and let Live**

Having weak but visible far-right actors is supposed to demonstrate to the West that the Orbán government is the only guarantee to keep the extremists out of power. Our Homeland has been also serving Fidesz as a pioneer to mark out new pathways ideologically and politically. It accommodates numerous ideas of the party, including restricting abortion and introducing a restrictive law, directly connecting sexual minorities to paedophilia.<sup>123</sup> As far as law enforcement and investigative bodies are concerned, there is no emphasis on the threat posed by far-right pro-Russian organisations in Hungary. On the contrary, the scene represents an opportunity for the Orbán government, which provides symbolic gestures and political support for them.

Therefore, the far-right scene often has financial support as well. One of the most prominent NGOs of the extreme-right scene, Protected Society Foundation, linked to the MP of Our Homeland, Árpád Szakács, received 22 million HUF public support in 2023.<sup>124</sup> The platform is extensively disseminating anti-US and pro-Russian interpretations of the war in Ukraine. The privileged relationship has been also reinforced by the support of the pro-governmental local and national media outlets. It is indicative that while oppositional politicians did not have access to the government-linked media outlets, the centralised media of Orbán's Hungary, including the public broadcaster, would feature Toroczkai on a number of occasions. Furthermore, government-linked mouthpiece media outlets seem to employ an area with an obvious double standard towards Jobbik and Our Homeland, heavily criticising Jobbik for being an extremist organisation while remaining silent about the openly hate-mongering, anti-US Our Homeland.

Attacking Jobbik served the role of undermining the unity of the opposition that aimed at co-jointly challenging Fidesz during the parliamentary elections in 2022.<sup>125</sup>

President Katalin Novák also pardoned György Budaházy, who organised violent attacks with petrol bombs against the socialist-liberal Gyurcsány government between 2007 and 2009, was convicted of hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people and participated in the attack on the Public TV Headquarters in 2006.<sup>126</sup> These were carried out by the Hunnia Movement and a terrorist organisation called the National Liberation Movement of the Arrows of Hungarians, established by Toroczkai and Budaházy in 2007. It strongly indicates that the government aims to lure these nationalist-radical voters to Fidesz to prove that the governing party shares a certain affinity with them.<sup>127</sup>

### **Shift in the Domain of Russian Influence**

Interviewed experts agreed that the Kremlin's secret services have less intention to boost local enablers on the Hungarian far-right spectrum, in particular since Russia invaded Ukraine. Instead of putting direct financial and logistical efforts into organisations like Our Homeland, HVIM, or the Army of Outlaws, the Kremlin is mostly focusing on the Orbán's government.

Firstly, they have put great efforts into strengthening economic cooperation with the Orbán government, which acts as a deliberate Trojan Horse of the Kremlin within the EU and NATO. The Hungarian Prime Minister is among the few European leaders to have consistently refrained from supporting Ukraine with weapon supplies and the only one to have taken an openly anti-Ukrainian stance on several occasions. Also, the Orbán government is openly campaigning against the sanctions targeting Russia. It fits Viktor Orbán's Eurosceptic, anti-Western, and pro-Russian politics since Fidesz came to power in 2010. Viktor Orbán's Eastern Opening Strategy, in particular the strengthening of economic relations with Russia and China, served the role of expanding business opportunities for the clientelist network of the government.<sup>128</sup> Orbán's childhood friend, the wealthiest oligarch in Hungary, Lőrinc Mészáros, is the key beneficiary of these transactions, in particular the Paks 2 nuclear investment that is being financed by Russian loans.<sup>129</sup> The government has been embracing more extreme, religious fundamentalist actors since 2017, when Hungary first hosted the World Congress

of Families,<sup>130</sup> an American Christian organisation that has been accused of being an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group with links to the Kremlin.<sup>131</sup>

Secondly, in Hungary, the government-organised media actively disseminates disinformation narratives about the war to justify Russian aggression. These narratives are adopted either from official Russian communications or the pro-Kremlin media.<sup>132</sup> They are centred around ideas that “Euromaidan protests were a CIA plot to overthrow the Ukrainian regime” and consequently allow the US access to the Black Sea.<sup>133</sup> That would indicate there is a written agreement between NATO and Russia that the former would not expand towards the East. Consequently, the United States, the EU, and NATO are always framed as aggressive, imperialist actors, while the roles of Russia and Ukraine vary depending on the source of disinformation.<sup>134</sup> These narratives claim that Ukraine has no borders because “it did not register them” with the UN, and Russia, as the USSR’s successor, can do as it pleases in Ukraine and Belarus.<sup>135</sup> The recurring argument is that “Kyiv is the aggressor by violating the ceasefire”, obstructing the peaceful settlement, the ceasefire, and regularly attacking the separatists.<sup>136</sup> Since the Hungarian language is not closely related to the other, largely interrelated Slavic languages in Europe, it provides even smoother sailing for the Orbán government to create closed disinformation bubbles.

Thirdly, various factors indicate that Hungary became the ever-growing European headquarters of Russian secret services. While European countries have been downgrading the size of the staff at embassies and consulates of Russia, it is indicative that the staff of the Russian Embassy in Budapest is on the rise.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the Hungarian government invited the Headquarters of the International Investment Bank to Budapest in 2019. It is a former Soviet financial instrument that has been turned into an asset of the Kremlin in exerting economic influence.<sup>138</sup> The bank can host an unlimited number of guests according to law, without background checks and with the freedom to move unrestrainedly within the Schengen Area – which is a threat to other EU and NATO member states. Furthermore, Russian hackers have entered the servers of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry several times and stolen plenty of information since 2012. Despite the revelations of the investigative website Direkt.36ú, there was no diplomatic response and no systemic steps to reduce these vulnerabilities.<sup>139</sup> As a result, according to Dezső, “Viktor Orbán is perceived by the Western intelligence community as an agent of influence working for Russia. There is not much difference between him and KGBéla in this regard.”<sup>140</sup>

Fourthly, the Russian Orthodox Church became an infrastructural power hub for Russia on the ground. Despite that, only 14,000 citizens declared themselves Orthodox believers, even though the Orbán government has been providing huge public funds to the Russian church in Hungary.<sup>141</sup> In 2022, the Hungarian government supported the construction of an orthodox chapel with one million euro, for which the “entire Russian Orthodox Church is grateful for Viktor Orbán.”<sup>142</sup> The official reasoning is that Hungary is a Christian country, and the government’s link with Russia is an aspect of that to uphold traditional Christian values that are neglected by the West.<sup>143</sup>

The importance of this relationship as a tool was reaffirmed on several occasions. Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Church, was excluded from a package of EU sanctions against Russia after the objection of Viktor Orbán in the EU Council. Kirill serves as an influential propagandist for the Kremlin who supported the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>144</sup> The Orthodox Church facilitated the transportation of eleven Ukrainian prisoners of war to Hungary in May 2023; the POWs belonged to Transcarpathia and were captured by Russia during its ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Such unilateral diplomatic efforts are further deteriorating Hungarian-Ukrainian relations and are perceived as a way to undermine the collective efforts by the EU Member States to pressure the Kremlin into backing down from the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>145</sup> “It indicates the shift in the functioning of the Russian secret services: the Kreml is building its local capacities through its Orthodox church. It is operating uninterrupted by the Hungarian counterintelligence services”, argued Panyi.<sup>146</sup> The importance of the Orthodox Church as a tool was reaffirmed by the Hungarian government on several occasions. Patriarch Kirill, the head of Russia’s Orthodox Church, was excluded from a package of EU sanctions against Russia after the objection of Viktor Orbán in the EU Council. He serves as an influential propagandist for the Kremlin who supported the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>147</sup>

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Kreko has argued that:

[W]hen it comes to the Hungarian pro-Russian far-right, there are more useful idiots than sorcerers paid by Russia. They are selling an alternative anti-Western reality where Putin is a hero. It is mostly ideology-driven and deliberate, in contrast to Western examples where Russia still has to put great

efforts into the far-right like in Austria or France. This is not needed anymore in a country where the main venue point of Russian influence is the Orbán government.<sup>148</sup>

However, Our Homeland and its satellite organisations are still serving a useful role for the Kremlin and posing a security threat. They are openly advocating for leaving the EU and NATO, and their anti-Ukraine standpoint is even more hostile than the government's.<sup>149</sup> One difference between Fidesz and the far-right is defined by their approach towards territorial revisionism; while the far-right openly advocates for it, the government has no such policy initiatives. However, the Hungarian Prime Minister provoked international criticism at various occasions by hinting that Hungary has a right to reclaim its lost territories. One of the latest examples was the yearly political festival of Fidesz in Baile Tusnád, Romania, where Orbán said that: "We never claimed these (Transylvania and Seclerland) were Romanian territorial units."<sup>150</sup> He also posted a video of himself at a football match wearing a scarf featuring a map of Greater Hungary in 2022. The scarf included territories that are today part of Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Croatia, which were perceived as blatant nationalism and irredentism.<sup>151</sup>

Whereas KGBéla and István Gyórkös's MNA were direct connections nurtured by Russian secret services, the current Hungarian far-right is under the indirect influence of the Kremlin. Despite the fact that Russia is not actively aiming to change the behaviour of these particular actors, harmful action can still take place due to pro-Russian discourse. There is circumstantial evidence proving that these far-right actors are acting on behalf of Russia to change the public attitude of Hungarian society by pushing anti-Western, anti-Ukrainian, and pro-Russian narratives. These far-right groups approved the Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine, allegedly to protect the Hungarian minority in Ukraine and in return obtain support for their fight against Western liberal values. Our Homeland and its satellite organisations serve Russian geopolitical interests and goals by inciting irredentist action and bolstering the autonomy of Transcarpathia in Ukraine. Our Homeland politicians are regularly voting with the governing Fidesz majority. Furthermore, House Speaker László Kövér, Orbán's close ally, decided that the openly anti-US and Pro-Russian party should become a member of the parliament's Committee on Defence and Security. Consequently, Előd Novák of MH gained access to classified, NATO-related materials, among others. Therefore, the Russian influence of the Hungarian far-right movements and their devotion to the Putin ideology threatens the stability

of Hungary and the entire region, which the Hungarian government should be considered as more than a potential security concern not only for Hungary but also its NATO allies and other EU Member States.<sup>152</sup>

Providing recommendations on how to combat pro-Russian far-right narratives in a country where the government corroborates their ideas is a difficult task to do. Therefore, a holistic and cross-sectoral approach is needed from the democratic forces to map, identify, and combat the security risk posed by the pro-Russian far right in Hungary.

- Finding a reasonable balance between not interfering with the right to associate and blocking radical and far-right actors from misusing this right is not easy. Yet, local authorities would need to employ a transparent and coherent strategy towards pro-Russian far-right actors who are threatening social cohesion. It is essential that local-level municipal leaders independent from the government have a better understanding of these risks to undercut their local subversive activities in a bottom-up fashion. In cooperation with civil society organisations and think tanks specialising in pro-Russian extremism, local municipalities should analyse the activities and narratives of these local organisations to provide better democratic responses to their anti-Western messages.
- Address social reconciliation by engaging relevant stakeholders and piloting strategies to boost trust, mutual tolerance, and democratic resilience at local levels of governance. Civil society should also aim at enacting social norm change by involving younger generations to develop their knowledge and ideas, raise concerns, and co-create solutions for social inclusion. This outcome could be highly significant at the local scale where pro-Russian disinformation and far-right organisations are the most vocal.

The EU should finance pilot countering strategies for increasing the democratic participation of marginalised (i.e. rural, poor, ethnic minorities) and disengaged groups (i.e. youth) designed to empower them and reinforce their participatory process in rural areas. It should create multiplication effects of social change by establishing and forming networks of young leaders across targeted countries. Such projects should increase political knowledge through a novel digital app Democratic Compass designed to reach groups that are vulnerable to political



manipulations and distortive practices and strengthen their participation in the democratic process through information support.

- In order to design better and more powerful counter-narratives to combat anti-Western pro-Russian disinformation, the EU should provide financial support to improve the skills of targeted stakeholders (i.e. local authorities, policymakers, CSOs at national and EU levels). Democratic political forces and civil society should aim at a methodological novelty to strengthen inclusive language and frame positive narratives around the European Union, the transatlantic alliance, democratic values, and mutual tolerance.
- While robust research reveals the Kremlin's influence within the far-right in CEE, the nature of Russia's influence is changing amid the war. Further academic and policy research needs to be conducted to explain the complex underpinnings of this shift—in particular, the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church—and its security implications. This interdisciplinary approach between academics, policy experts, and investigative journalists should co-jointly open the black box of relationships. This cross-sectoral advance research, funded by NATO Public Diplomacy Division Grants, should build deeper insights into the connection between the Orbán government and the Russian Orthodox Church.
- Maintaining good political and economic relations with Russia provides a huge risk of corruption, which further undermines democratic institutions. The United States needs to invoke the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and sanction government officials and oligarchs centred around Viktor Orbán for their extensive involvement in corruption. This is in particular warranted about Lőrinc Mészáros, who is extensively involved in the Paks 2 nuclear investment.
- The EU could also do more to push back against authoritarian foreign influence related to its Member States. The Commission should use its rich Rule of Law toolkit to monitor investments from suspected sources of malpractice such as monopolisation, corruption, and media capture in Hungary. The Commission should also reform its own EU Transparency Register to map lobbying activities in the EU institutions more efficiently. Despite the fact that it is obligatory to disclose lobbying on behalf of third-country governments, the current register is not legally binding, lacks sanctions, and is poorly enforced.

<sup>1</sup> András Rácz, “Authoritarian Ties: The Case of Russia and Hungary,” *Insight & Analysis*, 22 October 2021, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/authoritarian-ties-case-russia-and-hungary>.

<sup>2</sup> When the crisis in Ukraine was already underway, Hungary contracted Russia’s Rosatom to build two new nuclear power plant blocks in Paks in 2014. It was done without announcing a public tender and the project was financed by a €10 billion loan from Russia. One of the main Hungarian subcontractors was a close associate and oligarch of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Lőrinc Mészáros.

<sup>3</sup> András Dezső, “The Secret Life of Bela Kovacs - European Press Prize.” 2017. *European Press Prize*, 27 February 2017. <https://www.europeanpressprize.com/article/the-secret-life-of-bela-kovacs/>.

<sup>4</sup> Péter Krekó, Lóránt Gyóri, and Edit Zgut, “From Russia with Hate - The Activity of pro-Russian Extremist Groups in Central-Eastern Europe,” 2014.

[https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_summary\\_analysis\\_EN\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_summary_analysis_EN_20170428.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> One of the empirical backbones of this chapter is based on in-depth interviews with investigative journalists (Szabolcs Panyi, András Dezső, Szilvia Német), a former counterintelligence officer Ferenc Katrein, and an expert of Russian influence and disinformation, Péter Krekó.

<sup>6</sup> András Bozóki and Sarah Cueva, “Xenophobia and Power Politics: The Hungarian Far Right,” in *Transcript Verlag eBooks*, 2021, 109–20. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839453155-008>

<sup>7</sup> Germany, France, and Hungary Poland. 2015. “Gender as Symbolic Glue the Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe Edited By: Eszter Kováts Maari Põim.” <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/11382.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts, and Andrea Pető, “Gender as Symbolic Glue: How ‘Gender’ Became an Umbrella Term for the Rejection of the (Neo)Liberal Order,”., <https://hal.science/hal-03232926/document>

<sup>9</sup> Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003133520>

<sup>10</sup> Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, “Egyetlen Migrációt Ellenző Párt Maradt: A Mi Hazánk,” [Only one anti-migration party left: Our Homeland.] 30 August 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhXquTJLGvg>

<sup>11</sup> “Oroszország Európa jobbik fele? – út a normalitás felé [Russia is the better part of Europe? - on the way to normality.] | Betyársereg,” 2022. <https://betyarsereg.hu/oroszorszag-europa-jobbik-fele-ut-a-normalitas-fele/>

<sup>12</sup> On the night of 8 February 1945, thousands of Hungarian and German soldiers attempted to get through the blockade of the Soviet forces, which eventually resulted in the death of most German and Hungarian forces. According to Krisztián Ungváry, a historian expert of the era, the outbreaks were not defending Europe, but rather victims who prolonged the agony of Nazi Germany. See more here: <https://en.kitoresnapja.hu/mitosz-es-valosag>

<sup>13</sup> Pető, Andrea. “Revisionist Histories, ‘Future Memories’: Far-Right Memorialization Practices in Hungary.” *European Politics and Society* 18 (1): 41–51, 2016.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2016.1269442>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Krekó, Péter, Lóránt Gyóri, and Edit Zgut, “From Russia with Hate - The Activity of pro-Russian Extremist Groups in Central-Eastern Europe.” *Political Capital*, 2017.

[https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_summary\\_analysis\\_EN\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_summary_analysis_EN_20170428.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Juhász, Attila, Lóránt Győri, and Edit Zgut. “The Truth Today Is What Putin Says It Is’ The Activity of Pro-Russian Extremist Groups in Hungary.” *Political Capital*, 2017.

[https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_HU\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_HU_20170428.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Róna, Dániel. “A Jobbik-Jelenség. A Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom Térnyerésének Okai.” [The Jobbik phenomena - Reasons behind the rise of the Movement for a Better Hungary.] *Magyar Tudományos Akadémia*, 2016. [http://real.mtak.hu/37892/2/rona\\_kotet.pdf](http://real.mtak.hu/37892/2/rona_kotet.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Lakmusz, “Orosz Propaganda a Magyar Állam Támogatásával: Hazai Dezinformáció Az Orosz-Ukrán Háború És a Választások Idején - Lakmusz,” [Russian propaganda with the support of the Hungarian state: domestic disinformation during Russian-Ukraine war and elections.] *Lakmusz*, 25 May 2023. <https://www.lakmusz.hu/orosz-propaganda-a-magyar-allam-tamogatasaval-hazai-dezinformacio-az-orosz-ukran-haboru-es-a-valasztasok-idejen/>

<sup>19</sup> Panyi, Szabolcs. “Getting to the Bottom of Hungary’s Russian Spying Problem.” *Balkan Insight*, 30 November 2022. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/11/30/getting-to-the-bottom-of-hungarys-russian-spying-problem/>

<sup>20</sup> Interview on Zoom with András Dezső on 11 July 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>21</sup> Infostart.Hu. “Jogerősen életfogytiglant kapott a bőnyi rendőrgyilkos.” [The murderer of Bőny was sentenced to life imprisonment.] *Infostart.hu*, 11 December 2019.

<https://infostart.hu/bunugyek/2019/12/11/jogerosen-letfogytiglant-kapott-a-bonyi-rendorgyilkos>

<sup>22</sup> Veronika Munk, András Dezső. “A „migráns csürhe” ellen szervezkedett a rendőrgyilkos.” [The police murderer was conspiring against the “migrant horde’s”] *Index*, 11 November 2016. [https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/26/gyorkos\\_istvan\\_portre/](https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/26/gyorkos_istvan_portre/)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> On the night of 8 February 1945, thousands of Hungarian and German soldiers attempted to get through the blockade of the Soviet forces, which eventually resulted in the death of most German and Hungarian forces. According to Krisztián Ungváry, a historian expert of the era, the outbreaks were not defending Europe, but rather victims who prolonged the agony of Nazi Germany. See more here: <https://en.kitoresnapja.hu/mitosz-es-valosag>.

<sup>25</sup> Veronika Munk, András Dezső. “A „migráns csürhe” ellen szervezkedett a rendőrgyilkos.” [The police murderer was conspiring against the “migrant hordes.] *Index*, 11 November 2016. [https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/26/gyorkos\\_istvan\\_portre/](https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/26/gyorkos_istvan_portre/)

<sup>26</sup> Juhász, Attila, Lóránt Győri, Edit Zgut, and András Dezső. “The Truth Today Is What Putin Says It Is.” *Political Capital*, 2017. [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_HU\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_HU_20170428.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Sándor Németh Márton. “„Békét Oroszországgal!” – orosz zászló és munkásököl a Nyugati téren.” [Make Peace with Russia - Russian flag and the fist of the workers at the Square Western.] *Index*, 7 February 2023. <https://index.hu/belfold/2023/02/06/munkaspart-thurmer-gyula-tuntetes-nato-haboru-oroszorszag-ukrajna-demonstracio-orosz-ukran-konfliktus>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Szabolcs, Panyi, András Dezső. “Orosz diplomaták gyakorlatoztak a rendőrgyilkos brigádjával.” [Russian diplomats were holding drills with the gang of the police murderer.] *Index*, 4 November 2016.

[https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/27/orosz\\_hirszerzok\\_gyakorlatoztak\\_a\\_rendorgyilkos\\_harco\\_saival/](https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/27/orosz_hirszerzok_gyakorlatoztak_a_rendorgyilkos_harco_saival/)

<sup>31</sup> András Dezső, “Szinte könyörögtek az orosz pénzért Győrökösök.” [Győrökös was almost begging for Russian money.] *Index*, 8 November 2016.

[https://index.hu/belfold/2016/11/07/szinte\\_konyorogtek\\_a\\_penzert\\_gyorkosek\\_az\\_oroszoktol/](https://index.hu/belfold/2016/11/07/szinte_konyorogtek_a_penzert_gyorkosek_az_oroszoktol/)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Veronika Munk, András Dezső. “A „migráns csürhe” ellen szervezkedett a rendőrgyilkos.” [The police murderer was conspiring against the “migrant hordes.”] *Index*, 11 November 2016. [https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/26/gyorkos\\_istvan\\_portre/](https://index.hu/belfold/2016/10/26/gyorkos_istvan_portre/)

<sup>34</sup> Juhász, Attila, Lóránt Győri, Edit Zgut, and András Dezső. “The Truth Today Is What Putin Says It Is.” *Political Capital*, 2017. [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_HU\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_HU_20170428.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Interview on Zoom with András Dezső on 11 July 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>36</sup> Szabolcs, Panyi. “The Great Escape of ‘KGBéla’, Hungarian MEP Accused of Spying for Russia.” *Index*, 11 October 2017.

[https://index.hu/english/2017/10/10/kgbela\\_escape\\_russia\\_hungary/](https://index.hu/english/2017/10/10/kgbela_escape_russia_hungary/)

<sup>37</sup> Interview on Zoom with Katrein Ferenc on 10 July 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Interview on Zoom with Katrein Ferenc on 10 July 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>41</sup> András Dezső. “A bányi rendőrgyilkosság hazavágta a hungaristákat.” [The murder of a policeman undermined the “Hungarists”] *Index*, 20 June 2019.

[https://index.hu/belfold/2016/11/16/az\\_arcvonalosoknak\\_ezzel\\_befellegzett/](https://index.hu/belfold/2016/11/16/az_arcvonalosoknak_ezzel_befellegzett/)

<sup>42</sup> László Szemán János, Elítélték a Rendőrgyilkos Hungarista Szervezetének Nyolc Tagját. “Elítélték a rendőrgyilkos hungarista szervezetének nyolc tagját,” [Eight members of the police-murderer “Hungarist” organisation were convicted.] *Magyar Nemzet*, 13 June 2022.

<https://magyarnemzet.hu/belfold/2022/06/eliteltek-a-rendorgyilkos-hungarista-szervezetenek-nyolc-tagjat>

<sup>43</sup> Interview on Zoom with Katrein Ferenc on 10 July 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Juhász, Attila, Lóránt Győri, Edit Zgut, and András Dezső. “The Truth Today Is What Putin Says It Is.” *Political Capital*, 2017. [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_HU\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_HU_20170428.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Jobbik has been dominating the Hungarian far-right party scene under the leadership of Gábor Vona up until 2018. After it took a centrist turn, the party split and László Toroczkai established a new party based on the radical flank of Jobbik.

<sup>46</sup> Interview on Zoom with András Dezső on 11 July 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>47</sup> Chudjakov, Nikita. “Hungarian Far-Right MEP Suspected as Russian Spy.” *Euractiv*, 16 May 2014. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/hungarian-far-right-mep-suspected-as-russian-spy/>

<sup>48</sup> András Dezső, “The Secret Life of Bela Kovacs – European Press Prize.”, *European Press Prize*, 27 February 2017. <https://www.europeanpressprize.com/article/the-secret-life-of-bela-kovacs/>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with András Dezső on 11 July 2023.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with András Dezső on 11 July 2023.

<sup>52</sup> András Dezső, “The Secret Life of Bela Kovacs - European Press Prize.” *European Press Prize*, 27 February 2017. <https://www.europeanpressprize.com/article/the-secret-life-of-bela-kovacs/>

<sup>53</sup> Despite that Béla Kovács claimed that his Japanese wife has no linkages to Russian secret services, her past holds a number of secret incidents and facts suggesting that the Soviet secret service, or the Committee of State Security (commonly known as the KGB) has been a common link in the couple’s life. See more here: Richard Field, “Jobbik MEP ‘KGBéla’ Kovács and Wife Outted as Russian Spies,” *The Budapest Beacon*, 7 October 2014, <https://budapestbeacon.com/jobbik-mep-kgbela-kovacs-and-wife-outted-as-russian-spies/>

<sup>54</sup> Szabolcs, Panyi. “The Great Escape of ‘KGBéla’, Hungarian MEP Accused of Spying for Russia.” *Index*, 11 October 2017.

[https://index.hu/english/2017/10/10/kgbela\\_escape\\_russia\\_hungary/](https://index.hu/english/2017/10/10/kgbela_escape_russia_hungary/)

<sup>55</sup> András Dezső. “Kágébéla lehet a Jobbik veszte.” [KGBéla might have been the fate of jobbik.] *Index*, 15 May 2020.

[https://index.hu/belfold/2014/05/15/kagebela\\_lehet\\_a\\_jobbik\\_veszte/](https://index.hu/belfold/2014/05/15/kagebela_lehet_a_jobbik_veszte/)

<sup>56</sup> András Dezső “The Secret Life of Bela Kovacs - European Press Prize,” *European Press Prize*, 27 February 2017, <https://www.europeanpressprize.com/article/the-secret-life-of-bela-kovacs/>

<sup>57</sup> Jobbik changed its approach towards Russia various times in the last two decades. Due to its radical far-right roots of the party, it originally accounted for an anti-Russian stance in the mid-2000s then took a pro-Kremlin turn after 2008, largely thanks to the effective operation of Béla Kovács. As a result, Jobbik became one of the most ardent supporters of the Kremlin with a hostile approach towards Ukraine by 2014. After the party decided to shift towards the centre for the 2018 parliamentary elections, it turned down its pro-Russian rhetoric once again and became critical of the Kremlin by 2023. See details here:

<https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/03/26/jobbik-fidesz-kdnp-orban-viktor-vona-gabor-kommunikacio-hasonlosag-oroszorszag-szankciok-keleti-kapcsolatok>

<sup>58</sup> Mateusz Piskorski was formerly a member of Samoobrona, then established the pro-Russian radical Change (Zmiana) party in 2015. He has an ongoing trial for collaborating with Russian and Chinese secret services. Piskorski was detained in 2016 and remained behind bars until 2019 when the court released him on bail of PLN 200,000. See more here: <https://wyborcza.pl/7,173236,30092711,putin-s-agents-of-chaos-how-pro-russian-trolls-poison-poland-s.html>

<sup>59</sup> Zoltán Ember. “Kovács Béla él és virul Strasbourgban.” [Béla Kovács is alive and kicking in Strasbourg.] *24.hu*, 15 June 2016. <https://24.hu/belfold/2016/06/15/kovacs-bela-el-es-virul-strasbourgban/>

<sup>60</sup> Reporter, Guardian Staff. 2017a. “Poland Detains Pro-Kremlin Party Leader for ‘Spying.’” *The Guardian*, 12 April 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/19/poland-detains-pro-kremlin-party-leader-mateusz-piskorski-spying>

<sup>61</sup> Interview on Zoom with Szabolcs Panyi on 13 July 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>62</sup> András, Dezső. “A Glorious Match Made in Russia.” *Index*, 2 October 2017.

[https://index.hu/english/2014/09/28/a\\_glorious\\_match\\_made\\_in\\_russia/](https://index.hu/english/2014/09/28/a_glorious_match_made_in_russia/).

<sup>63</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen was one of the founding members of the organisation in 2009. After Marine Le Pen overtook the leadership of the party in 2011, she sought cooperation with more moderate Eurosceptic parties and ended formal collaboration with AENM.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Szabolcs Panyi on 13 July 2023.

- <sup>65</sup> Szabolcs Panyi, “The Great Escape of ‘KGBéla’, Hungarian MEP Accused of Spying for Russia.” *Index*, 11 October 2017.  
[https://index.hu/english/2017/10/10/kgbela\\_escape\\_russia\\_hungary/](https://index.hu/english/2017/10/10/kgbela_escape_russia_hungary/)
- <sup>66</sup> Interview on Zoom with Ferenc Katrein on 10 July 2023 in Warsaw.
- <sup>67</sup> Krekó, Péter and Mitchell a. Orenstein. “A Russian Spy in Brussels? The Case of ‘KGBéla’ -- and What It Means for Europe.” *Foreign Affairs*, June 26, 2023.  
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/hungary/2014-05-29/russian-spy-brussels>
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> András Dezső. “Az Orosz Kém, Akit Majdnem Elfogtak.” [The Russian spy who almost got caught.] *Hvg.Hu*, 27 September 2022.  
[https://hvg.hu/360/20220927\\_Dezso\\_Andras\\_Az\\_orosz\\_kem\\_akit\\_majdnem\\_elfogtak](https://hvg.hu/360/20220927_Dezso_Andras_Az_orosz_kem_akit_majdnem_elfogtak)
- <sup>70</sup> EUobserver. “Former Jobbik MEP Sentenced to Prison for Russia Spying.” *EUobserver*, 27 September 2022. <https://euobserver.com/tickers/156154>.
- <sup>71</sup> Mércé. “Rasszista demonstrációt tartott a Mi Hazánk Törökszentmiklóson, ellentüntetők is megjelentek a rendezvényen – Percről percre a Mércén « Mércé.” [Our Homeland held a Racist demonstration in Törökszentmiklós, there were counter-demonstrators at the event - Live on Mércé.] *Mércé*, 23 May 2019. <https://merce.hu/2019/05/21/rasszista-vonulast-tart-a-mi-hazank-torokszentmikloson-ellentuntetok-is-erkeznek-percrol-percre-a-mercen/>.
- <sup>72</sup> Interview with András Dezső on 11 July 2023.
- <sup>73</sup> John R. Haines. “A New Political Movement Emerges on Hungary’s Far Right *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 2018. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/07/a-new-political-movement-emerges-on-hungarys-far-right/>.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>75</sup> Political Capital. “A Mi Hazánk stratégiája: szociális fókusz, radikális rendpártiság és konteók”, [The strategy of Our Homeland: social focus, radical law and order stance and conteos.] *PC Blog*, 9 June 2022. <https://pcblog.atlatszo.hu/2022/06/09/nem-a-jobbik-2-0-a-mi-hazank-valasztasi-eredmenyeinek-melyelemzese/>
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>77</sup> Inotai, Edit. “Hungary’s Orbán Eyes Opportunity, Risk in Rising Far-Right Party.” *Balkan Insight*, 22 April 2022. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/04/22/hungarys-Orban-eyes-opportunity-risk-in-rising-far-right-party/>
- <sup>78</sup> Tamás Pál. “Több ezren vettek részt a Mi Hazánk járványszabályok elleni tüntetésén Budapesten.” [Thousands have participated in the demonstration against the pandemic restrictions of the Our Homeland in Budapest.] *Telex*, 16 January 2022.  
<https://telex.hu/koronavirus/2022/01/16/mi-hazank-tuntetes-koronavirus-jarvany-szabalyok-korlatozasok-covid-diktatura>
- <sup>79</sup> Jakab, Kárpáti. “Így Álltak Át a Víruszkeptikusok Az Orosz Propagandára - Lakmusz.” [This is how “virus-sceptics” have switched to Russian propaganda.] *Lakmusz*, 13 February 2023. <https://www.lakmusz.hu/igy-alltak-at-a-viruszkeptikusok-az-orosz-propagandara/>
- <sup>80</sup> Interview with Szabolcs Panyi on 13 July 2023.
- <sup>81</sup> Mandiner. “Mi Hazánk: Ne fizessünk Ukrajnának!” [Our Homeland: Do not pay to Ukraine!], *Mandiner.hu*, 7 December 2022.  
[https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20221207\\_belfold\\_ellenzek\\_mi\\_hazank\\_ukrajna\\_tamogatas\\_hatarozati\\_javaslat](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20221207_belfold_ellenzek_mi_hazank_ukrajna_tamogatas_hatarozati_javaslat)
- <sup>82</sup> Kata, Bálint, Bulcsú Hunyadi, Róbert László, and Csaba Molnár. ““Minél Jobbra, Minél Jobban” - A Magyar (Szélső)Jobb 100 Évvel Trianon Után.” [The more to the right, the better - The Hungarian (Far)-Right 100 years after Trianon.] *Political Capital*, 2020.

[https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/pc_boll_minel_jobbra_minel_jobban_2020.pdf)

[admin/source/documents/pc\\_boll\\_minel\\_jobbra\\_minel\\_jobban\\_2020.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/pc_boll_minel_jobbra_minel_jobban_2020.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> “Putyin jogos testvérháborúja? – a magyar szélsőjobb a nácitlanító Kreml szolgálatában, kivételekkel.” [Putin’s legitimate “war between brothers”? - The Hungarian far-right in the service of the Kreml’s denazification, with exceptions], *Political Capital*, 2022.

[https://politicalcapital.hu/hireink.php?article\\_read=1&article\\_id=2979](https://politicalcapital.hu/hireink.php?article_read=1&article_id=2979)

<sup>84</sup> Yuri Gagarin was the first human to travel into space, launching to orbit aboard the Vostok 3KA-3 (Vostok 1) on 12 April 1961. See more details:

[https://www.esa.int/About\\_Us/ESA\\_history/50\\_years\\_of\\_humans\\_in\\_space/Yuri\\_Gagarin](https://www.esa.int/About_Us/ESA_history/50_years_of_humans_in_space/Yuri_Gagarin)

<sup>85</sup> Interview on Zoom with Péter Krekó on 2 August 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>86</sup> Zrt Hvg Kiadó. “Putyin szerint több országnak is lehet területi követelése Ukrajnával szemben, egyedül a magyar kormány nem utasította el.” [According to Putin, many countries might have territorial claims towards Ukraine, the Hungarian government was the only one that did not reject it.] *hvg.hu*, 6 November 2022.

[https://hvg.hu/itthon/20221106\\_putyin\\_ukrajna\\_magyarország\\_területi\\_koveteles](https://hvg.hu/itthon/20221106_putyin_ukrajna_magyarország_területi_koveteles)

<sup>87</sup> Dávid Kovács Ferenc. “Toroczkai László Magyarországhoz csatolná Kárpátalját.” [László Toroczkai would annex Transcarpathia to Hungary.] *Index*, 14 November 2022.

<https://index.hu/kulfold/2022/11/13/toroczkai-laszlo-orosz-ukran-konfliktus-haboru-karpatalja/>

<sup>88</sup> Sadecki, Andrzej. “Ukraine–Hungary: The Intensifying Dispute over the Hungarian Minority’s Rights.” *OSW*, 2018. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2018-08-14/ukraine-hungary-intensifying-dispute-over-hungarian-0>

<sup>89</sup> An estimated 80,000 ethnic Hungarians live in Zakarpattia province in Western Ukraine. The main cause of the tension was the Education Act passed by the Ukrainian parliament in September 2017 that enhanced a comprehensive reform of the education system and imposed serious restrictions on the use of the languages of national minorities, including Hungarian, in school education.

<sup>90</sup> Mandiner, “Mi Hazánk: Ne fizessünk Ukrajnának!” [Our Homeland: Do not pay to Ukraine!], 7 December 2022.

[https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20221207\\_belfold\\_ellenzek\\_mi\\_hazank\\_ukrajna\\_tamogatas\\_hatarozati\\_javaslat](https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20221207_belfold_ellenzek_mi_hazank_ukrajna_tamogatas_hatarozati_javaslat)

<sup>91</sup> Mi Hazánk. “Dúró Dóra a Russia Today-Nak: Ukrajnának Le Kell Mondania Területekről,” [Dóra Dúró for the Russia Today: Ukraine must give up territories.] 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBUFCH4bMUI>

<sup>92</sup> Toroczkai László. “Az Eltitkolt Igazság Az Ukrajnai Háború Mögött [Eng Sub],” 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjIlWjtiN0E>

<sup>93</sup> Eszter, Neuberger. “Putyin Háborús Propagandáját Viszi Magával a Parlamentbe a Mi Hazánk.” [Our Homeland is bringing Putin’s war propaganda into the Parliament.] *Lakmusz*, 27 May 2022. <https://www.lakmusz.hu/putyin-haborus-propagandajat-viszi-magaval-a-parlamentbe-a-mi-hazank/>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Toroczkai László. “Az Eltitkolt Igazság Az Ukrajnai Háború Mögött [Eng Sub],” [The hidden truth behind the Ukrainian war.] 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjIlWjtiN0E>

<sup>96</sup> Dániel Dér. “Az új európai szövetség.” [The new European alliance.] *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*, 13 July 2023. <https://mihazank.hu/az-uj-europai-szovetseg/>

<sup>97</sup> Kata, Bálint, Bulcsú Hunyadi, Róbert László, and Csaba Molnár. “Minél Jobbra, Minél Jobban” - A Magyar (Szélső)Jobb 100 Évvel Trianon Után.” [The more to the right, the

better - The Hungarian (Far)-Right 100 years after Trianon.] *Political Capital*, 2020.  
[https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/pc_boll_minel_jobbra_minel_jobban_2020.pdf)

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<sup>98</sup> Szerk. “Hogyan radikalizálódott a Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom. A „Nagy-Magyarország” térképektől terrorista merényletek kiterveléséig – Adevãrul.” [ How did the Sixty-Four County Movement get radicalized. From the maps of the “Greater Hungary” to the planning of terrorist attacks.] *EuroCom - Romániai Sajtófigyelő*, 26 May 2016.

<https://eurocom.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/hogyan-radikalizalodott-a-hatvannegy-varmegye-ifjusagi-mozgalom-a-nagy-magyarorszag-terkepektol-terrorista-merenyletek-kiterveleseig-adevarul/>

<sup>99</sup> Farkasadmin. “Farkasok - Hagyományörző és Ifjúságképző Csoport.” [Wolves - Traditionalist and Youth Training groups.] *Farkasok*, 5 August 2023. <https://farkasfalka.com/>

<sup>100</sup> Anarki. “Farkasok: Nem vagyunk a Jobbik magánhadserége.” [Wolves: We are not the private army of Jobbik.] 444, 3 August 2021. <https://444.hu/2016/03/10/farkasok-nem-vagyunk-a-jobbik-maganhadserege>.

<sup>101</sup> Attila, Lóránt Győri, Edit Zgut, and András Dezső. “The Truth Today Is What Putin Says It Is.” *Political Capital*, 2017. [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_country\\_study\\_HU\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_country_study_HU_20170428.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> After former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany admitted to lying about the severe state of the economy to win re-election in April 2006, thousands of people protested peacefully for days demanding his resignation, but a few hundred rioters and radicals attacked the Headquarter of the Hungarian Public Broadcaster. Main football clubs and the radical right scene have been prominent during the clashes between the protestors and the police in Budapest. See more here: “CNN.com - Hungary: Rioters Attack TV Station - Sep 18, 2006.” n.d. <https://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/09/18/hungary.riots/>

<sup>104</sup> Tamás Fábrián. “Náci vagyok, vállalom! Vona meg a barátom.” [I am a nazi, I admit it. And Vona is my friend.] *Index*, 23 November 2015.

[https://index.hu/belfold/2015/06/15/naci\\_vagyok\\_vallalom\\_vona\\_meg\\_a\\_baratom/](https://index.hu/belfold/2015/06/15/naci_vagyok_vallalom_vona_meg_a_baratom/)

<sup>105</sup> Miklós Horthy was an admiral who served as the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary between the two World Wars and most of World War II—from 1 March 1920 to 15 October 1944. As head of state, he established an authoritarian, ultraconservative nationalist and revisionist regime, and in 1944, he was responsible for the mass deportation of 400,000 Hungarian Jews who were murdered in Auschwitz.

<sup>106</sup> Mi Hazánk Mozgalom. “Terepszemle a Betyársereggel a Közrend Érdekében,” [Field oversight with the Army of Outlaws or the sake of public security.] 2021.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZIcMSuYPkM>

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Nemzeti.net. “Egészségügyi sétát tartott a Betyársereg és a Légio Hungária Sopronban.” [The Army of Outlaws and the Légio Hungária took a “healthy walk” in Sopron.]

*Nemzeti.net*, 21 June 2023. <https://nemzeti.net/egeszsegugyi-setat-tartott-a-betyarsereg-es-a-legio-hungaria-sopronban-20932741.html>

<sup>109</sup> Zgut-Pryzbylska, Edit. (ed). “Visegrad Group - Disinformation and Civil Society Mapping Report.” *Techsoup*. 2023. [https://www.techsoupeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TechSoup\\_Disinformation-and-Civil-Society-Regional-Mapping-Report\\_Visegrad\\_Group.pdf](https://www.techsoupeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TechSoup_Disinformation-and-Civil-Society-Regional-Mapping-Report_Visegrad_Group.pdf)



<sup>110</sup> Péter Krekó, Lóránt Győri, and Edit Zgut, “From Russia with Hate – The Activity of pro-Russian Extremist Groups in Central-Eastern Europe,” 2014. [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_summary\\_analysis\\_EN\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_summary_analysis_EN_20170428.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> Various cases demonstrated these efforts in CEE: Slovak far-right paramilitary figures were fighting in Eastern Ukraine and promoted the separatists’ case in Slovakia. One of them was the case of Martin Keprta, a former member of the Slovak Conscripts (Slovenskí Branci-SB), whose organisation had received training from ex-members of Spetsnaz, the Russian military intelligence’s special forces. See more here: [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_summary\\_analysis\\_EN\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_summary_analysis_EN_20170428.pdf)

<sup>112</sup> According to the latest census in 2018, the number of Hungarian minorities in Transcarpathia is approximately 131,000 people. See more here:

<https://hang.hu/kulfold/mennyi-a-magyar-karpataljan-102494#:~:text=T%C3%A1mogassa%20a%20Magyar%20Hangot!&text=Tizen%C3%B6t%20%C3%A9v%20ut%C3%A1n%20k%C3%A9sz%C3%BClt%20demogr%C3%A1fiai,helyett%20k%C3%B6r%C3%BClbel%C3%BCl%20131%20ezren%20%C3%A9lhetnek>

<sup>113</sup> HVG. “Orosz Dezinformációs Kampanynak Tűnő SMS-Ek Élezik a Feszültséget Kárpátalján,” [Tension raised by sms’ resembling Russian disinformation in Transcarpathia.] *HVG.Hu*, 2022. [https://hvg.hu/vilag/20220322\\_dezinformacios\\_kampany\\_karpatalja](https://hvg.hu/vilag/20220322_dezinformacios_kampany_karpatalja)

<sup>114</sup> *Alfahir.hu*. “Bojkott indult a kárpátaljai magyarokért,” [A boycott was launched for the Hungarian minorities in transcarpathia.] *Alfahir.hu*, 2015.

[https://alfahir.hu/hirek/bojkott\\_indult\\_a\\_karpataljai\\_magyarokert](https://alfahir.hu/hirek/bojkott_indult_a_karpataljai_magyarokert)

<sup>115</sup> “Fegyveres ukrán szervezet fenyegette meg a Jobbikot és a HVIM-et | Betyársereg.” [Armed Ukrainian organization threatened Jobbik and the HVIM. - Army of Outlaws.] *Betyarsereg*, 2015. <https://betyarsereg.hu/fegyveres-ukran-szervezet-fenyegette-meg-a-jobbikot-es-a-hvim-et/>

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Péter Krekó, Lóránt Győri, and Edit Zgut, “From Russia with Hate – The Activity of pro-Russian Extremist Groups in Central-Eastern Europe,” 2014. [https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC\\_NED\\_summary\\_analysis\\_EN\\_20170428.pdf](https://politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/documents/PC_NED_summary_analysis_EN_20170428.pdf)

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Maszol.Ro*. “Itt a vádirat: bemutatjuk a „székelyföldi terrorizmus” ügyészégi dossziéját.” [Here is the indictment: we present the prosecutor's file of the "terrorism in Seclerland.] *Maszol*, 23 May 2016. [https://maszol.ro/index.php/tarsadalom/64783-itt-a-vadirat-bemutatjuk-a-szekelyfoldi-terrorizmus-ugyeszegi-dossziejat?utm\\_source=mandiner&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_campaign=mandiner\\_201610](https://maszol.ro/index.php/tarsadalom/64783-itt-a-vadirat-bemutatjuk-a-szekelyfoldi-terrorizmus-ugyeszegi-dossziejat?utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_201610)

<sup>120</sup> Interview on Zoom with Szilvia Német on 3 August 2023 in Warsaw.

<sup>121</sup> *Blikk-Infó*. “Döbbenetes: ezért vadásznak a zsaruk a magyar zsoldosokra.” [Shocking: this is why cops are chasing Hungarian sorcerers.] *Blikk*, 29 March 2019.

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