
RUSSIA IN HUNGARIAN PUBLIC OPINION

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1. Introduction

Issues of foreign policy are traditionally treated as marginal in Hungarian political discourses. A good indicator of how little interest foreign policy issues generate is the low rate of familiarity with the names of European leaders, even in comparison to other countries in the region (see for example: Globsec, 2018). But Russia is clearly an exception to this rule. The strengthening Russian–Hungarian relationship – in line with the ‘opening up to the East’ policy of the post-2010 Orbán cabinets – has deeply divided Hungarian politics and Hungarian public opinion. Russia’s higher profile in the Hungarian mind is partly a consequence of the crisis in Crimea and Russian aggression toward Ukraine. Still, interestingly, since the annexation of Crimea – and despite the unfavourable historical experiences of Hungarians with Russia – there has been a decline in Hungarians’ threat perception towards Russia.

While it is a commonplace that public opinion is primarily shaped by historical experience, this chapter will argue - based on the experiences from Hungary, where government has a dominant role in the public space – that political rhetoric can overwrite the impact of historical experiences.¹ The reason is that foreign policy is very distant from the day-to-day experiences of ordinary people, and this fact offers great scope for shaping public opinion. Of course, it is not so everywhere: there are countries where the scope for reshaping public opinion is more limited, when it comes to Russia, what happened in Hungary could not occur in Poland, for example, partly because of the historical experience of the Poles towards Russia, but more importantly,

¹ For a review of the literature on the influenceability of public opinion, see also Krekó et al. (2011). For a more detailed review of mostly (but not exclusively) the American context, see Friedman and Friedman (2012). For the centralization of the media market, see Vasarhelyi (2017).

due to the higher level of political pluralism and lower level of media centralization in the country. Namely: a political force that was highly critical of Russia comes to power and promptly does a U-turn, outdoing the pro-Russian stance of the previous Gyurcsány-cabinets (2005-2010), which it had previously criticized for its sympathy to-wards Russia.

The relationship with Russia, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, has become a politically divisive issue not only in Hungary, but all over the Western world. In the European Parliament, it is predominantly the populist, radical right-wing and left-wing parties that support Putin's Russia in their voting, their rhetoric and their diplomatic gestures; meanwhile the mainstream centre-right, liberal, social democratic and green parties are much more restrained (Krekó et al., 2015; Krekó and Györi, 2016; Shekhovtsov, 2017).

And that affects public opinion: those who vote for populist right-wing parties in Western Europe are much more supportive of Vladimir Putin and Russia generally (Taylor, 2017; Letterman, 2018). In the US, meanwhile, public opinion has undergone a truly dramatic change – presumably not unrelated to the (mostly rhetorical) friendly gestures of President Trump to-ward Russia and Vladimir Putin, and to the fact that Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential elections on Donald Trump's side, and against Hillary Clinton. The traditionally hawkish Republican electorate now regards Russia as much less of a threat; meanwhile the Democrats – generally the doves in this respect – keeps a bigger distance from Russia now (Bialik, 2018). Thus, on this question, the two electorates practically swapped places.

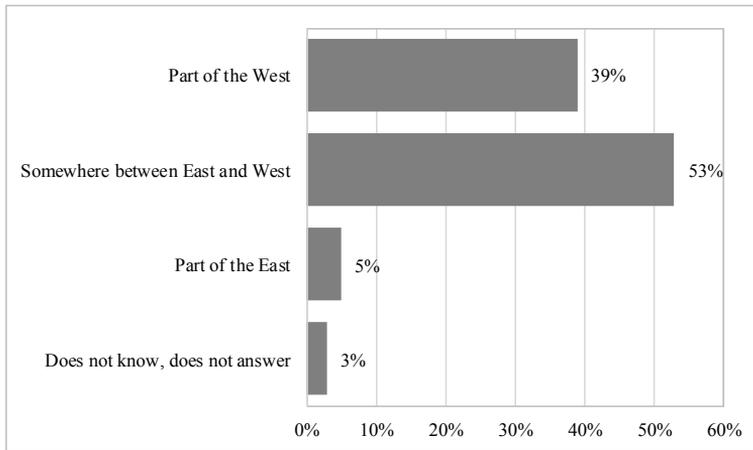
In what follows, we review the changes that have taken place in Hungarian public opinion with regard to Russia and its leader since the transition, and especially since the annexation of Crimea. This review is not comprehensive. We have analysed those research reports that we have found relevant from both the methodological and the psycho-logical point of view. All the findings we quote stem from representative public opinion research involving large samples.

2. East versus West

Foreign policy attitudes towards a specific country cannot be examined in isolation, but only in relation to attitudes toward other countries. Investigating attitudes toward specific countries in the broader framework of attitudes toward East versus West is a typical, and a relevant approach at the same time. The more general the phrasing, the more likely the Hungarian electorate are to choose the West. Globsec's 2017 research showed that almost eight times as many Hungarian voters (39 per cent) thought that Hungary should belong

to the West as thought it should belong to the East (5 per cent) (Globsec, 2017). In 2018, these figures were even more striking: 3 per cent said Hungary should belong to the East, while 45 per cent expressed a Western orientation (Globsec, 2018). At the same time, it is important to note that most respondents (53 per cent in 2017; 47 per cent in 2018) were of the opinion that Hungary should embrace the ‘bridge country’ concept and position itself between East and West (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1 *Hungary should be...*



Source: Globsec (2017).

The same research reveals that the majority of Hungarians hold a favourable view of Western institutions: 61 per cent of respondents thought the EU was a good thing (only 10 per cent thought it bad) and 58 per cent also had a good opinion of NATO (only 8 per cent had a bad opinion). Some 65 per cent of respondents had a favourable opinion of the United Nations. In an imaginary referendum, 76 per cent of Hungarians would vote to stay in NATO and 79 per cent to stay in the EU (11 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively, would vote to leave).² Some 81 per cent of Hungarians think NATO membership is important for the country, and more agree than disagree that Hungary should allow NATO to install military hardware in the country. Support for NATO is remarkably high by Eastern and Central European standards.

² For comparison: Hungary’s accession to NATO in 1997 was supported by 86 per cent of voters, while 83 per cent backed EU accession in 2003.

Moreover, respondents' support for NATO is more than just theoretical and is founded on more than simply selfish considerations. More than two thirds of Hungarians (68 per cent) agree that if an armed attack targets one member state, then Hungary should play its part in the defence operation. Of course, that principle of collective defence is clearly established under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty; yet support for it is not self-evident. In Germany, for example, an earlier research project by Pew found that the majority of the public would not support their country's military involvement in the event of an attack on another member state (Stokes, 2017). So, based on the figures above, we might gain the impression that Hungarians are strongly in favour of the West and its institutions.

3. Washington or Moscow?

However, a look at attitudes concerning specific states complicates the picture. Although most of the research carried out over the past decade has found that the Hungarian population favours Russia (and Russians) less than Western countries (including the US), the gap has been closing, particularly in the past few years. The Ipsos polling firm, in early December 2014, asked the following question: 'Hungary should not move further away from Europe, and should not move closer to Russia. Do you or do you not agree with that statement?' At the time, 57 per cent agreed, 28 per cent disagreed (and 15 per cent could not answer).

In a 2018 survey, the Medián polling organization found that only 26 per cent of respondents named Russia as the country we should move closer to; meanwhile 77 per cent felt it was more important to nurture good relations with our neighbours, and 76 per cent wanted to be on better terms with the EU.

But if we take a closer look at favourability of specific countries, the picture is less rosy. The most favoured countries, according to Medián's survey, are Western countries: the United Kingdom (62 points), Germany (60 points) and France (55 points). But the West's advantage over the East is narrowing: the popularity of the US (54 points) is just a shade higher than that of China (51 points) and of Russia (48 points).

Russia's position is even better if respondents have to name countries as possible strong allies spontaneously, rather than from lists provided by the researchers. In a 2016 survey by Globsec and Political Capital, respondents were asked to name (without any prompting) those countries with which Hungary – in their opinion – should build a close relationship. Some 16 per cent of respondents mentioned Russia as one of their Top Three countries. That

puts it in third place – a long way behind Germany and Austria, but above both the United Kingdom and the United States. While geographical proximity seems to play an important role here, this figure also suggests that Hungary’s relationship with Russia has become central to political discourse – and therefore easily re-called (*Table 1*).

Table 1 With which countries do you think Hungary should maintain its closest relationship. Tick at least three countries

Ten most frequently mentioned countries	Ratio of mentions among first three countries (%)
Germany	44
Austria	28
Russia	16
United Kingdom	13
United States	13
Poland	13
Slovakia	8
France	8
Romania	6
Czech Republic	5

Source: Globsec (2016).

Furthermore, the general assessment of Russia has shown spectacular improvement since the regime change (*Table 2*). In 1992, the sympathy index of the US was particularly high (73 on a scale of 100), while Russia’s was down at 36. In 2001 (at the time of the first Orbán cabinet, when relations with Russia were at a low level), Russia scored a mere 34 points.

People’s opinion of Russia started to improve even before the second Orbán cabinet took office. By 2007 (during the second left-liberal Gyurcsány government) the US’s favourability index had dropped to 60, while Russia’s had risen to 41 (Medián, 2007). In 2014 (during the third Orbán government) the US had 64 points and Russia 44. Then, by 2018, after eight years of Viktor Orbán’s rule in Hungary, Russia’s assessment had improved to 48 points, while the US’s score had declined to 54. Thus Russia’s assessment has improved significantly over the past decade and a half (Medián, 2018), while the rating of the United States has declined significantly. This tendency has accelerated in the last four years: whereas in 2014 only a quarter of Hungarians said that Hungary should maintain a closer relationship with Russia than with the US, in 2018 already third of the voters shared that view.

Table 2 *Changes in sympathy for individual countries*
(average values on a scale of 100, 0 = very bad, 100 = very good)

	1992	1997	2001	2003	2006	2007	2014	2018
Germany	75	72	73	75	73	71	80	60
Austria	–	–	76	78	77	68		
Poland	42	63	56	59	62	61		
United States	73	72	68	58	59	60	65	54
Czech Republic*	38	51	50	54	54	53		
Slovakia	–	37	44	51	31	38		
Russia	36	40	34	37	41	41	44	48
Romania	10	33	23	28	33	34		
United Kingdom						69	74	62
France						68		55
China						34	46	51

*1992: Czechoslovakia.

Source: Medián Omnibusz.

The main reason for the change clearly lies in the political environment. Traditionally, especially since 2002, the typical role play has been that the government argues the necessity of pragmatic economic cooperation with Russia, while the opposition criticizes that position. That was the situation from 2002 to 2010 (and especially between 2006 and 2010), under the socialist–liberal governments; and it has been the same since 2010, during the Orbán administrations. While in opposition, Fidesz voters were very critical of Russia, but during the second and third Orbán administrations that has clearly changed. As early as 2014, but more emphatically in 2018, Medián’s data reflected a clear shift on the part of the Fidesz electorate toward a Russia-friendly position. Fun fact: public opinion was most dismissive of Russia during the first Orbán government and most supportive of it during the third Orbán administration.

Support for Russia from the Fidesz electorate in 2018 was (according to Medián research) at 59 points, far above the average; meanwhile Jobbik (formerly strongly pro-Russian) and the leftist opposition (home to voters for the MSZP – the successor to the old party of state socialism) both became significantly more critical of Russia, scoring 42 points and 40 points, respectively. Supporters of both the leftist opposition (66 points) and Jobbik (58 points) are much more willing to agree that Russia has excessive influence on Hungary’s internal affairs than are Fidesz supporters (50 points) (Medián, 2018).

Even more importantly, by 2018 a majority of the Fidesz electorate had reached the point of preferring Russia over the US as Hungary’s closest ally (51 per cent vs. 39 per cent). That is a significant change even compared to 2014, when a shade more Fidesz voters would have preferred Washington (40

per cent) over Moscow (39%). In line with these results, a 2018 poll by Political Capital and the Böll Stiftung (in cooperation with Medián Institute) showed that anti-Western, pro-Russian conspiracy theories, which are typical elements of Russian propaganda, are strongest among the electoral base of the governing party Fidesz than among voters for other parties. Fidesz voters tended to agree the most with statements such as ‘the refugee crisis is deliberately caused by US interests’, ‘the Ukrainian conflict is caused by the West and NATO rather than Russia’ and ‘NATO and the US support terrorists in Syria’ (Political Capital, 2018).

A research report by TÁRKI commissioned by the Center of Russian Studies at Budapest’s ELTE University came to a similar conclusion: the Hungarian view of Russia improved from 2006 to 2012, and from 2012 to 2016. Despite the annexation of Crimea and the dispute over the Paks nuclear power plant in Hungary, the majority of people support a further deepening of the economic, political and cultural relationship with Russia. That research project also confirmed that – despite a particularly negative assessment of Russia’s historical role in Hungary – Hungarians regard Western countries in only a marginally better light than Russia (Szvák, 2016).

4. Trump, Putin or Merkel?

If we look at various foreign political leaders, the overall picture presented at the start of this chapter – of a powerful Western orientation and a preference for keeping the East at arm’s length – starts to fade even more. Based on Globsec’s research results, 44 per cent of Hungary’s adult population approved of Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2017 (just a little less than the percentage of those who did not approve of him – 47 per cent). Hungary’s approval of Putin in this survey was the highest of all the Visegrád countries. Angela Merkel fared worse: only 38 per cent of Hungarians approved of her, while an absolute majority – 54 per cent – disapproved of her. Only 29 per cent approved of Donald Trump. By comparison, on the domestic stage 45 per cent of Hungarians approved of Viktor Orbán (and exactly the same number disapproved).

A 2018 survey by Medián also shows that Vladimir Putin is the second most popular international leader among Hungarians (after Pope Francis). And in a poll conducted prior to Viktor Orbán’s visit to Moscow in 2016, the Nézőpont Institute (which has close ties to the government) came up with similar findings (MTI, 2016). The average approval rating is even higher among Fidesz supporters: Medián (2018) found 54 per cent support for Vladimir Putin among Fidesz voters (against a national average of 43 per cent); meanwhile

Angela Merkel's popularity among Fidesz supporters was just 29 per cent (against an all-party average of 38 per cent). This contrast proves conclusively that the Hungarian public – and especially the voters of the governmental party – responds to the message widely disseminated by the Kremlin and its supporters: Putin is the strongman of our time; unlike weak European leaders like Chancellor Merkel, he deals effectively with problems like migration and terrorism.

5. Are Hungarians Russophile? – an international comparison

International comparative researches paint an even more complex picture of Hungarians' relationship with Russia. *On the one hand*, international comparative studies clearly show that Hungary adopts a far more favourable position than the average Western country with regard to Russia. That is particularly true when Ukraine (and thus the Ukraine–Russia conflict) is added to the equation. This seems to tie in both with the highly politicized position of Ukraine's ethnic Hungarian minority (more than 100 000 people) and with the fact that Ukraine is one of the countries generally least favoured by Hungarians.

In early April 2014, Ipsos MORI surveyed the opinion of the populations of 11 European countries, including Hungary, about the situation in Ukraine. The figures suggested that Hungarian respondents were generally those least in favour of any action against Russia: only a third (34 per cent) agreed that Russia should not be allowed to invade East Ukrainian territory, whereas every second respondent from all the other countries shared this view. Only 31 per cent of Hungarians (as opposed to 58 per cent of Germans) agreed that Ukraine should be given all possible assistance in bringing stability to the country and its people. Hungarians were also the least supportive of sanctions against Russia: only 31 per cent were in favour (and 41 per cent were against); whereas the figure for the full sample was 45 per cent in favour.

This could all suggest that the message from the government (and Jobbik) concerning Russia is getting through to the public, and also that Hungary's historical grievances over the Treaty of Trianon (under which Hungary lost two thirds of its territory, including lands that today belong to Ukraine) are coming to the surface. Hungary's geopolitical position and the Hungarian minority in Ukraine mean that the country is significantly affected by the issue: every second Hungarian believes that the government should not intervene at all, and should leave the resolution of the problem up to others (Ipsos MORI, 2014). Also, we can find a general ignorance: according to a poll by the National Democratic Institute (National Democratic Institute, 2018) and the Po-

litical Capital Institute, few young respondents are concerned about the Russian invasion of Ukraine or perceive the Kremlin to be behind disinformation campaigns in Hungary similarly to the youth in Slovakia, but in contrast to youngsters in Poland).

A 2017 research project by Pew found that of 23 Western countries, Hungary had the second-lowest figure (after Greece) for the proportion of people who considered Russia a threat: 28 per cent, as opposed to almost two thirds of Poles and almost half of Americans (Stokes, 2017). Furthermore, Hungarians regard tension with Russia as no more of a threat than China's rise to world power status or the overexpansion of US power (Stokes et al., 2016). In another study, only 13 per cent of Hungarian respondents shared the view that Russia is a threat to Hungary's sovereignty (Kerner, 2017).

A low sense of threat may explain why only 17 per cent of Hungarians consider it likely that Russia would ever attack an EU Member State. The bilateral relations are viewed more through the prism of pragmatism than fears over security and sovereignty: two thirds of Hungarians believe that a strong economic relationship with Russia is more important than a tough stance toward the Kremlin on foreign policy (which a quarter of respondents considered more important). Here again, only Greek respondents adopted a softer, more pragmatic position on Russia (Stokes, 2017).

On the other hand, as mentioned above, other research done in the region (using different methodologies) suggests that Hungary continues to be among those countries most supportive of the West – second only to Poland, a country traditionally the most hostile to Russia. Comparative research by Globsec (2018) for example shows that far more Hungarians want to see Hungary belong to the West (45 per cent) than to the East (3 per cent). And the proportion of Hungarians who want to belong to the West exceeds the proportion of Czechs (38 per cent), Poles (42 per cent) or Slovaks (21 per cent). In fact, Slovakia seems to be the most East-oriented country in the region: 15 per cent of the population would prefer to look East. A similar survey completed a year before in seven countries showed that in the wider region Hungary ranks in the middle, with Croatia and Romania (and to a lesser extent Bulgaria) showing a stronger Western orientation.

There is, however, a very high ratio of respondents who prefer the 'middle way', with Hungary positioned between the East and the West (47 per cent in 2018). The strong attraction to the West and rejection of the East is not necessarily reflected in Vladimir Putin's approval ratings though. In 2018, only the Slovaks (41 per cent) agreed more than Hungarians (33 per cent) with Vladimir Putin's policies; that said, a relative majority of Hungarians (48 per cent) still rejected them. And in 2017, of the four Visegrád countries, Vladimir

Putin's popularity was highest in Hungary (44 points) – though much lower than in Bulgaria (70 per cent), and a little lower than in Romania (48 per cent) and Croatia (46 per cent) (Globsec, 2017). These figures demonstrate convincingly that the general East–West orientation does not strongly determine assessment of Russia's premier. Interestingly, Putin enjoys his strongest support in those countries with the most marked Western orientation. Two factors seem to play a dominant role in raising Putin's popularity ratings: the eastward-looking pan-Slavic ideology (strong in Slovakia and Bulgaria, for instance) and religion (in countries where Orthodox Christianity is predominant – like Bulgaria and Romania).

The TÁRKI–CEORG survey of 2014 also showed that in terms of threat perception in the region, Hungary ranks in the middle: 66 per cent of Poles, 41 per cent of Hungarians and 26 per cent of Slovaks expected that Russia would, in the near future, strive to regain control over this part of Europe. Thus, Poland is most fearful; Slovakia is least afraid; and Hungary falls half way between the two extremes. The survey reveals that it is mostly city dwellers (and particularly the population of Budapest) who believe Russia wants to restore its control in the region (TÁRKI–CEORG, 2014).

Globsec and Political Capital wanted to take a closer look at the attitudes toward the West and Russia (Globsec, 2016) in three countries. On the basis of people's responses (on a scale of 1–10) to six statements dealing mainly with the confrontation between NATO and Russia (e.g. over the issue of Ukraine), we constructed a single *multipolar world index*. The six statements were:

1. Neutrality would more effectively guarantee your country's security than NATO membership.
2. The US uses NATO to control other countries (e.g. your country), imposing its intentions on them.
3. NATO is an aggressive organization that implies a threat to other countries (e.g. over Russia).
4. NATO's enlargement means breaking a deal with Russia.
5. NATO and the US are responsible for the Ukrainian crisis.
6. Ukraine belongs to Russia's sphere of influence, and therefore Russia has the right to have a say in decisions on Ukraine's future.

A high value of the index reflects the view that a unipolar world (with the US and the West at its centre) is undesirable, and Russia should be given a decisive role in shaping events – even if that is to the detriment of the West. This concept is often referred to in pro-Russian political discourse as *multipolarity*, i.e. a demand for a world order with several poles. Based on the values of the index, we created three groups:

- Pro-Western (index value under 4)
- Balancing (value between 4 and 7)
- Multipolar (index above 7).

The ratio of NATO-critical, ‘multipolarist’ respondents, who tend to look eastward, was lowest in Hungary (11 per cent). In Slovakia the proportion was 27 per cent, while Czech respondents (18 per cent) were half way between the two. It is important to add at the same time that Hungary had the highest ratio of respondents (36 per cent) who were not interested in the subject and failed to provide a response to at least two of the statements (*Table 3*).

It is the case that in each of the three countries, pro-East multipolarity is highest among the elderly, while the pro-West ratio is highest among groups with high levels of education. In Hungary, the capital Budapest featured the highest pro-West rates and the lowest pro-East ‘multipolarist’ rates.

Table 3 *Percentage of those in the region in favour of a pro-West stance, a multipolar position and a balance between the two*

	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia
Pro-Westerns (index \leq 4)	26.5	20.9	18.7
Balancers (4 < index \leq 7)	37.7	31.6	30.5
Multipolars (index \geq 7)	18.0	11.4	27.1
Uninterested (no response to at least two questions)	17.7	36.1	23.7
Total	100	100	100

Source: Globsec (2016).

6. Conclusions

First of all, Hungary is still characterized by a powerful pro-West attitude, particularly compared to the rest of the region’s countries. This is apparent in its favourable assessment of Western countries and institutions, and in its manifestly expressed pro-Western orientation. The more general the phrasing of the East–West question, the clearer is Hungarian society’s essential westward orientation.

Secondly, however, almost half of Hungarian society adopts an ‘in-between’ position on the West–East question. This shows convincingly that there remains a strong element of a tradition in Hungarian public opinion that emphasizes the country’s sovereign politics, its ‘bridging’ role and the idea of occasional alliances that serve the national interest. The popularity of the ‘in-between’ position – which is also sceptical of the West – suggests that Hungarian society could be turned eastward, if there is sufficient political will.

Thirdly, there is such a will. The general assessment of Russia has under-gone a significant positive change since the regime change, and particularly in recent years. What we essentially see is that when government policy makes clear the importance of improving the relationship with Russia (during the two Gyurcsány administrations, and the second and third Orbán cabinets), Russia's approval rating improves substantially. This suggests that political discourse on the subject fundamentally shapes and moulds public opinion.

Fourthly, people's opinion of Russia is determined by a fine balance of attraction and repulsion. The attraction of Russia is partly the country's economic potential, as well as its leader's abilities and strength – it is no wonder that Russia's 'soft power' aspirations accentuate precisely those key features: 'strong man leading a strong country'. The rather pragmatic turn toward Russia is bolstered by a low sense of threat to our country and by the Hungarian people's ambivalent feelings toward Ukraine (which came to the fore following the Russian annexation of Crimea). At the same time, there is also a factor that has possibly indirectly contributed to the improvement in Russia's image: to wit, the decline in the US approval rating.

It is interesting that negative historical experience does not appear to have a strong influence on the Hungarian assessment of Russia: one might assume that Hungary's geographical position and history (post-1945, 1956) would encourage suspicion of Russia and fear for our sovereignty; however, we do not see anything of the sort in the data. For those, however, who are more alarmed by Russia, the Crimean conflict and the Russian threat to the West played an important role in raising awareness.

Fifthly, socio-demographic variables seem to be of relatively little importance in determining sentiment toward Russia: although education, age and dwelling place do play a part, public opinion on the issue continues to be primarily shaped by the political discourse and party preference. That is clearly reflected by the spectacular improvement in Russia's image among supporters of Hungary's governing party in recent years. Meanwhile the left, traditionally more indulgent toward Russia, has become considerably more critical of it. It is likewise interesting that even among supporters of Jobbik (the party that used to be loudest in advocating better relations with Russia), pro-Russian voices are now rarer than among the Fidesz voter base (where they form a majority). Hungary's situation is unique: whereas in Western Europe Russia's most fervent supporters are to be found on the radical right (Shekhovtsov, 2017; Krekó et al., 2015), in Hungary it is within the Fidesz electorate. This is of course not unrelated to public discourse on Russia and the Russia–Ukraine conflict in the media and political discourse (Pynnöniemi and Rácz, 2016).

At the same time, analysis of international statistics sheds light on another interesting phenomenon. Public opinion is rarely the cause of foreign policy; rather it tends to be the *consequence*. While Hungarian public opinion – especially around 2010 – preferred to keep Russia at a distance, the Hungarian government started to pursue a strong pro-Russian course; instead of back-firing on its popularity, this served to reshape public opinion. Furthermore, in those countries where an East-oriented, pan-Slavist policy enjoys more serious support (such as Slovakia, the Czech Republic – and, from a certain perspective, also Romania and Bulgaria), the governments take urgent action at both the rhetorical and the policy level against such phenomena as Russian disinformation without facing a backlash from voters. Leaving aside rare exceptions (e.g. Poland), there are indications that public opinion is a weak predictor of foreign policy measures toward Russia.

TÁRKI's previous research suggests that in terms of its values, Hungary is much closer to the East) and especially to Orthodox countries) than to the West (Tóth, 2009). Our results show a country drifting eastward in its geopolitical preferences as well. When asked, the Hungarian population would still like to belong to the West, but it thinks highly of Vladimir Putin's authoritarian policies, and sees Russia increasingly as a friend rather than a threat. Also, it has an increasingly favourable opinion of the social-political system of Russia (and of China), and a declining opinion on the United States. And this shift is mostly a consequence of the government's politics and policies, and not the other way around.

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