

A b s t r a c t s

Programme of Choice Hungary, Russia, South Caucasus

Timm Beichelt

Authoritarianism and Its Friends On the Appeal of a Form of Rule

Authoritarianism is on the rise. Support for authoritarian parties and their leaders has grown. Even the dictatorships in Russia and Belarus have the backing of a majority of the population. Theodor W. Adorno and Erich Fromm worked out an explanation for the appeal of authoritarian rule that remains valid to this day: they emphasized the significance of individual and collective dispositions. Newer approaches to explaining this appeal highlight the ambivalences of freedom and the loss of control within globalized capitalism, or they focus on politicized emotions, such as anger and resentment, which are fueled by a lack of recognition and lead people to support authoritarian politics.

Kai-Olaf Lang

“A Plebiscite on the Country’s Future” The Election Campaign in Hungary

Hungary faces a pivotal election. Will Viktor Orbán be able to continue his anti-liberal and sovereigntist course, or will the country embark on a new path under Péter Magyar? As always, Orbán and his party waged a campaign with no holds barred. Yet his challenger held his own. The final phase of the election campaign was marked by mutual accusations of foreign interference. The elections’ outcome remains open. One thing is certain: no matter who emerges victorious, peace will not return to Hungary.

Ellen Bos

Change of Power in Hungary The Parliamentary Elections of April 12, 2026

A political earthquake took place at Hungary’s ballot boxes. After sixteen years in power, Viktor Orbán’s *Fidesz* party was voted out of office. The victor is Péter Magyar, who with the party *Tisza* secured a two-thirds majority. Magyar’s victory was fuelled by the population’s dissatisfaction with the economic situation as well as growing indignation over deficiencies in the health- and welfare system

and the self-enrichment associated with Fidesz. Péter Magyar won over voters with a shrewd election campaign. He picked up on the concerns of ordinary people in the provinces and, in a structurally conservative country, presented himself as an authentic conservative. He benefited from his charisma, his communication skills, and his intimate insights into Orbán's power apparatus. Magyar and Tisza now face the need to embark on massive domestic policy reforms and to reposition Hungary within Europe.

Roland Götz**Unabated Decline****Russia's Oil Revenues and the Iran War**

Since the start of the war in the Persian Gulf at the end of February 2026, Russia has been exporting crude oil and natural gas at higher prices and in larger volumes. However, the decline in export earnings that began following the invasion of Ukraine has not been stemmed. The share of revenue derived from the export of fossil fuels has dropped significantly due to the high costs associated with circumventing sanctions. Additional earnings generated by the conflict in the Gulf are expected to reduce the massive budget deficit projected for 2026. However, military spending has risen so sharply that this gap is far from being covered.

Alexandra Prokopenko**The Logic of Loyalty****Russia's Servile Technocrats**

Russia no longer has an elite. The leadership stratum of the civilian state apparatus has transformed into a servile nobility. This is the result of a deliberate depoliticisation that Putin pursued as early as the 2000s through the institutional disempowerment of governors, ministers, and economic magnates. The consequence has been a total erosion of institutions. Even the security of property depends on the whims of the man at the top. In a post-Putin era, this will not simply change. Servile executors do not overnight become individuals capable of thinking autonomously and strategically, weighing alternatives, and engaging in public debate.

Zaur Gasimov**A Balancing Act in the Fog of War****On the State of Russian-Iranian Relations**

Russia and Iran have been on a path of rapprochement for about ten years. The two countries' cooperation in the arms sector dates back to the early 1990s; in both the Syrian civil war and Russia's war against Ukraine, they stood — and continue to stand — on the same side. As an economic partner and transit country, Iran has become increasingly important to Russia, particularly since 2022. A bilateral agreement concluded in 2025 serves as an expression of their

closeness. At the core of the treaty lies security policy cooperation between Moscow and Tehran. However, this agreement did not establish a military alliance. After the United States and Israel launched their war against Iran in February 2026, Russia did issue verbal responses — sometimes sharply worded — but it has provided no overt military support. So long as the outcome of the war remains unclear, Moscow will strive to extract maximum benefit from the conflict without committing itself too much politically.

Anna Gevorgyan

Dancing across Divides

Armenia and the War Against Iran

As a small state situated in the contested geopolitical environment of the South Caucasus, Armenia relies on strong allies. For many years, in its conflict with Azerbaijan, Yerevan pinned its hopes on an alliance with Russia. However, weakened by its war of aggression against Ukraine, Moscow abandoned Armenia in 2023. Today, to safeguard its state sovereignty and territorial integrity, Yerevan is pursuing a strategy of “hedging”. Good relations with a diverse array of partners — including Russia and the EU, as well as with the United States and Iran — are intended to mitigate risks. The war in the Gulf, however, has jeopardised this approach, while an opposition that still looks to Moscow has denounced it. Nonetheless, Nikol Pashinyan’s government remains committed to the peace process with Azerbaijan and Turkey and to securing that process through a multi-vector foreign policy.

Uwe Halbach

Fluctuations and Tensions

Domestic and Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus

The situation in the South Caucasus remains fluid. In Georgia, the ruling party, Georgian Dream, continues its authoritarian course. In terms of foreign policy, it has halted the country’s rapprochement with the EU and is seeking closer ties with Russia. This has met with significant public protest. In Armenia, the peace process with Azerbaijan has polarised the country. Critics accuse Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of “capitulation” and “betrayal”. Baku is exacerbating the situation by means of demands that are barely acceptable. At the same time, the international landscape is shifting. There are some indications to suggest that Russia is losing its role as regional hegemon. Conversely, Turkey is gaining influence — economically, politically, and militarily. The EU should continue to devote attention to the South Caucasus within the framework of its Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood policies.

Nikolay Mitrokhin
Russia's War Against Ukraine
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Russia cannot win the war against Ukraine. Following the failed “special operation” launched from the north, the military steamroller advancing from the east has also stalled. Occupying forces are suffering massive losses and are no longer making any headway. Even in the war of attrition waged from the air, Ukraine now has the advantage. With the continued destruction of the Russian economy’s foundations — particularly its oil and gas export infrastructure - Kyiv is pinning its hopes on forcing Moscow to halt its war of aggression. Fresh funding from EU partners is enabling Ukraine to increase military pay. The aim is to use these funds to recruit the new soldiers urgently needed in the wake of mass desertions.

Hans-Henning Schröder
Ideology and Power Resource
On the Rise of “Traditional Values” in Russia

Russia’s leadership fears state disintegration and the loss of power. Since 2012, it has been aggressively cultivating a state ideology that draws on conservative models from the Tsarist era. These “traditional values” are intended to immunise society against “Western influence”. Patriotism, orthodoxy, and a backward-looking conception of the family are meant to forge the population into a whole. In this way, Russia’s leadership has been positioning itself as a partner for other national-conservative and reactionary parties and regimes.