

Abstracts

Ivana Ranković

Hungary's Western Balkans Policy After Orbán

This paper examines how Hungary's foreign policy toward the Western Balkans may evolve following the electoral defeat of Viktor Orbán and the rise of Péter Magyar in April 2026. Under Orbán, Hungary's engagement in the region was strongly shaped by personal ties with like-minded leaders, as well as by a broader illiberal alignment that influenced Budapest's approach to EU enlargement, economic cooperation, and political support. In this context, Hungary promoted a fast-track EU accession process that often downplayed rule-of-law conditionality, while simultaneously building networks of political, financial, and media influence across the region.

The paper explores the potential implications of the political transition in Hungary for both EU dynamics and bilateral relations with Western Balkan actors, particularly Serbia and Republika Srpska. It argues that Orbán's departure will weaken key regional alliances and may open space for a more rule-based and cohesive EU approach toward enlargement. At the same time, Hungary's strategic interests, especially in economic and energy cooperation, are likely to dictate continuity in certain aspects of engagement, and will probably not lead to rapid change in Hungarian foreign policy towards the region.

Daniela Apaydin

Just a Misunderstanding? "Understanding Hungary" Literature as an Attempt to Reframe the "Orbán Era"

The article analyses "understanding Hungary" literature in the German-speaking book market as a strategic attempt to reframe German perceptions of the Orbán era. Focusing on Bence Bauer's "Ungarn ist anders" (Hungary is Different, 2023) and Werner J. Patzelt's "Ungarn verstehen" (Understanding Hungary, 2023), it examines how these works reinterpret common criticisms of Viktor Orbán's government through specific framing techniques. Drawing on framing theory, the study shows how narratives of cultural difference, national sovereignty, and external threat construct a dichotomy between "Hungary" and "the West," while portraying criticism as misunderstanding or bias. Both authors employ rhetorical strategies that relativize democratic concerns – such as corruption or rule-of-law issues – by embedding them in alternative interpretive frameworks or presenting them as competing "truths." The analysis situates these publications within a broader communication network linked to pro-government institutions, highlighting their role in shaping discourse in German-speaking contexts. Ultimately, the author argues that this literature functions as a coordinated reframing effort that stabilizes and legitimizes Orbán's influence internationally – even after his electoral defeat in April 2026.

Ronald Meinardus

More Sun than Shadow: German Perceptions of Greece and the Asymmetry of Perceptions

This article analyses mutual perceptions in German-Greek relations based on a representative survey conducted in Germany (2025), complemented by survey data from Greece (2022, 2024), with a particular focus on the image of Greece among the German public. The findings show that Greece is perceived predominantly positively in Germany: roughly two-thirds of respondents express a favourable view of the country. This perception is shaped primarily by tourism-related experiences, cultural associations, and personal contacts, while political conflicts, economic crises, or historical grievances play only a minor role. At the same time, a comparison with survey data from Greece reveals a pronounced asymmetry in perceptions. While Germans tend to evaluate Greece mainly through individual experiences, perceptions of Germany in Greece are more strongly shaped by political considerations. These views are influenced in particular by the memory of the German occupation of Greece during World War II, Berlin's role during Greece's financial crisis, and Germany's positioning in Greek-Turkish tensions – therefore, largely negative. Despite a noticeable improvement in Greeks' perceptions of Germany since 2022, an asymmetry in perceptions persist.

Adamantios Theodor Skordos

Right-wing Populist Politics of History in Contemporary Greece: The Greek Nation between Brotherlessness and Orthodox Christian Brotherhood in a Hostile “New World Order”

This article elaborates on two concepts that are widespread among the supporters of radical right-wing populist parties in contemporary Greece and are based on ambiguous historical narratives. The first concept, that of the “brotherless nation”, formulated for the first time in 1985 by the then president of Greece, Christos Sartzetakis, claims that modern Greeks are not related to any other nations or ethnic groups due to their “unique origin.” Therefore, in difficult or dangerous situations, they must depend only on themselves. The second concept, on the other hand, asserts that modern Greeks, along with Serbs and Russians, are members of an Orthodox Christian brotherhood. This perception has existed since the 19th century and experienced a revival in the wake of the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of the Yugoslav Wars. Recently, it has resurfaced in the course of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Its proponents, similarly to mainstream ideologues of Putin's Russia or Vučić's Serbia, see themselves in a struggle against the “new world order”, allegedly imposed by Western transnational “globalist elites” and promoters of a “woke agenda”.

Fisnik Zyberi

North Macedonia Between a Slav-Macedonian Nation-State and a Multiethnic Nation of Will: A Historical Analysis of the Constitutions from 1944 to 2019

This historical study examines the distribution of political power in socialist and democratic Macedonia in the context of the participatory integration of the ethnically diverse population. The research gap lies in the overview of the historical development of minority policy. The source analysis of the Macedonian constitutions from 1946 to 2019 uses a comparative-discursive approach and is analytically supported by theoretical concepts from Brubaker (nation/ethnicity), Lijphart (consensus democracy), Young (inclusion), and Fraser (symbolic recognition).

The results show that the status of ethnic minorities, especially the Albanian ones, was strongly dependent on the state and self-image of the Macedonian majority society. Historically, North Macedonia has fluctuated between a Slav-Macedonian nation-state and a multi-ethnic nation of will. Further questions could draw on Foucault's concept of violence, for example.

Christian Voß

Migration. Literature. Thieves: In Conversation with Alem Grabovac

Alem Grabovac was born in Würzburg in 1974 and grew up in various places in southern Germany. He studied at LMU in Munich, in London, and at FU Berlin, graduating in sociology. Recently he published two books of autofiction in German: "Das achte Kind" [The Eighth Child] (2021) and "Die Gemeinheit der Diebe" [The Meanness of Thieves] (2024). The first book is told from a child's perspective, while the second is more from an adult's. The story is set in the Frankfurt area of West Germany in the 1970s and 1980s—and a sweeping, trans-regional narrative unfolds that ultimately leads the author and the reader to Berlin. While his first book focuses primarily on his host family, who took Grabovac in as their eighth child, his second book centres on his Croatian mother, Smilja. It is an authentic and very personal case study of the first generation of female "guest workers" from Yugoslavia in Germany.

In conversation with the author, the discussion centres on post-migrant self-ascriptions and external attributions in Germany today—including those tied to language—as well as the question of whether a shared post-Yugoslav space of memory and experience is taking shape in Germany today.