



By: TA | AP Brief

US and Hungary are to sign a civilian nuclear pact



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio was in the Hungarian capital on Monday for meetings with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his government during which they plan to sign a civilian-nuclear cooperation agreement heralded by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Trump has been outspoken in his support for the nationalist Orbán in the Hungarian leader's bid for **reelection** in two months.

Orbán and his Fidesz party are facing their **most serious challenge** in the April 12 vote since the right-wing populist retook power in 2010.

The stop in Hungary's capital follows Rubio's visit to Slovakia on Sunday, after he previously attended the **Munich Security Conference** in Germany.

Led by Euroskeptic populists who oppose support for Ukraine and vocally back Trump, Slovakia and Hungary represent friendly territory for Rubio as he pushes to shore up energy agreements with both Central European countries.

Widely considered Russian President Vladimir Putin's **most reliable advocate** in the European Union, Orbán has maintained warm relations with the Kremlin despite its war against Ukraine while currying favor with Trump and his MAGA — short for the 2016 Trump campaign slogan "Make America Great Again" — movement.

Many in MAGA and the broader conservative world view Hungary as a shining example of successful conservative nationalism, despite the **erosion of its democratic institutions** and its status as one of the EU's poorest countries.

In a post on his Truth Social site earlier this month, Trump endorsed Orbán for the coming elections and called him a "truly strong and powerful Leader" and "a true friend, fighter, and WINNER."

Russian energy

Trump has praised Orbán's firm opposition to immigration, exemplified by a fence his government erected on Hungary's southern border in 2015 as hundreds of thousands of refugees fled Syria and other countries in the Middle East and Africa.

Other U.S. conservatives admire Orbán's hostility to LGBTQ+ rights. His government last year banned the popular Budapest Pride celebration and allowed facial recognition technology to be used to identify anyone participating despite the ban.

It has also effectively banned same-sex adoption and same-sex marriage, and disallowed transgender individuals from changing their sex in official documents.

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Orbán has remained firmly committed to purchasing Russian energy despite efforts by the EU to wean off such supplies, and received an **exemption from U.S. sanctions** on Russian energy after a November meeting in the White House with Trump.

Apparently trusting that his political and personal affinity with the U.S. leader could pay even greater dividends, Orbán and his government have sought to woo Trump to Hungary before the pivotal April 12 elections — hoping such a high-profile visit and endorsement would push Orbán, who is trailing in most polls, over the finish line.

Budapest has hosted several annual iterations of the Conservative Political Action Conference, or CPAC, and another was hastily rescheduled this year to fall in March, just before Hungary's elections.