

George Answers Your Questions: Hungary and the Iran War

by George Friedman - April 17, 2026

War and the Principles of the Negotiation Process

April 13, 2026

Question: Your latest analysis finally introduces the true vector of this conflict: China. However, applying the Vietnam model to this balance of power generates an error in the fundamental mechanics of the clash. You define the American dilemma through the logic of a war where time eroded political support. Vietnam buried the American will to fight through massive human casualties. The operation against Iran, based on an air-naval blockade and avoiding the red line of a ground intervention (as you accurately point out), almost entirely eliminates the factor of American casualties. Without body bags, public tolerance for a prolonged conflict grows asymmetrically. Time here does not work in favor of the regime in Tehran – instead doesn't it consolidate American dominance?

Response: The Vietnam war began under John F. Kennedy without opposition and without public knowledge of what would follow under subsequent presidents. As the situation progressed, there began to emerge opposition to the war, and ultimately deep division in the United States between pro and antiwar factions, culminating in Nixon's withdrawal. The Iran war is different in that opposition to the war emerged at the start, and it included supporters of the president. Polls now show a majority opposition to the war, based in part on the Donald Trump's pledge to avoid such engagements. The opposition is perhaps not as deeply felt as it was during Vietnam, nor is the division between anti-war and pro-war factions. But the fact that there is no deep social conflict about the war, and that there has been significant opposition to this war from the first day, is in some ways at least as significant as the much later opposition to the Vietnam War. Opinion polls suggest that one point on which many Trump supporters and Trump detractors find common ground is the opposition to this war. This creates a much earlier and broader opposition to this war than to Vietnam.

I would add that the Vietnam War lasted for many years, while the Iran war has lasted for a few weeks. The casualties at this point have been light. If the war drags on, the U.S. may well incur many more casualties, especially if troops go in on the ground. I believe that Trump is trying to end this war

before those casualties mount. If he fails to do that, I think he will face profound opposition.

Hungary and Europe

April 15, 2026

Question: Why is focus on the U.S.-China relationship so high versus the US- Europe relationship? Trade between the U.S. and Europe (~ \$1.7 trillion/yr) is far higher than the U.S. trade with China (~\$600 billion/yr). The U.S. has also a trade surplus in services with Europe, which offsets somewhat the deficit in goods. It seems that Europe is more important to the U.S. than China, plus Europe is a much safer place for US investments. So why is the US so negative about Europe?

Response: Several things I think. First, European nations may dislike the U.S., but they pose no military threat as China does. Second and perhaps more important, one of the impacts of the decline of Chinese imports to the U.S. is the lack of availability of lower-priced goods, leading to the affordability problem. So your concern with the American focus on China has both a military and an economic interest that is not present in our relationship with Europe.

Question: Given that Magyar's ideological and political position is not too different from Orbán's – he also belongs to the conservative right, albeit somewhat more moderate – do you expect a dramatic shift in Hungary's foreign policy in the sense of becoming more cooperative with Brussels and/or hostile to Russia?

Response: There is a fundamental difference between Magyar and Orbán. Magyar presented himself as a Europeanist, Orbán was very wary of the European Union (and Europe as a whole). I also think that Magyar is promising a different mode of governance. We should also remember that the manner in which candidates running for office present themselves tend to differ from how they actually govern. In this case, the fundamental difference between the two candidates was Europe and time – by which I mean Orbán had governed for 16 years. That's a very long time, and the public seemed tired of him. I don't know how much impact simple weariness with Orbán effected the election, but I suspect it was a factor.

Question: Given the understanding that Hungary is constrained by larger powers, to what degree, if any, does its current situation relate to being on the losing side of both World Wars?

Response: If you had asked me that question 50 years ago, I would have said war weariness. For the generation that lived through World War II, and whose parents lived through World War I, that was very much a factor. It was certainly the case with my family when I was growing up. But the generation that lived through the Cold War, and through the Soviet repression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, is not so much weary but hostile to Russia. Orban came to adulthood shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union. He was not a product of the two world wars but of the Cold War. Magyar, 45, became an adult around the turn of the century, experiencing Russia under Putin's rule. Orban distrusted Europe more than the new Russia. Magyar has not shown his hand on this, but he is to a degree part of a very different generation. To some extent, generations differ. We shall see.

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