

# HUNGARY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN REGIONAL SECURITY AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THE COOPERATION WITH THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR STRENGTHENING REGIONAL SECURITY

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## ABSTRACT

*At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, three security threats have affected Central Europe as well as other European regions. First of all, it was the “Arab spring”, which evoked migration from the “Arabic world” to Western Europe and caused a refugee crisis. The second significant security threat was the “reunification” of the Crimean Peninsula to Russia and the breakaway Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics’ proclamation. The third security threat was the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levante (ISIL/Daesh), followed by a wave of terrorist attacks in Europe. Another security threat is a global world order changing from bipolar to present unipolar world order, which has been continuously shifting to the multipolar world order, resulting in the national and geopolitical interests coming to the fore on the global and regional environment. Multiple Central European countries reacted to the security threats changes, evaluated the current security situation, and adopted new national security strategies to reflect changes in the new security environment. Hungary and the Slovak Republic are neighbouring Central European mid-size countries without considerable military power. The author of this article evaluates - in practice - the new Hungarian National Security Strategy and indicates possibilities for the cooperation between Hungary and the Slovak republic on the military security field.*

**Key words:** Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Central European regional security, security threats, Hungarian National Security Strategy

## Introduction

In April 2020, the Hungarian government adopted a new Hungarian National Security Strategy (*Magyarország Nemzeti Biztonsági Stratégia - NBS*), which replaced the previous National Security Strategy of 2012. After 1989’s peaceful transition from socialist rule to a democratic political regime in Hungary’s modern history, the new Hungarian National Security Strategy (NBS) is the fourth essential strategic state document. The first primary Hungarian National Security Strategy was adopted in May 2002, but its application was not possible in practice due to the contradiction of the program statement of the new Hungarian Social-Liberal government and partly due to the adoption of the new European Security Strategy 2003. The Second Hungarian National Security

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Strategy was adopted in April 2004, which was in line with Hungary's accession to NATO<sup>2</sup> and the EU<sup>3</sup>. The third Hungarian National Security Strategy was adopted in 2012, states that the foundation of a security policy of Hungary constitutes of a NATO membership, an economically prosperous Europe, and a stable Balkan region and Eastern Europe – especially the neighbouring countries of Hungary. (Pásztor, 2020a, p. 216-221)

This paper's primary goal is to introduce the new NBS focusing on the Hungarian security ambitions and its impact on the Central European region, especially on the Slovak Republic. In conclusion, the author focuses on possibilities for cooperation with the Slovak Republic for strengthening regional security in line with the new Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic (*Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej Republiky*) adopted by the Slovak government in December 2020 and approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in January 2021.

## 1 The new National Security Strategy of Hungary

The NBS 2020 reflects current global and European security challenges, risks, and threats from the Hungarian point of view, mainly following national interest and membership in NATO and the EU. The NBS drafting process was in progress between autumn 2016 and spring 2020. The Office of the Deputy State Secretary for Defence Policy of the Ministry of Defence was responsible for drafting NBS. This leading state office closely cooperated with civilian and military national security services and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (Pásztor, 2020b, p.147) Hungarian think-tanks<sup>4</sup> and some experts were also involved in the preparation of NBS from 2018, but the document was never discussed nor in the circle of the professional public until its adoption by the government in 2020. (Csiki, 2021, p. 1-2)

The NBS titled "Secure Hungary in a changing world" (*Biztonságos Magyarország egy változékony világban*). The second paragraph of the NBS makes clear the primary emphasis and the current basic security situation: "*One of the most defining features of the processes that affect our security is that their formation, development, and impact are difficult to predict, and this results in increasing uncertainty. Therefore, the focus of our answers to the changing challenges must be a solid system of Hungary's values, endowments, and priorities, one of the determining elements of which is the national economy and within that the defence industry development. Thus, the starting point of our answers to the global, European, and national challenges affecting the security of our country is always Hungary and the Hungarian nation.*" (NBS, par.2)

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<sup>2</sup> Hungary joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1999 (Külügyminisztérium, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> Hungary joined the European Union (EU) on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 (European Union, 2021)

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Hungary's membership in NATO and the EU is no less critical for increasing the currently stable Hungary's security situation. (NBS, par.44) NATO is the cornerstone of Hungary's security (NBS, par.14). As a result of the Hungarian Armed Forces' development, Hungary contributes to the collective defense guaranteed by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. (NBS, par.129) Hungary believes in a successful EU that respects the sovereignty of the member states and has their united support, promoting both the European continent's global competitiveness and the effectiveness of the common defense. (NBS, par.15) Hungary's interest is to have a common EU foreign and security policy and the associated support for more effective enforcement of the common defense policy. (NBS, par.93) Hungary has clearly stated its position on the introduction of a compulsory mechanism for refugee relocation quotas:<sup>5</sup> “[...] *any attempt to require the compulsory resettlement of stateless persons or foreign nationals to be contrary to Hungary's national sovereignty and unacceptable.*” (NBS, par.9) Hungary attaches great importance to closely interrelated values such as peace, security, state sovereignty, and territorial integrity (NBS, par.11) and sees no country as an enemy in this regard. (NBS, par. 12)

To achieve the primary goal of NBS – secure Hungary – has the confident ambitions and set the following fundamental priorities, interests, and values:

- Build a secure Hungary by 2030 and reach fifth place in Europe and top tenth in the world. The ambition priority is relied, on the one hand, on maintaining a high level of public security in the country and, on the other hand, building one a regional group of the dominant, modern forces that relies on an exportable domestic defence industry; (NBS, par.5 and 6).
- The gradual development of the Hungarian Defence Forces (NBS, par.5 and 27) is a fundamental institution for guaranteeing Hungary's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In terms of its international roles, it is an essential tool for implementing foreign policy. (NBS, par.25)
- Development of the domestic defense industry (NBS, par.28) focused on Research and Development and Innovation and reduce import dependence on all parts of the economy. (NBS, par.105)
- Improving Hungary's demographic situation (NBS, par.6) is the most crucial national affair (NBS, par.104) and high-security risk. (NBS, par.124g)
- A substantial Hungarian national fund based Hungary, millennial statehood, language and culture, history and traditions, the Christian-based values, and the Hungarian national identity<sup>6</sup> are the keys for the Hungarian nation to survive. (NBS, par.7)

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<sup>5</sup> For more details please see „Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015”. (Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601)

<sup>6</sup> By István Simicskó (September 2015 – May 2018: Minister of Defence of Hungary; May 2018 - May 2020: Government commissioner for patriotic and defence education), the “Hungarian national identity” is a national feeling and emotional pillar throughout history and

- Hungary's responsibility promotes the prosperity of Hungarian communities across the Hungarian border in their homeland and protects the persecuted Christian minorities. (NBS, par.13) The Hungarian minority living across the border is inseparable from Hungary's security <sup>7</sup> (NBS, par.84). It is a high-security risk if they may be forcing to leave their homeland due to the deteriorating situation. (NBS, par.124f)
- NATO is the cornerstone of Hungary's security. (NBS, par.14) As a result of the Hungarian Armed Forces development, Hungary contributes to the collective defense guaranteed by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. (NBS, par.129)
- Hungary believes in a successful EU that respects the sovereignty of the member states and has their united support, promoting both the European continent's global competitiveness and the effectiveness of the common defense. (NBS, par.15) It is in Hungary's interest to have the common EU foreign and security policy and the associated support for more effective enforcement of the common defense policy. (NBS, par.93) Hungary does not rule out creating the joint European army, which can only be built after effectively implementing the common European defense policy. It is necessary to maintain the joint promotion of security interests at the national governments' level until then. (NBS, par.94)

To strengthen Hungary's current security level and ensure its further development, the new NBS 2020 specifies the strategic partners. Hungary's priority national interest is to maintain and develop political, economic, and defense cooperation with the V4<sup>8</sup> countries. (NBS, par.108, 109) Due to the traditional bilateral and multilateral political, economic, human society, and defense cooperation's, Hungary considers Germany<sup>9</sup>, a key partner in its foreign

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educates in respect of its national values, without violating other nations. (Simicskó, 2021, p.66-67)

<sup>7</sup> From the beginning of the 1990s for Hungary, the quality of life and safety of the Hungarian minority living across the border is a factor strengthening Hungary's security. (Pásztor, 2020a, p.219-220, 25-226)

<sup>8</sup> V4 had founded on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1991 in Visegrad town in Hungary. V4 members are Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. One of the fundamental objective for the foundation was, and still is - the full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation. (Visegrad Group, 2021)

<sup>9</sup> Since 2018, representatives of the Ministry of Defense and the Hungarian Defence Forces have signed contracts for the supply of 20 Airbus H145M attack helicopters, 16 Airbus H225M multi-purpose helicopters, 44 new Leopard 2 A7 + tanks, and 24 PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzers. The new military equipment had been implemented since 2020. (Pásztor, 2019, p.220) In August 2020, the Hungarian government signed an agreement with the German company „Rheinmetall”, which established a joint venture in Hungary to produce Lynx infantry combat vehicles. In September 2020, General Ferenc Korom, Commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces, and Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall, signed a contract to produce 218 pieces of Lynx KF41 combat vehicles. The contract also includes that the vast majority of the

and security policy. (NBS, par.110) Based on “a millennial community of destiny and arms friendship” between Hungarian and Polish nation, as well as a joint NATO and EU membership, Hungary pursuit to strategic cooperation with Poland within the bilateral<sup>10</sup> and V4 format too. (NBS, par.111) The USA is a significant player in a global security policy and will encourage its allies and partners to be more powerful and reliable in foreign, security, and defense policy. Hungary’s interest in continuation strategic partnership with the USA on the high-level cooperation on the defence<sup>11</sup> and economic fields. (NBS, par.112) In the imaginary ranking of strategic states, Italy is in fifth place, with which Hungary has significant defense<sup>12</sup> and economic cooperation. Italy is also NATO, and the EU member state has with Hungary another multilateral security and defense policy<sup>13</sup>. Due to the mass immigration, Italy and Hungary have an opportunity to coordinated action in this significant security threat. (NBS, par.113) The next strategic state is France, which plays a substantial role in joint EU security and defence policy, and it’s an influential NATO member. Maintaining and increasing multilateral and bilateral security and defence relationships are significant for

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vehicles - 172 pieces - will do manufactured at the newly established factory in Hungarian city Zalaegerszeg. (Révész, 2020)

<sup>10</sup> Poland is a key partner for Hungary. It does also confirmed by the bilateral cooperation agreement signed on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021 covered 63 areas, including the areas of training, military drills, as well as nurturing historical ties and traditions. Besides that, Hungary and Poland cooperate within the joint military exercises of the special forces and utilize experiences gained from training and preparing reserve soldiers and the joint UNIFIL mission in Lebanon. Also, Hungary and Poland exchanged Leopard 2 crew training methodologies because Hungary commissioned a similar platform by Rheinmetall. (Snoj, 2021a)

<sup>11</sup> In the first half of 2019, Hungary and the USA signed the „Agreement on Defence cooperation between the government of Hungary and the government of the United States”. (2019. évi LI. törvény, 2019) In November 2020, it became to the public that the Soviet air defense system 2K12 KUB using by Hungarian Armed Forces would be replaced in 2023 by the Norwegian-American air defense missile system - NASAMS (National/Norwegian Advanced Surface to Air Missile System). The NASAMS is the joint development of US “Raytheon” and Norwegian “Kongsberg Defense & Aerospace”. The system combines the well-proven American AIM-120 AMRAAM medium-range active radar-guided anti-aircraft missiles, and the AN/MPQ-64 Sentinel 3D mobile X-band uses a radar system. Norwegian Kongsberg has incorporated the principles of network-centric warfare, command and launch systems, and the Royal Norwegian Air Forces expectations into the missile system. (Trautmann, 2020a)

<sup>12</sup> On the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), Hungary contributes 432 soldiers, and Italy contributes 490 soldiers, which is the largest number from the European-based NATO members. (KFOR, 2021) Besides, Hungary has received support from NATO to appoint a new KFOR commander. For Hungary, the KFOR is „a high-priority military operation”. (Euroactiv, 2021)

<sup>13</sup> More significant is the Multinational Land Forces (MLF), with Hungarian Defence Forces, Italian Armed Forces, and Slovenian Armed Forces. (Honvédelmi Minisztérium, 2020) Also, Hungarian and Italian Air forces alternately provided Airpolicing for Slovenia. (Pásztor, 2020c, p,75)

Hungary. (NBS, par.114) Hungary is interested in political, economic, cultural, and defense industry cooperation with Turkey.<sup>14</sup> Its geostrategic location has an important role in Europe and Hungary security, including the Middle East and the Western Balkan stability. (NBS, par.115)

Hungary considers essential for the geographical reasons the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics successor states, the Middle East<sup>15</sup>, Asia, Africa, and Latin America<sup>16</sup> states in the foreign trade's field. (NBS, par.117) The countries belonging to this region occupy eighth place in the "economic ranking of partner countries and regions" of Hungary.

The Russian Federation is in ninth place, which is essential for Hungary from an energy point of view. Russian Federation plays a substantial role in the global and regional security environment. (NBS, par.118) Lastly, the tenth most crucial country for foreign trade and politics for Hungary is the People's Republic of China. Hungary is interested in intensively building pragmatic trade relations, emphasizing mutually beneficial construction of a modern "Silk Road" connecting the European, African and Asian continents.<sup>17</sup> (NBS, par.119)

## 2 The regional security policy of Hungary

Hungary's regional security policy's primary point does express in par.19 of the new NBS 2020: *"Even from historical perspectives, the Carpathian Basin locates in the great powers' traditional conflicting areas of influence. Today, Hungary is the border country of the EU, the Schengen Area, and NATO, so our historical duty and fundamental task are to protect our nation and our wider community"*. Hungary's fundamental interest is its immediate neighbours' stability, especially in the Western Balkans. There are processes in the region

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<sup>14</sup> Hungary ordered more than 300 pieces „GIDRAN” 4x4 military armored off-road vehicles from the Turkish factory „Nurol Makina”. The first 40-60 pieces will be made in Turkey, and the others made in a joint factory shall establish in Kaposvar town by Hungary, Nurol Makina, and German „Rheinmetall”. (Portfolio, 2021)

<sup>15</sup> In December 2020, Hungary signed a contract with Rheinmetall Canada to develop a new 3D „ELM-2084” radars. The radars use Israeli know-how and technologies. Defense industry cooperation and Research and Development programs also connect with the procurement. (Portfolio, 2020)

<sup>16</sup> In November 2020, Hungary signed a contract with Brasilia to develop two Embraer „KC-390 Millenium” medium-size transport aircraft. (Trautmann, 2020b)

<sup>17</sup> The Hungarian pragmatics trade connections with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China manifested during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Hungary (as a single EU member to February 2021) bought vaccines from these two states. At first, at the end of January 2021, Hungary bought the „Sputnik V” vaccine from Russian Federation, which is enough for 1 million people. (Kálmán, 2021) On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021, the first 550 thousand doses Chinese “Sinopharm” vaccine was delivered to Hungary. According to the contract, The People's Republic of China will deliver 5 million doses, which is enough for 2,5 million people. (Bolcsó, 2021) The Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán was vaccinated by Chinese vaccine on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021. (Kormány, 2021)

(such as state instability, ethnic and crisis fault lines) that, unexpected and unpredictable, can even pose a security risk not only for Hungary. (NBS, par.87) It considers it essential to strengthen the stability of a geographically more remote territory - the Middle East and North Africa and the Sahel and Central Asia regions - to enhance the transatlantic territory's security. (NBS, par.89) Hungary considers balanced bilateral relations with a more robust, democratic, stable, and economically developing Ukraine to be necessary. At the same time, however, the NBS states that the legitimate strengthening of Ukraine's national awareness cannot realize the expense of depriving the already acquired rights of the Hungarian national minority living in Transcarpathian Ukraine. (NBS, par.88) In these unstable regions, mass refugee waves are emerging (in the Eastern neighbourhood can be) illegal migration routes crossing Hungary further into Western Europe. This alternative is also taken into account by the new NBS 2020, which has placed massive illegal migration at the top of the security risks list, in par.124a.



Figure 1: Hungary's geopolitical location in Central Europe and the significant military security challenges and threats.  
(Source of map base: google; the author made graphics)

The new NBS 2020 in Part V. - Hungary's security environment (*Magyarország biztonsági környezete*) describes the current Hungary position in

the global and regional security environment. Based on this chapter's analysis, the author of this article concluded that the Hungarian perception generally corresponds to the assessment of the current security situation from the EU and NATO member's perspectives: "The current global security environment characterized by unexpectedness, sudden changes, and complexity. Regional and global security are inseparable, to which the power struggles of the great powers, declining enforceability of international law, climate change, uneven population growth and the technological revolution in digital and cyber technologies contribute significantly."<sup>18</sup> Regional Special Operation Component Command (R-SOCC)<sup>19</sup> and Multinational Division - Central (MND-C)<sup>20</sup> Hungary consider being fundamental pillars of regional and Euro-Atlantic security.

### **3 The impact of Hungarian security policy on the Slovak Republic and possibilities for the cooperation**

For Hungary, the primary regional security challenge is the turbulent West Balkan - south's threat, then threat from the south-east and third place from the east. Slovakia has a little bit another order on the primary regional security challenges. According to the new Slovakian Security Strategy (*Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej republiky - BSS*), Slovakia considers the east's primary regional challenge, second from West Balkan and third place from the south and the south-east wing.<sup>21</sup> (BSS, par.25-28) These small differences in priorities are completely understandable because Hungary and Slovakia's geographical location is different from the direction in which security challenges arise. However, this is not an obstacle to cooperation between the two countries in the military field - the security challenges are the same. Since 2017 Hungary started a vast revitalization and developing program named "ZRÍNYI 2026" for its defense forces. This activity is currently also emphasized in the new NBS 2020 (NBS, par. 5, 27) with the domestic defense industry's involvement. (NBS, par.2, 5, 6, 28, 105, 128, 136) Throughout the military revitalization program, Hungary creates its new defense industry within cooperation programs with Rheinmetall, Nurol Makina, and Airbus.<sup>22</sup> By creating joint production and Research and Development in the defense industry with the world's major market players,

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<sup>18</sup> Definition created by the author

<sup>19</sup> For more information, please see NATO Factsheet, available online: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_10/20191022\\_1910-factsheet-rsocc.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_10/20191022_1910-factsheet-rsocc.pdf). (NATO, 2019)

<sup>20</sup> MND-C is currently had been developing with the participation of two framework countries - Hungary and Croatia. (Snoj, 2021b)

<sup>21</sup> Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions.

<sup>22</sup> Cooperation with Rheinmetall and Nurol Makina explains in this article. Cooperation with Airbus consisted of establishing a joint production plant for helicopter components to Airbus helicopters. (Maróth, 2021)



Hungary can gradually become a leading regional country in the production of defense products and technologies. (Kiszelly, 2021) Moreover, Hungary creating sustainable employment and ensuring a return on investment and domestic GDP growth. Slovakia's benefit is a strong alliance partner in the southern neighbourhood.

The fundamental starting point for the joint Slovak-Hungarian cooperation is the EU and NATO membership. Next, we discuss neighboring countries with shared 655 km longest border than other bordering countries. Both countries started a considerable revitalization of their armed forces. Hungarian Defence Force has a bit advantage in this issue - it has a signed contract to develop new equipment for land forces - Leopard 2 tanks, PzH 2000 howitzers, and Lynx armoured vehicles. Before Hungary, there is another challenge: the replacement of fighter aircraft.<sup>23</sup> Nowadays, Slovakia solves the replacement of its armoured vehicles and tanks. Both countries signed a contract to develop 3D radars with Israeli technology. Hungary has an agreement with Rheinmetall Canada, while Slovakia has a direct contract with the Israeli government. (MOSR, 2021) Hungary favours contracts with private suppliers and more prone to Germany, while Slovakia follows a government-government system and prone to the United States. These measures may take as an opportunity to cooperate between both countries following the main goal - cooperation and cost-effectiveness.

Another possible cooperation field is smart ammunition within the PESCO project led by Slovak Republic „EuroArtillery“, cyber defense, and Post-Quantum Cryptography.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hungary has a valid leasing contract with Sweden about 14 pieces JAS-39 leasing, with is done on 2026. It is a time to look around the international market for who offers the type of gear and under what condition. (Kotulyák, 2019)

<sup>24</sup> For more information, please see the article „Prof. RNDr. Otokar Grošek, a member of Military Intelligence of Slovak Republic, was acknowledged with „Slovak Scientist of the Year“ award“. Available online: <https://vs.mosr.sk/vedec-roka-sr/eng>. (Military Intelligence, 2019)

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