

FERENC GLATZ

# Balkan Policy and the Renaissance of Balkan Studies 2005

## I. Changes in Foreign Political Thinking

### *1. The Eastern Enlargement of the European Union: Beyond the Two Millennia-Old Borders*

The Europe policy of the coming decade will be about two issues of world historical and one of continental dimensions. The first one is about the *new world economic and power political positioning of the continent* (the US, Middle East, China). The second one would be continental and about the internal administrative, social and cultural structure of the Union. The third one is about South-Eastern Europe and the *Balkan region* within it. Now we would speak about the third one, about the scene of the Southeast European enlargement of the Union, and about the region called the Balkans.

Up to 2004 the enlargement of the European Union covered areas that have been linked to major West European integrative political entities by closer or looser political organisations (and cultural and religious ones) for two thousand years. (The map of the archaeological sites of the so-called Halstatt culture, beginning in about 800 B.C. almost perfectly covers the map of the *present* European Union. And cultures of common roots, such as Western Christianity, and even organisations of territorial administration, states based on similar principles have been alive to this day.) From 2004 on the European Union went beyond the borders of the former Holy Roman Empire, but included as yet only territories of Western Christian culture and traditional political institutions.

From 2007 on, however, the European Union has accepted the accession of societies of different political culture, different religion and customs. The years 2004 and 2007 are key dates in the history of the European continent and European culture. The new territories are going to influence the future of Europe as a whole. They will affect even the structure of the Union.

*With the eastern enlargement of the European Union the peoples of the Carpathian basin and of the Danube valley have been included into a new world economic and cultural sphere of interest.*

On 1 May 2004 ten states of Eastern Europe *joined* the European Union, including two states of the Carpathian basin, namely Slovakia and Hungary. In April 2005 the European Union signed *Accession Treaties* with Bulgaria and Romania, and put their accession to the Union in the perspective of the year 2007. On 3 October 2005 negotiations were opened with Croatia and Turkey, and preparations were begun for *stabilisation and accession* pacts with Serbia-Montenegro. The analysis and assessment of the south-eastern space (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia-Montenegro and Kosovo) is under progress to find out how far they meet the Union criteria fixed in 1993 (in Copenhagen). It is clear from the statements of Union leaders that the Union is not planning to include further states in the negotiations preparing for admission beside the states of the region.\*

Now already 25 states are participating in the enlargement of the Union. As experience gathered so far shows the admission of the new countries means an active role for *states* located in the region neighbouring the candidates. (This is called 'new neighbourhood policy'.) It also offers new *opportunities* to individuals, to citizens living in the neighbourhood of the region of candidate countries. Enlargement is also a challenge for the entrepreneurial strata as well as for intellectuals. Hungary and the other states contiguous with the Balkan region have to reconsider their foreign political directions, including those of economic, transport and cultural policy. It is recommended to widen their radius of movement that became one-sided after 1990 and oriented to Western Europe, to include the Southeast European (Balkan) space in order to utilise opportunities and because of the new competitive situation.

## 2. *Economic-Military Interests and Research*

Presumably with the enlargement of the European Union the Southeast European space would attract not only the *researchers* of international politics and investors, but also those interested in the society and *culture*.

During the past one thousand years the region was a field of military and strategic conflicts. It was the region of conflicts at first between Roman and Byzantine Christianity and the power alliances built on them (1054–1453), next between the Ottoman and the Western and Orthodox Christian world (1453–1878), and, finally, between the Soviet and the Western spheres of interest (1945–1992).

World interest in the region naturally followed military and political interests.

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\* Since the completion of the presentation these documents were published on 9 November 2005, and on 1 January 2007 Romania and Bulgaria acceded to the EU.

1878–1920. After the withdrawal of the Turkish Empire (1878) the region attracted the attention of British, French and German (also Austrian and Hungarian) researchers. In addition to the traditional British interest (in Greece) this led to German, Austrian and Hungarian scholarly activities in South-Eastern Europe (1878–1920). (History, archaeology, ethnography, geography.)

1920–1992. At the time of the expansion of the Soviet zone and the existence of Yugoslavia attention shown toward the region (1920–1992) was determined and nourished by interest in the Soviet Union. It resulted in a general attention towards Slav peoples, and Balkan studies in particular, in the development of institutes, conferences, etc., all over the world. (Mention should be made particularly of research into South-Eastern Europe with its centre in Munich which was originally launched with a programme of research into the German minorities in South-Eastern Europe, but became much broader and complex, which has produced the most fundamental historical manuals from 1934 to this date.) We regard the Austrian researches into Southeast Europe equally important: the activities of the institutes of the Universities of Vienna and Graz and of the Österreichische Ost- und Südosteuropa-Institut (OSI) in Vienna.

1992–2007. After the collapse of the Soviet Union (1992) these researches slumped all over the world, research workshops disintegrated, because the states did not find it a 'strategic aim' to 'support' experts, their periodicals and institutes dealing with the space with the money of the state. (An exception is Munich.) It is true that a lot of political analyses were produced about the Balkan crisis of 1992–1999, but it could not keep the earlier institutions of 'East European Research' alive. General interest in the Russians and in the peoples of the Balkans decreased in the US as well as in Western Europe, not speaking about the small occupied states of the former Soviet zone (such as Hungary). The rearrangement of the global power system has also contributed to it: international investors and military-political state strategists alike have been focusing on the growing strength of the Far Eastern space, and mostly of China.

Now, or after 2007 the situation may change. South-Eastern Europe would still remain a field of direct conflict between Russian interests and the NATO. This factor would undeniably influence and even promote the admission of the states of this region to the EU and NATO. Yet the main characteristic of the region would be its *attachment to the Union*. This fact would reevaluate South-Eastern Europe for the market of goods and capital and for world economy. Just as with progress in consolidation Russia would also attract more the attention of Far Eastern as well as EU entrepreneurs than today.

No matter what the economic, military and political future would bring about, surely enlargement and integration would once again provoke *attention towards the region*, and would create research institutes, chairs and projects monitoring and *analysing the region*.

### 3. *Promoting Interest of Eastern Europe*

There is a need for change in Hungarian foreign political thinking today. Preserving the linkages to Western Europe of three hundred years, we *have to help the birth of a new, general interest of Eastern Europe in South-Eastern Europe*. Our assumption is that the eastern enlargement of the Union and the new Southeast European processes of integration will change not only the political environment of the Hungarian state but also the daily life of the country's inhabitants.

In the next decade the 'main route' of European politics would go through Hungary. New challenges, competition and opportunities would be opening up for citizens of states located in the region as well as of contiguous states (Germans, Austrians, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Italians, etc.). Therefore it has to be explored what competitive situation and mutual investments would be made possible in the next decade. We have to build new institutions for the dissemination of knowledge. We repeat: *in the next decade European policy will be partly about rivalries between continents and partly about the relationship between Western Europe and South-Eastern as well as Eastern Europe. It will be forced out by considerations of the environment, energy, gaining markets and investments*. (It is already visible.) Hungary is one of the gateways to the Russian as well as the Balkan region. It is in the interest of everybody that *we perform this gateway function intelligently and in a cultured manner*.

## II. The Promotion of Research into South-Eastern Europe

### 1. *Hungary's Interest and the Possibilities of Hungarian Researchers*

The history of Hungarians and of the Hungarian state has been closely intertwined with the history of the peoples and states of the Balkan region.

Several such peoples (Romanians, Serbs, Bulgarians, etc.) lived inside the Hungarian state the majority of whom were located southeast of the state. Yet, after the expulsion of the Turks (1690) Hungarian foreign policy and political thinking took a one-sided West European direction. It had understandable reasons, for it lived in a common body politic with Austria. It was also attracted by a more developed technical and

economic standard: in the 18th and 19th centuries Western Europe was the centre of the modernisation of the world. It was also linked to that orientation by Christian ideology and its institutions, the Catholic and Protestant Churches, determining one thousand years of intellectual and political thinking. Yet, after the liberation of the Balkans (1878) the Hungarian state, a constituent of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, began an active Balkan-policy which was part of the Southeast European interest-sphere policy of the Monarchy. This political activation had also led to laying the foundations of learning about the Balkans in Hungary. It is commonly known that the 'Hungarian lobby' represented the position of national and religious tolerance in the foreign policy of the Monarchy. The reason was that the Carpathian basin itself was also a multinational and multilingual area. Similar views were represented by the politician Benjámín Kállay as well as by Lajos Thallóczy, who pressed for regular Balkan studies and himself understood the region well. Between 1900 and 1914 little was realised of these research plans conceived at the beginning of the century. It was due to the fact that only a tiny group of the political elite knew the ethnic, religious specificities and customs of the Southeast European space that the Slav peoples of the Hungarian state and of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Romanians wanted to quit the common state.

The thinking of Hungarian intellectuals was attracted to Western Europe after 1920 by the fact that the thousand-year-old Hungarian state disintegrated in 1918–1920. The historical body politic lost two thirds of its territory. The intellectuals of the age thought that it disintegrated mostly as a consequence of the policy of the Western Great Powers. (They did not want to consider that the causes of disintegration were to be looked for in local ethnic and social as well as political problems.) The stratum of Hungarian politicians and the intellectuals wanted to regain lost territories with the help of the Western Great Powers. This trend of foreign policy and public thinking did not favour researches into the Balkans, and the spread of learning about the Balkans in general. Moreover, the new southern (Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom) and the south-eastern neighbours (Romania) became important enemies of Hungary. (The 'modest' institute organised in the University of Pécs was an exception.)

After 1945 Hungary found itself in 'forced friendship' with its South-east European neighbours in the Soviet zone. This friendship had a dual result: it partly helped the institutionalisation of Balkan studies, and partly, under pressure, intellectuals did not sense the real importance of knowledge related to the Balkans. 'Forced friendship' encouraged reality: part of the intellectuals set up cultural and scientific societies

linking our foreign political thinking with our Southeast European neighbours. East European and Slavic studies were pursued at the universities and through them we could get acquainted with our Southeast European neighbours and we could converse with them. Several experts found a livelihood in studying Balkan culture. At the same time this 'forced friendship' had the disadvantage (just as the introduction of Russian language, too) that the knowledge about the Balkans and Eastern Europe in general was brought on us by political pressure. Society regarded this new culture as the product of the political system forced upon us. Thus after the collapse of the political system and the withdrawal of the Soviet troops research into Eastern and South-Eastern Europe became 'old-fashioned'. (The knowledge of the Slavic languages of the neighbouring countries also decreased in general.)

## *2. The Emancipation of Regional Researches*

One can only remember with respect and gratitude those West European, British, German, French, and American as well as Russian scholars who wrote analytical papers and comprehensive works on the Southeast European space, and edited the relevant periodicals during the past one and a half centuries. At the same time researchers of the local states have produced an enormous quantity of historical, ethnographic, musicological, literary and economic analyses and detailed studies. Yet synthesising and comparative approach was left to be done by foreign colleagues. Researchers living in the region rarely found each other; they mostly supplied primary material to the summaries made in the West. This is a deficit of the local research organisations. (One of the causes of this deficit may be found in the local and nation-state animosities.)

As preparations for the eastern enlargement of the European Union, synthesising and comparative programmes may be launched, together with locally operating institutes and periodicals. A networking of researchers and their respective institutes active in the region is necessary. We have several networks in mind, evolving by themes. Several synthesising research programmes running parallel are needed in natural science, economics, historiography, ethnography, political science, etc.

The education of the new generations of researchers in every specialisation is considered as a primary objective. We expect the growth of a new generation of Balkan researchers. The new Centre for Balkan Studies in Budapest also wishes to promote the education of the rising generation. Its basic institutions are a private and an academic one. One is the Europe Institute Budapest (founded in 1990), which is based hundred per cent on private capital, and receives postgraduate research-

ers from all parts of the world. It has flats for visiting professors and a young researchers' hostel of its own. The other basic institution is the Social Science Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Strategic Research Programme of the HAS. Presumably there would be a large number of initiatives similar to ours in the coming decade in the states of the region, and the network of the institutions of Balkan studies would be built with specialised faculties, periodicals, institutes and learned societies.

### III. A Research Hypothesis

#### 1. *On Our Concept of the Balkans*

The concept of South-Eastern Europe comprises the Carpathian basin and the 'Balkans' southeast of the Danube and the Carpathian mountains.

At first every research has to define its spatial and time frame. It has to be done even if those limits of time and space may be challenged. And even if we know that precisely during the course of research we are going to modify the time frame and the geographic borders. Our research target is the space stretching southeast from the Carpathian basin to the seas. We label the space as 'Balkans', originating from a nineteenth-century European geographer. (He took the name of the Balkan mountain in Bulgaria and we adopt it now.) We use the category of *physical geography* which draws the northern border of the Balkan region at the line of the Rivers Drava and Sava, the Southern Carpathians and the Danube. Thus the territory of present-day Croatia as well as Greece is included in it, but Romania only tangentially (*Figure 1*). But the constricted, cultural and historical interpretation of our research target is also accepted. In that case the dividing line should be the four hundred years of Ottoman Turkish occupation. (It shut off the major Western intellectual trends, such as Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment from the region.) The separation of Western Christianity from the Eastern (Orthodox) one may just as well be a determinant of the cultural region. (Then, in this case Croatia would rather belong to Central Europe, Romania would belong partly to Central Europe and partly to the Balkans.)

Naturally we are aware of the heated scholarly and political debates of the past two hundred years about the concepts of 'Southeast Europe', and the 'Balkans'. We know that the 'Balkan' concept of intellectuals living in Western Europe was not simply a geographical connotation. This is how peoples living West of the region and regarding themselves as more advanced and located under well-ordered political conditions

Figure 1  
Central Europe and the Balkan Region



wished to distinguish themselves from their south-eastern neighbours. The term 'Balkan' was used and in some circles of intellectuals is still used as a synonym of 'lack of culture', 'corruption', 'political anarchy' and a 'powder keg'. The historiography and the politicians of peoples living in the space called Balkans on the other hand, wished to stress that they belonged (or wanted to belong) to the intellectually, technically and economically stronger Western peoples. Therefore they did not like to be called 'Balkan' people.

We do not use by any means the name 'Balkan' as a category indicating 'quality'. For us the Balkan region is a uniquely *colourful geographic and social unit* if its specificities of physical geography, the ethnic and religious composition of its population, or its settlement system is viewed.



## 2. Geographic and Cultural Diversity

The *marked articulation of the surface* plays a major role in the conservation of ethnic and religions diversity (Figure 2), which had an important function in the development of small and isolated communities. It lends a special feature to the location of the Balkans among the 'major spaces' of the continent. Namely, it is a dividing as well as linking territory between Europe and Asia Minor. This is what determined and still determines its features within world economy.

It was the result of this location that the region was the western border area of the Turkish Empire for five hundred years, a territory in almost constant contact with the Holy Roman and the Turkish Empires. In addition to its geographic location it is this *five hundred years of history* which is the other factor that determined and still continues to determine the social articulation and ethnic-religious diversity of the space. It is inhabited by an ethnically uniquely mixed population of Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Muslim religion. (Just as the population along the borders of major economic and political empires has been mixed because of constant intercourse in all parts of the world.)

The *tolerant nature* of five hundred years of Turkish rule is the third factor that has caused the survival of ethnic and religious diversity

Figure 2  
Areas of National Settlement and State Borders, 2006



(the unique cultural diversity of the region). The Turkish Empire was far more tolerant towards ethnic and religious differences than the West or East European Christian states were. It did not divest peoples living on its territory of their nationality as it was done by the major empires of Western Europe.

### 3. *The Concept of 'Historical Osmosis'*

The ethnic-religious diversity of peoples living at the border areas of different cultures, the differences in their customs as well as their mutual influence and mixing are well known social phenomena. The concept of 'historical osmosis' is used to indicate them.

The phenomenon of *osmosis* is known from chemistry: the characteristics of two bodies mix and exist side by side at the outer rim (border areas) of the two bodies in constant touch. In case they mix (assimilate to each other: marry, or live together when moved to the same settlement) they produce a new quality. If not, they would live in constant tension. The whole of South-Eastern Europe is characterised by the co-existence and osmosis of the cultures and peoples representing Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and even Asia Minor.

The *cultural diversity* of the region is unique. Whatever was considered yesterday by our predecessors as 'backwardness' we are today inclined to call 'specificity', and 'a different kind of development'. We turn with distinguished interest towards the colourful culture of the region, and are also curious: would this miraculous diversity be tolerated by the technical modernisation of our age? Could the ethnic and religious diversity that resulted in constant warfare for six hundred years, now be one of the model areas of cultural diversity on the planet Earth in the 21st century?

Accession to the European Union would speed up technical and infrastructural development in the region, the mobility of the population would grow, and presumably the disintegration of traditional communities would also become faster. Traditions and religious linkages would disintegrate in daily life, ethnic mixing would be faster in the settlements and families, and as a result ethnic-religious tensions would dissolve. The question is what the outcome would be. Would it be the same that had taken place in the case of similarly mixed populations during the past two hundred years, for instance, in the Carpathian basin, as a result of which a uniquely mixed nation, the Hungarian emerged? The process that has resulted in a national culture of mixed ethnicity but singular language, namely Hungarian? Or, would the region be organised into cantons along the example of Switzerland,

where the different linguistic and ethnic communities organise themselves into rigorously drawn territorial administrative units, but live side by side in an exemplary system of federal administration? Or, would there emerge a new kind of territorial organisation and administration that we still do not know?

#### IV. The Research Programme

##### 1. *The Centre for Balkan Studies (October 2005)*

###### *a. The aims of the Centre for Balkan Studies are:*

- It wishes to promote the economic, social and political *approximation* of the Balkan region to the other regions of Central-Eastern Europe, to Hungary and to the European Union. It wishes to help Hungarian and Hungarian *researchers and entrepreneurs to take up roles* in this process.
- It wishes to acquaint persons and institutions interested in the Balkan region with one another.
- It wishes to present the natural, economic, social and intellectual specificities of the Balkan region.
- The Centre would elaborate proposals for the political sphere concerning the mediating role of Hungary.
- The Centre as a virtual research institute offers a forum to researchers and entrepreneurs dealing with the Balkan region. It wishes to promote the *regular co-operation* of Hungarian and European researchers involved in the Balkan region.
- It wishes to promote the major cross-border projects of natural economy, production, commerce and infrastructure.

###### *b. The means at the disposal of the Centre for Balkan Studies:*

- It launches an internet periodical that would organise the co-operation of experts and those interested in the Balkans. It publishes papers together with the 'Observer' updated monthly. (The periodical is launched in Hungarian but with summaries in English, German, and south Slavic languages).
- It regularly organises *conferences* and gets papers done in these topics.
- It publishes a *series of booklets* on the Balkan region. (1. The Concept of the Balkans; 2. Dayton; 3. Regional Rearrangement.)
- *Association: "Friends of the Balkans."*

The Centre *engages* itself in the *long-term* economic, social and environmental *alternatives* of the region and also of Hungary. It

wishes to deal with issues of current *foreign and security policy* only *tangentially*. It offers partnership to the active political administration and its background institutions of the day. Daily politics is only a partial factor in our interest, but its importance is rather great: for it is a means of realising long-term opportunities.

The Centre pays special attention to the study of the *interest of Hungary* in the new regional integration.

### *c. Programme Council and programmes*

The *Programme Council* of the Centre includes several leading personalities of scientific life, among them representatives of agricultural sciences, settlement studies, economics, transportation science, protection of the environment, water management, law, geography, minority research, political science and historiography.

Members:

– Members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences József Bayer (political science), Zoltán Bedő (agricultural science), György Enyedi (spatial development), Ferenc Glatz (Chairman, historical sciences), Béla Kádár (economics), Pál Michelberger (transportation), István Láng (environment), László Somlyódy (water management).

– Directors of institutes at universities and of the HAS: Margit Balogh (Church), András Inotai (economics), Sándor Kerekes (environmental management), Vanda Lamm (law), János Rechnitzer (spatial development), Zsolt Rostoványi (Middle East, international relations), Tamás Sárközy (economic law), Ferenc Schweitzer (geography), László Szarka (minority policy), Zoltán Szász (history). Managers of the programme: Attila Pók and Andrea Antal.

– Members of the Programme Committee: Erhard Busek, former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, Special Co-ordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Andrei Pleșu, former Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Director of the Europe College in Bucharest, Dušan Kovač, Vice-President of the Slovakian Academy of Sciences, Arnold Suppan, President of the Institute for East and Southeast Europe in Vienna and Members of the HAS: Ferenc Glatz, Béla Kádár, György Enyedi, István Láng, Ernő Marosi.

## *2. Intellectual and financial resources of the research programme*

### *a. The Europe Institute Budapest*

Ferenc Glatz, Director of the Europe Institute Budapest (founded in 1990, see: [www.europainstitut.hu](http://www.europainstitut.hu)) proposed on 10 June 2005, at the meeting of the academic council to set up a Centre for Balkan Studies in

Budapest. During the preparatory talks the National Programme for Strategic Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences joined the initiative together with the Social Science Research Centre of HAS and several noted Members of the HAS, university professors and public personalities.

Ever since its foundation in 1990 the *Europe Institute Budapest* has been continuously engaged in the topic of the eastern enlargement of the European Union. It has participated in several all-European projects studying eastern enlargement since 1991. Since its foundation it has been devoting special attention to the research and organisation of Hungary's scientific and cultural relations with the East European and Southeast European space. The Institute receives scholarship-holders and visiting professors, a significant proportion of whom come from that space. It organises conferences and publishes a series of books in foreign languages (*Begegnungen – Crossroads*) the topics of which are related to the space. The Institute provides premises and infrastructure necessary to the organisation of the new Centre for Balkan Studies, it also finances the post of director and secretary, and it offers annually a 12-month fee for professors and 24 months of scholarships to postgraduates (in a residential hostel) engaged in Balkan research.

*b. National Programme of Strategic Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*

The *National Programme of Strategic Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* was launched in 1996 with the aim that “the societies” of Central Eastern Europe “have to define jointly their common local interests in the major continental and intercontinental rearrangement. And these local interests should be asserted, if possible, at the European forums.” In 1997 the Programme elaborated plans on the level of the space about a regional ecological monitoring system, about a strategy of transport and water management, about the spatial development prospects of the Danube valley and the Plain. (They were published in monographs.) The concepts elaborated were not implemented partly because of the so-called ‘Balkan wars’ (1999), and partly because of the lack of funds. The Programme Council of Strategic Studies took its position at its session on 25 June 2005 to support the setting up of the Centre for Balkan Studies. It finances conferences, the invitation of scholarship-holders, and publications. At the same time it recommended to the President of HAS the inclusion of the development of researches into the Balkans in the ideas of science policy of the Academy (young researchers, supporting projects, etc.).

c. *Social Science Research Centre of HAS*

The *Social Science Research Centre of HAS* comprises nine social science research institutes and two research groups. The Centre was set up to organise long-term enterprises in social sciences. It is headed by a Scientific Council. The 24 October 2005 session of the Scientific Council decided for supporting the programme and the directors of eight institutes of the Social Science Research Centre of HAS were ready to take up some office in the Programme Council (political science, historiography, law, sociology, ethnography, economy, archaeology, minority research).

The initiative was supported by the then Foreign Minister Mr Ferenc Somogyi, too, who accepted to give the introductory speech at the opening conference held on 15 November. Several supporters have come forward outside the Social Science Research Centre, such as the Institutes of Agricultural Science and Geography, as well as Corvinus University, the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Szent István University, some departments of ELTE University. The Programme expects the agricultural and industrial sphere (chambers) as well as the national organisations of entrepreneurs and financial institutions and of individual entrepreneurs to join in.

*Literature*

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