

HUNGARIAN FOREIGN POLICY ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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Hungary's intention with both NATO and the European Union was to "anchor" the country institutionally as soon as possible to the West. This institutional anchoring was important because we badly wanted the international investment community to understand that Hungary is part of the western structures, so businessmen have nothing to fear when they come to Hungary to invest or to be part of privatization.

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Hungarian foreign policy as it is conducted today has its roots in the past. Its style also has its roots in the past. It is at times radical and at other times reluctant. During the nineteenth century as well as during the twentieth century Hungary was a part of alliances with different powers. And once it regained its independence, Hungary immediately joined new alliances again. These developments certainly have had their effects on the way the country conducts its international relations today.

I would argue that the romantic phase of the post-Soviet attitude in foreign policy is over. In the beginning of the 1990s we did have this romantic and euphoric attitude toward Germany, the European Union and the United States. I had the feeling at the beginning of the 1990s, right after the changes, that this naïveté was somehow rooted in the idea of gratitude of the West. Which is of course totally ridiculous. There is no gratitude in history! I remember going to Copenhagen in November 1989 where I met Mary Dau Hansen, one of the well-known conservative researchers in Denmark. She had studied Central Europe and the Soviet Union. I was euphoric and told her I believed in immediate EU membership and that NATO would embrace us soon as well. And she responded with a smile: wait a minute, you have to stop being euphoric; the memory of democracies is short. As the matter of fact today I believe that she was right: we had to come to terms by the mid 1990s that this is not about being grateful, this is not about gratitude; this is about hard-core interest driven power politics. There is

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nothing wrong with that, it is just reality. And if it is reality, then we can cope with it and Hungary, and we will be fine.

In the last 12 years we have all be trying to catch up with lost time. Our powerful presentation of the cause of integration was related to the fact that we wanted to catch up very fast. We Hungarians wanted to push our integration process on the way to cushion the recovery of our economy. Basically that is exactly what has happened. Our intention with both NATO and the European Union was exactly this: to “anchor” Hungary institutionally as soon as possible to the West. This institutional anchoring was important because we badly wanted the international investment community to understand that Hungary is part of the western structures, so businessmen have nothing to fear when they come to Hungary to invest or to be part of privatization. There was an underlying security concern also: the general instability of the region and the still undecided direction of development of the then Soviet Union.

I would therefore argue that the margin of deviation from the integrationist line has been minimal, as each of the consecutive democratically elected governments have embraced NATO and EU membership as two of the pillars of foreign policy. The third pillar concerned Hungary’s relations with our immediate neighbors and the attendant Hungarian minority issues. One problem, however, has emerged: the elite is torn between understanding and accepting the limits of flexibility, the need for a consensus dictated by reality, and between belonging to one political grouping, one political family. So while I believe that a consensus exists on the basics of Hungarian foreign policy, and there is very little room to deviate from it by the individual governments, at the same time in the practical interpretation of this foreign policy there can be huge differences, especially relating to style. This has been particularly apparent over the last thirteen years in matters related to military action and minority issues. Therefore, I think one of the issues we desperately have to sort out quickly is how to make sure that these differences do not rock the foundations of our foreign policy.

I want to reiterate that I do not think there is an alternative to the above mentioned three-pillar foreign policy. But I want to stress again that there can be such serious differences in emphasis that these may at times be transformed into differences of substance. We have to come to terms with the fact that the challenges for Hungary are exactly the same as those for the other democratic members of the European Union and for part of the Transatlantic family. The real challenge is globalization, its impact on security, economy, health, science, culture and lifestyle. Globalization is not a question of choice, globalization is with us, and Hungary has become a part of this process. It does not help to try to reject it, as if Hungary could somehow escape its consequences. Unfortunately I have sometimes heard statements from politicians and the members of think tanks in Hungary that indicate an unwillingness to come to terms with globalization. When

this happens, I have a feeling of *deja vue*. Many of you remember back in the Kádár era there was this idea in 1970s and 1980s that the effects of the oil crisis exists in the West only and will not affect Hungary because we will stop this crisis from entering our country at the border. That is a pretty voluntaristic idea. Sometimes I have this strange feeling that some of the politicians and maybe some of my colleagues believe that Hungary can be isolated from the rest of the World. Let us pretend we are not part of it; and maybe the world will not notice Hungary, and Hungary will then not be affected by the rest of the world. Such an attitude lacks seriousness. Hungary is very much a part of the world, and very importantly part of the Western world; and it would be ridiculous not to be looking outward and instead trying to isolate ourselves rather than proactively engaging and helping to determine in which direction the world is moving. Therefore, the threats and challenges for all of us who believe in the democratic world is exactly the same. Today terrorism constitutes a most grievous threat to security. Let me be very clear: the heightened tensions related to terrorism will not go away in the near future. The bad news is that unfortunately these threats and challenges are here to stay. The issue is how our society will react: are we going to fall apart or are we going to find the way to interact and cooperate together to make sure that these threats are fought and that terrorists fail? The challenges of the world's economy, health, science and culture, are all also challenges that we have to face together, and there is no alternative for Hungary except to join with its friends and allies on both sides of the Atlantic and to be part of the search for a solution.

In the mid 1980s I started to write my doctoral dissertation. It was supposed to be about Danish foreign and security policy. Obviously the dissertation though was not about Denmark; it was about Hungary. You all know that during the 1970s and 1980s, when we wanted to write something controversial about Hungary, we disguised our intention by seemingly writing about something else. As the matter of fact my study was actually about Hungarian security policy and the possibilities of a small nation within the Warsaw pact to liberate itself from the Soviet imperialism. Yet, formally it was about Danish foreign security policy. Furthermore, what I tried to do then was not a unique phenomenon because other people did the same. The idea was to have a look at a small NATO nation that had been able to make minor amendments to NATO decisions on medium range missiles and the like. Denmark was deviating from the common policy of NATO, and I wanted to see if there were any lessons to be learned for a small country such as Hungary. Could Hungary do the same within the framework of the Warsaw pact and perhaps end up with Finlandization, which would have been fairly radical. There was at that time no sign yet of the systemic change, the breakup of the "socialist camp," which would soon come. Not in our wildest dreams did we see Hungary becoming a part of NATO, or the European Union.

My conclusion was unfortunately that nothing could be learnt from the Danish example, because Denmark was a good NATO ally, despite its differences; and today it is still a good NATO ally. The only lesson I learned did not concern ideas of leaving the Warsaw pact, but involved the price to pay for obstructing NATO decisions. Another lesson learned concerned the limitations to which the foreign policy of a small nation was subject. The Danish problem of a lack of foreign policy consensus was rooted in the country's past. Consequently, I do believe that some of the problems that we are facing today in building consensus is rooted in the past as well.

The attitudes favoring neutrality by many Hungarians today remain difficult for me to comprehend because I believe that neutrality was never a real option for Hungary in the past decade. But let me now turn to the three pillars that I mentioned earlier.

First, I would like to talk about the European Union pillar. We are finally going to become members of the EU. We have concluded our negotiations and the referendum is just around the corner. There is overwhelming support in the country for our membership. By the way, I believe the European Union made a huge mistake by not enlarging in the early 1990s. The enlargement would have driven the Transatlantic agenda and would have also driven the strategic security agenda. But the EU failed to do so and displayed petty attitude. I do think that a delayed and late enlargement is taking place. Thus, I do believe Europe let us down because it made false promises to us in 1990. It's a fact. Nevertheless, that is in the past and by now a subject for research; and there are huge amounts of documents, which I trust will support what I have just said. But the bottom line remains that Hungary is going to become a member of the European Union at a moment where the enlargement of the EU is so crucial once again both to us and to the European Union. We know that we will be jumping on a moving train. The EU is in constant change. We are not joining the European Union of the early 1990s. We are joining a European Union that is trying to cope with the scope of enlargement. It is also making efforts to create a security and a defense dimension. It has to adapt to be able to face the new challenges. The last events of the last couple of weeks have revealed some of the problems. The discussion of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy provided by András Gerő has been helpful. Why did the Austro-Hungarian monarchy prove to be so strong and so viable? Because there was a common economic policy, common foreign policy, and there was a common defense policy. Two of these are lacking for the European Union, and as long as the European Union is not able to embrace a common credible security policy and a common foreign policy, it is not going to be able to act as a super power. We will work in that direction within NATO and in furthering US–Hungarian relations. We are not choosing between the Transatlantic relationship and Europe. I want to be very-very clear: more of Europe for us does not mean less of America. It will mean

more possibilities with the United States as well. We are not abandoning America in terms of business relations. Obviously strategically and for our security the relationship to the United States is crucial for us and will remain so. European defense is not going to replace the United States as our formal ally in our security policy.

The second pillar is NATO. NATO has to change; NATO has to adapt. We Hungarians think that it is right to say that the institution of choice in the transatlantic relationship will be NATO, and there is nothing wrong with the American leadership in NATO. However it will have to change too, if it wants to be able to respond to the threats of the twenty-first century. It will have to be able to act fast and in a credible way, if and when necessary. It is good that NATO is enlarging to take in our neighbors from the East, thus extending the zone of security and stability. Hungary will want to contribute, consequently we are pursuing military reforms. And we would like to be sure to use our resources in a useful way, so that our capabilities reflect a real need. The relationship between Europe and America is of course a key question. There is no alternative to America and Europe working together but sometimes cooperation appears to be increasingly difficult. I think we have to find new ways to make sure that this relationship will remain.

The third pillar concerns our relationship to our neighbors. Probably this is the sphere where the biggest differences can be detected between the consecutive governments of the last twelve years. None of the governments can abandon or neglect the issue of our relationship to our neighbors and the quest to improve the situation of the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries. But in terms of methods, there have been serious differences. I do not have the time here to delve into the details, but I think the bottom line is that this third pillar is going to remain with us. On the other hand as we move into the European Union and as NATO embraces our neighbors, we Hungarians will be able to see an improvement in the situation of the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries. Within the broader region we will strive to build better relations with Russia, which now is an important partner of both NATO and the EU.

Last, but not least, let me say a few words about Iraq. The Hungarian position on Iraq has been very clear during the last six months, since President Bush's speech at the United Nations. The Hungarian position has been that we would like to see the conflict resolved by peaceful means through the United Nations. We have also determined that in the end we will have to make clear to Saddam Hussein that the international community is ready and willing to move militarily, if peaceful means do not work. Why did we say this? We said this because we thought that the unity of the international community and providing a credible threat against Saddam Hussein would have provided the best chance for a peaceful solution. Unfortunately this did not happen. I must say the failure of the international community in standing together against Saddam Hussein is probably the real reason

why we had to go to war. Some of you might recall that toward the end of January the British, the Spanish the Italian, the Danish, the Portuguese, the Polish, the Czech, and the Hungarian leaders signed a letter supporting the United States. We signed the “letter of the eight,” which was intended to build a greater unity within Europe, as well as to strengthen the unity between the United States and Europe. The message, which we wanted to send, was that we are not going to allow Saddam Hussein to drive a wedge between us. It is most unfortunate that some countries in Europe, which are close friends and allies and are absolutely crucial in our development, have chosen to go in a different direction. Obviously we did not agree with the French and the German position, and we did not agree with the way the communications between the US and some of the European allies were conducted. Hungary early on made a commitment and a contribution. Together with the United States we have been training Free Iraqi Forces in Hungary since January. This was a clear statement of support. We also granted over flight rights to the United States during the war. We have also supported the decision by NATO to help Turkey. Hungary is thus a part of the coalition of those who are willing to support the efforts to disarm Saddam Hussein.

The present day events will have a huge impact on the whole structure and system of security that was established after 1945, which will probably have to be reviewed and revised. The way the UN makes decision in order to secure its role must be placed under scrutiny. This situation is in a way unfamiliar because we were used to the stability of the international system. The system that we created more than fifty years ago might not serve us completely, when we have new threats and new challenges. I would like to conclude by saying that yes there are a number of dilemmas. Hungary has chosen to have a very pragmatic foreign policy; and rather than finding a theory and putting it into practice, we are doing it the other way around. We are implementing it in practice, and then later in a few years you historians will build a theory around it.