

Prospects for reform and community-based operations in Hungarian law enforcement

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Summary

This paper summarises the main theses of the author's doctoral research, awarded with an excellent rating, and funded by the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund and supported by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology's Cooperative Doctoral Programme Doctoral Fellowship. The aim of the research is to take a position on whether organisational reform is necessary for a modern, socially integrated police force in Hungary that respects human rights. To reach his conclusion, the author reviewed the changes in the perception of security and the role of the police in society from the creation of modern states to the present day, and studied five foreign police reforms. He examined the process of social integration in the Hungarian police from the change of regime to the present day, analysing in detail the attempts at organisational reform and the reasons for their failure, as well as the situation of plural policing. In his empirical research, he carried out a questionnaire survey with the participation of 310 police officers serving in the public places in a police headquarters in a county, and interviewed 19 senior police officers, and compared these findings with those of a survey of the general public on a similar topic.

According to his conclusions, the lack of reforming the rule of law in the period of regime change in the spirit of depoliticisation, decentralisation and demilitarisation can be considered reasonable in view of the social, political and law enforcement conditions of the period. Since the regime change, the Hungarian police has been experiencing changes in the direction of cooperation with the communities of society. Structural reform is not necessarily the way forward for the renewal of Hungarian policing. The changing, globalising world situation, which is burdened by serious crises, points to new directions for the development of the police. A state policing model that reinforces centralisation does not preclude the emergence of a community approach that is capable of cooperating with society. Changes in the direction of the three 'de-' can be facilitated by a paradigm shift that recognises and accepts the extension of policing.

Keywords: law enforcement reform, criminal strategy, community policing, social integration, plural policing

A reform és a közösség alapú rendészet kilátásai a mai magyar rendőrségen

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Összefoglalás

E tanulmány a szerző doktori kutatásának főbb téziseit foglalja össze. A kutatás célja állást foglalni abban, hogy szükséges-e szervezeti reform ahhoz, hogy modern, az emberi jogokat tiszteletben tartó, társadalomba integrált rendőrség működjön Magyarországon.

Állásfoglalásához a szerző áttekintette a biztonság szemlélet és a rendőrség társadalmi szerepének változásait a modern államok létrejöttétől napjainkig, tanulmányozott öt külföldi rendészeti reformot. Megvizsgálta a magyar rendőrségben a rendszerváltástól napjainkig végbemenő társadalmi integrációs folyamatot, részletesen elemezve szervezeti reformokra tett kísérleteket és ezek elmaradásának okait, valamint a plurális rendészet helyzetét. Empirikus

kutatásaiban a rendőrök bűnözésértelmezését, együttműködési készségét és problémakezelését vizsgálva kérdőíves vizsgálatot végzett egy vármegyei rendőr-főkapitányság 310 közterületen szolgáló rendőrével, interjút készített 19 vezető beosztású rendőrtisztrel, e vizsgálatokat pedig összevetette egy, a lakosság körében hasonló témában végzett kutatás eredményeivel.

Megállapításai szerint a rendszerváltás időszakában a depolitizálás, decentralizálás, demilitarizálás jegyében megvalósítandó jogállami reform elmaradása az időszak társadalmi, politikai, rendészeti viszonyainak ismeretében okszerűnek tekinthető. A magyar rendőrségben a rendszerváltás óta tapasztalhatók a társadalom közösségeivel való kooperáció irányába mutató változások. A magyar rendészet megújításának nem szükségképpen útja a strukturális reform. Az átalakuló, globalizálódó és súlyos válságtünetekkel terhelt világhelyzet a rendőrség fejlesztésének új irányait mutatja. A centralizációt erősítő államrendőrségi modell nem zárja ki a társadalommal együttműködni képes közösségi gondolat térnyerését. A három „de-” irányába mutató változások a rendészet kiterjesztését elismerő és elfogadó paradigmaváltással elősegíthetők.

Kulcsszavak: rendészeti reform, kriminálstratégia, közösségi rendészet, társadalmi integráció, plurális rendészet

Forewords

Our common history with Árpád Budavári started in 2010, when the police captain from Dunaújváros started to study at the master's school. His history is interestingly winding: he led two other captaincies, and after thirteen years he returned to his home town. But only for a few months, because on 1 November 2023, he was given a bigger post – and with it a bigger task: he was appointed Deputy Chief Criminal Commissioner of Fejér County. This fact could be embarrassing, but for me he will remain Árpai, as he has been from the very beginning, just like I was for him, Kata.

One of our first experiences in class was the thrilling distance from which the two of us approached the mysteries of good enough policing and then good enough police driving. Under *the headings of Integrated Social Studies and Leadership Communication*, we had the opportunity to bring together theoretical (obviously Kata's) and practical (obviously Árpai's) ideas about organisational and occupational culture. This was so successful that the diploma thesis of the master's student who chose me as a consultant – the telling *The Stone Soup of Public Security* – was published in the *Journal of Internal Affairs*. From then on, it took six years for Árpai to make up his mind to apply to doctoral school. In 2018, he came to me again as a supervisor. I was happy to do so, and the successful award of the degree shows that I made the right decision.

I do not praise his thesis, since the two opponents, Géza Finszter and István Szikinger, who have their honor, did it. The committee's verdict – *summa cum laude*, 100% – also confirms that great work has been produced.

Whatever I have had to do with the work over the past five years has been done with integrity, and I hope the author will agree that I have been a worthy companion and supporter throughout. In any case, I wish everyone such a dissidence.

I enjoyed every moment of the often difficult journey we were on. We alternated between serious, fine professional-theoretical discussions and practical steps. We collected signatures and certificates to keep all the paperwork in order. In the meantime, we enjoyed together the candidate's attempts at teaching, the smell of the workshop and the appreciative feedback from the students, who said that the Colonel would be a good teacher, but

it was a pity he did not teach at the university. In Zalakaros, we had an extraordinary conference with a quarter of us, and I have fond memories of our late-night, world-changing wine-tasting session at the same venue. Then came the pandemic, the fearful anxiety, the online complex exams, the constant credit-hunting and finally the absolutorium. The awarded Cooperative Doctoral Programme made research progress tighter. But there is still work to be done: a forthcoming joint publication is still in progress, almost a year in the making, and we have to close the CDP grant. Our long and repeated attempts to tackle the textual data of Árpai's work, and in the final stages the less than successful – and I stress quantitative – slimming down of the dissertation, were not easy. But more decisive were my wonderful absorptions in the author's superb style. I loved the process of thoroughly preparing the questionnaires and interviews, and the constant perusal of the incredible amount of literature processed by an author with a real researcher's flair.

Then came the reassuringly pleasant atmosphere of the workshop debate, followed by months of final touches, the selection and organisation of the opponents and the selection committee. The final approval of the thesis to be submitted, the printing and binding, the final signature and submission. Small things, but all important.

In the end, everything was smooth and all the hard work was crowned with success. It's been an arduous but happy five years, after which we pause for a moment, but just. Because tomorrow the work will resume, and from the workshop of the scientific spirit, Árpai will return to practice. I would like to believe that his acquired knowledge will be of use not only to his beloved Dunaújváros, but now to the whole Fejér County, and even to our police and society. At the same time, I also hope to see him back in the faculty and in the pages of scientific journals, and that our professionalism will not end with this toast, but will move on to another stage and level.

It is understandable why my congratulations are so biased. I am delighted and thank him for having chosen me as his guide at the time, and I wish him continued success in his professional, academic and, not least, personal life!

Dr. Katalin Molnár PhD
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Colonel Árpád Budavári's research is a gap filler, as law enforcement professionals expect the results and recommendations of applied research that can be used in everyday practice from the researchers of the Doctoral School of Police Sciences. Colonel's research is also forward-looking, because until now there has been a lack of researchers with serious practical experience in the field of police science, and the field is showing an increasing interest in the results of police science.

The researched topic is a timely issue of police operation, since the more than thirty years following the regime change have resulted in a number of unprecedented situations in the operation of the police. The quantitative and qualitative transformation of tasks and expectations also requires a reassessment of the relationship between state and non-state actors in the creation and maintenance of security. The priority is to make an informed and responsible choice as to which tasks the police should concentrate its resources on, which tasks it can delegate to civilian, complementary police actors and in which areas it should strengthen its cooperation with them, thus ensuring the rationalisation of public tasks and more efficient and cost-effective organisational operation.

Colonel, you are a highly experienced and respected law enforcement leader. Given the relevance of his research, it is expected that it will be supported by both the public and civil sectors, and that it will be used in practice by all actors involved in the security sector.

The colonel is a recognized police leader with extensive professional experience. Given its relevance, the utilization of its research results is expected to be supported by both the public and civil sectors, and they can also be used in practice by all actors involved in the security sector.

*Dr. József Németh PhD. r. Colonel, Associate Professor
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Reasons for the choice of topic and purpose of the research

The idea of renewing the police, inherited after forty years of state socialism, dates back to the pre-reform era. The basic structural set-up has remained virtually unchanged since 1949: a highly hierarchical and militarised centrally controlled state police force, separate from the civil administration. Under the party state, the professional and political management of the police, which was part of the Ministry of the Interior, was not separated. Its operation was not under the rule of law but of the state party, and there was no social control. The state had a monopoly on the performance of public security functions, ensuring both total control over its citizens and a low crime rate, aided by the fact that the economy was also under the control of the state administration, with no private property and no market economy.

The democratic rule of law that took shape after the change of regime was far from being able to guarantee security to the same extent as in the period of total dictatorship. With privatisation, a vast amount of wealth has been given into private hands, and the egalitarian planned economy of socialism was replaced by a market economy. The democratic turnaround required both a reform of the judicial system and the democratisation of the police, and a fight against the sharp rise in crime. It was also clear that a new police force could only be formed on the basis of the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Opinions on the future of the police were divided into two poles. The proponents of a radical turnaround were mainly theoreticians. Their aim was to replace the military-style organisation with a decentralised municipal police force integrated into the civil administration, which would provide strong guarantees against abuses of the monopoly on the use of force. However, police leaders and policy-makers did not turn their backs on the past, arguing for the maintenance of the old structure and wanting to build fewer constraints and greater empowerment into the way it operated. In the end, the latter idea won the day (*Finszter 2008*). The constitutionalisation brought the police under the same authority as the army, now without direct party control, but left the centralised, militarised state police structure in place.

The change of regime created an opportunity for our police to face its past openly, to make an accurate diagnosis of its condition and to offer a chance for a socio-political consensus on the police's role in the rule of law. Without this, it would not have been possible over the last 30 or so years to develop long-term concepts for the organisational structure and functioning of the police that could withstand the test of changing political courses. And although renewal has been a constant theme of police research, in my opinion only one period has offered any real prospect of reform: the period of 2006–2010. The investigations carried out in the aftermath of the police handling of the demonstrations in Budapest in the autumn of 2006 highlighted the shortcomings that were closely linked to the unchanged organisation. These failures led to a serious level of social dissatisfaction and a crisis of confidence in the police. The poor state of public safety and the police became a leading theme in political rhetoric in the following years. This dissatisfaction revived vigilante movements calling for the restoration of public safety and the crackdown on criminals. The emergence of the paramilitary Hungarian Guard, which had the largest social support of all, both cast doubt on the state's ability to fulfil its function of protecting public safety and deepened the divisions between the Roma and the majority society. The police's handling of the series of attacks against the Roma in 2008–2009, the most extreme manifestation of this, pointed to professional shortcomings and some manifestations of prejudice in the organisation's staff (*Pap*

2019). It became clear that the government of the time was unable to deal with this situation.

In the more than a decade since then, however, the improved outcomes, growing sense of security and confidence mentioned earlier have pushed the idea of a reformed, structural overhaul of the police back into the research workshops. There have been several attempts to introduce a community policing approach in recent years, but no breakthrough structural change has occurred (*Christián 2019: 79–89*).

In our current context of low crime and high institutional confidence, there is an opportunity to move from a spectacle to a workshop, where the community's need for security, the results of scientific research and the views of the profession can all be taken into account.

The situation is not only ripe for change, but also makes it necessary. Globalisation processes are also fundamentally changing the conditions affecting security and the perception of security. The focus on addressing global security threats in many European countries has been accompanied by a redefinition of the role of the police in society, with implications for the relationship between the police and society.

The general aim of the research was to assess whether structural reform is necessary to ensure an effective police force in our country that respects human rights, is close to and cooperates with civil society and citizens. This work does not deny the need for change. It does, however, suggest that the reform that has not taken place since the change of regime is not the only way to achieve change, and perhaps not the most effective one. There is currently a huge gap between the positions of police science, which argues for radical change, and those of police policy and the law enforcement profession, which are rigidly attached to the current way of doing things, and a bridge between them, which can be bridged by arguments based on scientific need and practical experience.

The first of the specific objectives of the research is to understand the reasons for, the content and the results of the police reforms implemented in the different countries since the turn of the millennium, the main elements of the police reforms, how these reforms harmonise with the principles of community policing and the experiences of their implementation. The knowledge thus gained can contribute to a general understanding of the nature of police reforms and to an analysis of the situation of the Hungarian police in light of the changes in policing that have taken place.

In the further parts of the research, I used my knowledge of police reform to examine the Hungarian police force by systematically analysing the relevant literature and my own experiences, and by using empirical methods to take a position on the need for police reform through an understanding of its relationship with communities.

Hypotheses

1. The economic and social tensions caused by the transformation of the political system, and in particular the dramatic rise in crime in the first half of the 1990s, demanded that the police, above all, should be kept operational rather than undergoing radical structural changes. In view of the social, political and policing conditions of the period, the lack of implementing a reform in line with the requirements of the rule of law in the period of regime change, in the spirit of depoliticisation, decentralisation and demilitarisation, can be considered reasonable.
2. Especially since the change of regime, the Hungarian police has been experiencing changes towards cooperation with communities, the characteristics of community-based cooperative problem solving, and the intervention needs that can improve the problem sensitivity and cooperative competences of the police.
3. The reform focusing on decentralisation, demilitarisation and depoliticisation of the police is not necessarily the way to renew Hungarian policing. The changing, globalising and crisis-ridden world situation shows new directions for the development of police forces. A model of state policing that reinforces centralisation does not exclude the emergence of a community idea capable of cooperating with society.

Research design, scope, scale and methods used

The research is divided into five main parts, progressively narrowing its focus from the analysis of the changing perception of security and the changing role of the police in society in the international arena, to the analysis of international reforms and community-oriented policing strategies, to the situation of community policing in Hungary and Fejér county. Thus, the processing of the experiences of the areas under study moves from the identification of general world trends towards concrete proposals for the identification of the needs for change in domestic policing.

In the first, theoretical part, I presented the changes in the interpretation of security from the beginning of modern statehood to the present day, and in parallel the correlations between the applied policing strategies and operational models, thus laying the foundations for the analysis of international policing reforms. Among them, I have paid particular attention to community policing as a fundamental *policing* strategy of modern policing. An emphasized part of the analysis is the presentation of the impact of globalization and, in this context, the risk society on the interpretation of security, on the relationship between the police and society, and on community policing. I have described the 'abstract policing' theory of Jan Terpstra, Nick Fyfe and Renze Salet, which illustrates the increasingly abstract nature of police relations

systems focused on addressing global security challenges as an undesirable side effect of police reforms, using the examples of the Scottish and Dutch police (*Terpstra–Fyfe–Sallet 2019*). I have explained the process of pluralisation of policing, highlighting its democratising role. I have analysed the specificities of the former socialist countries' approaches to security and the challenges of democratising their policing. Finally, I took a position on the main criteria for democratic policing today.

Drawing on the experience of the first part, the second part looks at police and police reforms in other countries at the turn of the millennium and beyond. The aim of this chapter is to take a position, through the international examples presented, on the main trends in police reform today and what lessons can be drawn from the various police reforms that can be applied to domestic policing. In the first part of the chapter, I analysed in detail the reforms of Belgium, the Netherlands, Scotland and the Czech Republic, and presented their important experiences that are worth considering in the context of domestic conditions. An important task of the analyses is to shed light on how the countries under study have responded to the threats of globalisation to security in their reforms. In what ways has the end of the monopoly of state policing and the pluralisation of policing been achieved? And how has this affected the relationship between police and society?

I then discussed the police reform in New York, USA, implemented by William Bratton. The experience of this reform is important to this research in a number of ways. First, they can provide lessons on the potential for repressive policing away from the communities it serves to cause serious discontent, escalating to the point of social crisis, even in the face of significant reductions in crime. On the other hand, William Bratton's second term as New York City Police Commissioner demonstrates the kind of policing strategy that can both serve the community and reduce crime without significantly altering the police structure.

The general world trends and the experience of the five reforms under review have been instrumental in shaping my views on the main issues. For this purpose, it is necessary, but not sufficient, to filter the changes in the interpretation of security perception and the lessons learned from law enforcement reforms implemented in other countries. In order to use these experiences at home, it is necessary to examine the needs and opportunities for reform in the Hungarian police, why these were not realised, how the relationship between the police and society has changed since the change of regime, and what changes are needed for the future.

The third part of the thesis was devoted to these investigations. I showed how the democratisation process of the Hungarian police progressed after the regime change, and how the need for a reform worthy transformation emerged. In this part, I started from the period of regime change to show the emergence of the need for

reform and the main periods with reform potential. I examine in detail the period of regime change, including the findings of the Team Consult study, the changes in the period 2006–2010, and the years after 2010 with a unified approach to criminal policy.

I have presented the relationship between the Hungarian police and society, and thus the desirable directions of change needs, through the following dimensions:

- a. I have illustrated the crime policy and social inclusion efforts reflected in the National Strategy for Social Crime Prevention and the National Crime Prevention Strategy through a comparative analysis;
- b. a key indicator of the relationship with the communities is the expected police behaviour as set out in ethical standards, the development of which I have outlined through a sketch of the various codes of ethics;
- c. respect for universal human freedoms is a fundamental characteristic of modern, democratic policing. In a separate sub-chapter, I have presented the guarantees that have been built up in the Hungarian police after the change of regime and what characterises the police of our time. This thesis cannot attempt to cover the topic in its entirety, therefore, in addition to the changes in the legislative activity determining the functioning of the police, I have examined the situation of two fundamental rights, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to equal treatment, in more detail. In this context, I also considered it important to examine how the control mechanisms of the police, which are empowered to restrict fundamental rights, are structured and how they serve the rule of law;
- d. I have described the development of the community policing concept that has become a fundamental value of socially integrated democratic police forces from the change of regime to the present day.

In the fourth part of the thesis, I have already used the results of my empirical research to assess the domestic situation of what Jan Terpstra, Nick Fyfe and Renze Sallet called “abstract policing”. Among the globalisation influences, illegal migration, the COVID-19 epidemic, e-governance, the transformation of information gathering activities, and the introduction of the current system of performance evaluation and the Unified Emergency Call System have had a significant impact on the distancing of the police within the organisation and its relationship with society.

The study of the above-mentioned areas cannot do without the processing of the relevant literature, but at the same time it also requires independent, empirical data-based knowledge of the topic. The fifth part of my thesis is a detailed description of the empirical research, for which I have chosen as a model my place of service, the Fejér County Police Headquarters and the police officers serving there.

To have a clearer view on the police's understanding of security, the system of cooperation and the definition of public security problems, I analysed the reports of the Fejér County Police Headquarters to the County Assembly from the entry into force of the Police Act until today. These allowed me to follow the evolution of the relationship between the police and the communities, which is evident from the reports. In particular, I examined how these reports reflect the police's identification of problems, their handling of public safety issues, and the relationship between the police and communities.

In the course of my interventional investigations, I examined the policemen's understanding of security, their problem management attitudes and cooperation skills by interviewing police officers working in the headquarters' police stations and involved in work in public areas with a self-filled questionnaire. The reported data have a margin of error of $\pm 1.9\text{--}3.1\%$ for binomial (two-category) questions at the 95% confidence level and depending on the number of respondents to each question. This means that the measured results differ by at most this much from the results that would be obtained if all police officers on duty in the public areas of Fejér County were asked. I also involved Tamás Ruff, a senior staff member of the Hungarian Urban Research Institute Ltd. in the data analysis, which was carried out using SPSS.

The survey asked closed questions, some of which were so-called multiple-choice questions, while others required respondents to rank their answers on an ordinal scale. For some questions, I asked them to rate statements, social actions, problems and institutions on a scale of four or five. For these questions, I converted the scores to a scale of one hundred, where one hundred would be the maximum score if all respondents were unanimous on the question and zero would be the minimum score. The cut-off point on such a scale of one hundred is fifty points. A value below this usually indicates a negative opinion (distrust, dissatisfaction, dislike, etc.), while a value above this indicates a positive opinion.

In its design, it was essential that the results could be compared with the results of a recent questionnaire survey of public perceptions of security and public opinion on public security and its institutionalised actors. In 2016, a survey was carried out among the population of Székesfehérvár (seat of Fejér County) in the framework of the project "*Improving public safety in Székesfehérvár by focusing on settlement safety and youth protection*" (BM-15-MA-0052), which was implemented by the Hungarian Urban Research Institute Ltd. and supported by the National Crime Prevention Council. During the survey, 500 Székesfehérvár residents aged 18 and over were interviewed using standard questionnaires. The sample was selected using a random probability procedure, ensuring that all residents had an equal chance of being included.

In addition, the attitudes of the managers who have a fundamental influence on the functioning of the departments through their decisions were investigated through semi-structured interviews. The interviews shed light on how managers identify local problems, what options, room for manoeuvre and individual methods they have to deal with them, how they think about cooperation with local communities and with non-police actors in the police.

As a result of these studies, it is possible to take a position on the validity of the basic questions and hypotheses of my research, and to formulate the needs for change that will make the Hungarian police adequate in problem definition and its cooperative skills capable of protecting public safety in cooperation with the communities, even within its current organisational structure.

Key findings, results

The findings that support the first hypothesis can basically be found in the chapters on Hungarian policing, but the thesis on which they are based became clear when examining reforms abroad. A common feature of the law enforcement reforms analysed in this thesis is that among the causes of the reforms, social changes leading to a deterioration of public security are of fundamental importance. The poor state of public security, in turn, leads state leaders to be cautious about reform. Organisations in transition are distracted by change itself and can easily become unstable, which can make it difficult to manage an already critical public safety situation. However, stability is not an incentive for reform. Consequently, there is little chance of reforming the police at a time when it is most desirable to do so.

This contradiction can also be traced through the Hungarian police of the period of regime change. The need for decentralisation, demilitarisation and depoliticisation had already been expressed before the change of regime, but the apparatus was not interested in their implementation, and the new system could not do without their expertise. In events that tested both the new democracy and the police, such as the opening of the western border or the taxi strike, the centrally controlled police performed well. The fact that the status of the police was discussed in the constitutional law alongside the army gave the militant establishment a constitutional mandate. There has been no meaningful public debate on public security and the place of the militia in a democracy, nor has there been any social demand for a new organisation to confront the police's past. Team Consult, which conducted an external review of the police, also expressed its belief in a monolithic police organisation, and foreign experts who had insight into the functioning of the domestic police (in this paper, the Dutch police) praised the professionalism of our police. In the light of all this, it is indeed reasonable not to reform the police.

The second hypothesis formulates a premise about the social integration process of our police after the regime change: the section on the changes in the Hungarian police's relationship with society after the regime change supported this hypothesis from several sides. After the regime change, our police started on the path of social integration, not relying on foreign models, but rather through their own, often bitter, experiences. There is no doubt that the centralised, militant operational structure inherited from the police of state socialism, which has not been shaken by the crises that gave rise to reform during the regime change and the subsequent periods under scrutiny, has hindered the completion of this process to this day. However, there are also a number of factors that show that the present police are much more open to local communities than they were before or immediately after the regime change. The continuity of the community approach of our two crime prevention strategies has not been a breakthrough in the domesticisation of community policing, but the values of this approach have seeped into daily operations and we can now see locally initiated community-oriented projects across the country.

The culture shift announced in 2014, the implementation of a growing and broadening cooperation to tackle local security problems, is a way of reaching out to society. However, the research also points to the increasing distraction of the police in the domestic context. However, surveys of police officers suggest that this is more a process of internal police relations, with respondents perceiving little negative impact on police–society relations, as in Western Europe. This is supported by the high level of institutional trust in the police.

The process of opening up and getting closer to society was most vividly captured by examining the reports of the Fejér County Police Headquarters before the General Assembly. From the mid-1990s, signs of a shift from the position of power of the police to that of a service organisation gradually appear in the annual evaluations, which are initially narrow and rely only on the figures of criminal statistics. There is a growing need to build partnerships, and the reports increasingly focus on crime prevention and the evaluation of various satisfaction measures.

The process of transformation from a position of power to a service police force will never be complete and will only slowly catch up with the backlog of forty years of state socialism. However, it seems that this need does not only exist in society. Both the managerial expectations and mission statements for the operation of the police and the police officers in daily contact with society understand and appreciate the importance of cooperation and practice it in the performance of their daily duties. While, in addition to the crime prevention strategies mentioned above, minority liaison working groups, District Public Safety Advisory Forums, Drug Advisory Forums, culture change or expectations of police services

are examples of cooperation initiated from above, questionnaires and interviews, in addition to numerous local community policing projects, provide a good ammunition for joint problem solving in the everyday life of police officers. On this basis, the hypothesis can be considered valid.

The third hypothesis, concerning the necessity of structural reform, is based on a number of findings which, on the basis of the laws of law enforcement reform and the evaluation of the individual reforms under examination, provide arguments in support of the hypothesis of decentralisation, demilitarisation and depoliticisation in general. Among these findings that most resonate with the demands for change towards the Hungarian police, the following should be highlighted:

To begin with, it is important to recall the findings of David H. Bayley, who argues that there are no universally applicable police reform strategies. A country's tradition of policing, the relationship between police and society, the legislative environment, the organisational culture and many other external factors determine how a country's police can be changed and moved towards democratisation. Reforms in Western Europe show that democracy is compatible with both centralised and decentralised systems (*Bayley 2001*).

- Reforms are often motivated by the desirability of their objectives, not their feasibility, but they are rarely implemented when they are most needed.
- The organisational culture of the police cannot be changed by formal reorganisation within the police. Changing some elements of the organisational structure cannot have a significant impact on the content of operations unless it is accompanied by a much slower change in organisational culture.
- In addition to stable external conditions, a firm commitment of leaders to the goals of reform is essential, and this is lacking in the domestic police, as both the research I have studied and my own data confirm.
- Another reason for caution about reforms is that they can only fulfil their hopes much more slowly, after a series of “replications”, than the accelerating changes in the complex world relations would require. Evaluators of the reforms that have already been carried out therefore stress that institutional development is not only a matter of change but also of continuity, and in our time a gradual process of development that is constantly mindful of social change seems more realistic than large, total transformations (*Terpstra–Fyfe 2019: 106*).
- These changes should focus on professional development rather than structural issues. All the more so because there does not seem to be an exclusive path to follow on the question of centralisation/decentralisation of the police either. The key may be to find and maintain a balance between the unifying aspirations of the central will and the needs of local priorities.

The main experiences of the law enforcement reforms studied that affect my hypothesis:

- Western European countries with traditionally municipal police forces (see the analysis of the Belgian, Dutch and Scottish reforms) have reformed to create unified national police forces. The main objectives of creating monolithic police forces were to standardise the quality of police services, eliminate duplication in fragmented police organisations, build a common record and information base, apply a common policing strategy and increase cost-effectiveness. The operation of the restructured organisations then has a strong centralised character.
- In a security environment transformed by globalisation, police forces are becoming increasingly empowered by the state, and their operations are becoming increasingly military in character. This is supported by Klára Kerezsi, who argues that the militarisation of the police – although the definition of this concept is still unclear – is a reflexive response to global threats and, in addition to its relationship with society, has implications for procedural justice, legitimacy, law enforcement and police cooperation (*Kerezsi 2020b: 157*).
- The danger of distortion in the direction of arbitrariness exists mostly with the close relationship between the police and politics. This is particularly true for all centrally controlled police forces, and thus also applies to the police forces under investigation. States opting for unification are seeking to mitigate this risk by strengthening police controls.

Overall, we can conclude that in the functioning of police forces in modern democracies, there are trends in the opposite direction to the triple requirements of decentralisation, demilitarisation and depoliticisation. It can also be seen that police forces in Western European democracies are finding it extremely difficult to deal with the security deficit resulting from the effects of globalisation. The national police forces are concentrating a significant part of their forces on these issues and are becoming increasingly distanced from local communities (the phenomenon of abstract policing), repressive elements are being intensified and the application of the community policing model is being increasingly withdrawn from everyday practice into the realm of rhetoric. The authority of the police is undermined by professional errors (the killing of Linda van der Giessen in the car park of Waalwijk hospital, the mishandling of an accident on the M9 motorway in Scotland – see *Terpstra–Fyfe–Salet (2019)*) and serious excesses (the cases of Moise Bangoura, Mawda Savri, Mehdi Bouda, Adil Charrot, Jozef Chovanec, Ibrahim Barrie – see *Budavári (2022)*).

At the same time, the creation of national police forces has catalysed the multiplication of policing. In addition to police forces that paid less attention to local problems, there was an increased demand from society for various municipal police formations, whose role was strengthened by the state increasing their powers. The multipli-

cation of policing can contribute to the achievement of the three ‘de-’, if interpreted for the whole policing system:

- As a consequence of the reflexive modernisation of global society, the focus of addressing public security challenges has shifted towards prevention. This process has enabled organisations with no or limited legitimacy to use force to play a prominent role in public security. This may contribute to the demilitarisation of policing.
- Local public safety is delivered by independent organisations working in partnership with each other and in close cooperation with local communities. This provides an opportunity for a decentralised, community-based approach to policing.
- The democratic control and transparent functioning of independent local organisations and their cooperative networks of partners is ensured by the state and social control instruments, but central power is not directly involved in their management. Non-political policing can therefore be achieved by non-state police organisations.

To justify my hypothesis, I have made a number of significant arguments in the course of the previous hypotheses: the Hungarian police force after the regime change – despite the maintenance of its basic organisational structure and the lack of structural reform – has made significant progress towards democratisation and social integration. At the same time, however, there were also circumstances that made social integration, and ultimately the democratisation of our police, difficult. In relation to the enforcement of human liberties in policing, there is a clear international trend, even in the domestic context, to increase the powers of the police while limiting these rights. However, this process has been able to take place virtually without significant social resistance. In addition to this important lesson, it can also be concluded that the control system necessary for a police force that respects human rights has been established, but is only partially fulfilling its purpose. The powers of the Fundamental Rights Commissioner are limited, and much of the control of the police by local authorities is nominal. However, the low number of complaints and the use of non-institutionalised control mechanisms also suggest that there is a lack of a strong societal demand for more effective controls.

The perception – also inherited from socialism – that responsibility for public safety rests solely with the police and, through them, the state, is only slowly being dismantled. “*Domestic society expects the police to provide public safety, although it probably knows in its heart of hearts that the police alone cannot do this.*” – says Kerezsi (*Kerezsi 2020: 586*). The gradually expanding system of plural policing is still far from the situation in many European countries, where, in addition to police forces focused on global threats, the state has given local authorities considerable powers to operate local police forces.

These, complemented by private police formations, have the potential to take a significant burden off the shoulders of the police and become important actors in addressing local security problems. In our country, in addition to the scarcity of legal powers, there is a lack of expertise and a lack of a guarantee system for accountable and transparent operations. This is partly the reason why pluralisation processes in Hungary have started later and are more difficult to develop than in the Western European police forces analysed. The common, unanimous conclusion of both the evaluations of the reports illustrating the process of social integration and the questionnaire surveys and interviews contributing to the present state of play is that the complementary actors of policing still play only a marginal role in the policing system. This perception persists despite the fact that it is evident that, with the proliferation of tasks, the police are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the role-conflict-ridden entrenchment of the dual expectation that they (the police) should meet local security needs and address global security threats. The explosion of illegal migration after 2015, the COVID epidemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war have led to the Hungarian police devoting more and more attention to global threats and, as a consequence, less of their work to local problems, which, despite the obstacles, reinforces the need for multi-role policing.

It is also clear that without a vision of a policing strategy, the organisation is often forced to drift with the tide of daily compliance demands. What is more, important basic prerequisites for strategising are missing. The deficit that has been dragging on since the change of regime is the lack of a real social debate on the desired functioning of the police, which is inextricably linked to the need to carry out a situation analysis that would show precisely what the desired relationship between the police and society is, what conditions are in place for the expected functioning and what conditions need to be provided by legal, financial, training, etc. means. Of the police reforms analysed, both Western European and Czech police forces have carried out the necessary work and, building on this experience, have developed their medium- and long-term policing strategies.

As so often in this work, however, it should be noted that the list of intervention needs cannot be exhaustive. The framework of this paper is defined by what can be called the typical functioning of a police force of general competence, i.e. the police activity that is perceived by society in everyday life and is therefore decisive for the relationship of the police with society. The work of the police is much more diverse than this, and it is clear that an examination of each of these areas can reveal both virtues and failings. There is no doubt that many areas not covered by this research play an important role in social integration and the democratisation of policing. For example, there can be no question about the importance of the training system or police communication.

A precise analysis of these areas was hampered both by my lack of expertise and by the operational characteristics of the police headquarters of the county in which the research was carried out. Thus, the identification of shortcomings was limited to those operational areas that could be 'explored' in sufficient depth within the constraints of this research.

It does not follow from the support for these hypotheses that changes involving decentralisation, demilitarisation and depoliticisation are unnecessary. However, the direction to take is a new approach to policing as a whole, one that allows for a truly multi-stakeholder policing system. A paradigm shift must take place in state, society, science and policing. Even in our country, it is not possible to effectively address the challenges of public security today if the police remain solely responsible for it. In many respects, pluralist law enforcement actors can provide a solution to the problems, but this requires a change of attitude on the part of the state, which is entitled to mandate, train and regulate operations, the police, which is interested in working in partnership, and society, which has so far expected security services only from the police. We can also make progress if we do not interpret the desired decentralisation, demilitarisation and depoliticisation solely within the organisational framework of the police. With a truly pluralist police force, this is inevitable.

The police, as the representative of the supreme power of the state, with a monopoly on the use of force, will continue to play a leading role in protecting public safety, and there is an inherent interest in their operation under the rule of law. However, the multi-playing role of the police may also represent an 'evolution' of the police, leading to a more advanced state of affairs, which will result in a higher level of service to society's security needs. However, while emphasising this, it is also important to stress that the aforementioned effects of an expanded system of understanding of policing should not exempt the state from the ongoing democratisation of its police.

New directions for future research

The objectives of the research have been achieved, but the research cannot be considered complete. New tasks have been set for research into the role of plural policing in the present and its possible future. A more complete picture of the actors of the law enforcement system in Fejér County can be obtained by examining in detail the situation of each of these actors: municipalities, civil police, private police. This, like a drop in the ocean, can reflect the state of Hungarian plural policing.

Our picture of the police will be more complex and complete if I broaden the scope of the research by analysing the situation of problem sensitivity and cooperation between police officers serving in an executive and

managerial role in several departments outside the country.

A third new direction is to explore areas not covered by current research, such as training, communication or human resource management, with competent peers, which could create new opportunities for a broader exploration of the subject.

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One of the main ideas of my doctoral thesis is the cooperation of law enforcement actors. The existence of the dissertation itself is a result of significant cooperation, which is a sufficiently credible support for this idea.

Throughout my research, I have been guided by the aim of bridging the gap between the ideas of police science calling for reform and the views of police leaders and policy-makers who consider the current structure to be unquestionable. A significant step forward in my research mission was the award of a Doctoral Student Fellowship from the Ministry of Innovation and Technology's Cooperative Doctoral Programme, which opened up a new opportunity to fulfil my inner demand for research quality. This programme essentially ensured that, with the support of my supervisor, Dr. Katalin Molnár, and the corporate expert representing the police, Dr. József Németh, our regular consultations would help to promote the creation and dissemination of research results that would be of benefit to both science and everyday practice. The financial support provided by the Cooperative Doctoral Programme has also provided a solid basis for the production and publication of results, which has resulted in 19 scientific publications, 9 conference presentations and the fact that I have defended my dissertation with the highest possible score, "summa cum laude".

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