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THE MAIN INTERRELATIONSHIP OF CROATIAN-HUNGARIAN POLITICAL RELATIONS, FROM THE HUNGARIAN PERSPECTIVE, FROM 1990 TO 2021

Abstract: With the break-up of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of its federation systems (Warsaw Pact, CSTO), the bipolar world system came to an end. In between – the western borders of Europe slowly but surely moved eastwards. After the change of regime, Hungary quickly recognised that Croatia could be a key partner in the pursuit of its geopolitical interests, as evidenced by the fact that it was one of the first countries to recognise its independence. The experience of historical coexistence from a common past was a significant factor in this. Over the past thirty years, Croatian-Hungarian relations have been balanced. They have been able to find appropriate solutions to common challenges that have arisen. The situation of national minorities is satisfactory. The Hungarian government's approach to European domestic policy differs from that of Croatia. We insist more strongly on preserving our nation-state competences within the Union. The aim of this study is to present the developments of the last thirty years.

Keywords: regime change, Croatia, Croatian-Hungarian relations, politics

Introduction

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of its federal systems (Warsaw Treaty, Comecon), the bipolar world system came to an end. Intermediate – Europe's western borders slowly but surely moved eastward. NATO and the European Economic Com-

munity began to fill the created „imperial void” and bring the region under their control. The process in the Western Balkans could start with a delay of more than ten years. One of the main hindering problems was the outbreak of the South Slavic war. The bloody disintegration of the „separate passenger” Yugoslavia, which ended in 1995, caught outside observers by surprise. In addition, the independence aspirations of the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija turned into a bloody inter-ethnic conflict in 1999. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, until 2012, when Vladimir Putin was elected as the second president, it seemed that the EU and NATO would be able to extend their influence to Central Europe.¹²⁴⁴ Already in 1995, the Union included Austria and Finland, thus becoming a direct border with Russia. NATO expanded in two stages, first in 1999 it included the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, then in 2004 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and in 2009 Albania and Croatia became members, in 2017 Montenegro, And in 2020, North Macedonia. In 2004, the second major enlargement of the EU took place, during which ten countries were added to the organization, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus became new members. Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007 and Croatia in 2013. Almost ten years ago, the accession process stopped completely.

Meanwhile, on the ruins of the Soviet Union, Russia reorganized itself and created domestic political and economic stability. The nearly twenty-year era marked by Putin’s name is the initial period of redefining great power aspirations and regaining influence over the Eurasian imperial space. The occupation of Donbass, Donetsk and Luhansk counties and the forcing of the Crimean referendum can be considered the first step of this. In 2015, Russia, in alliance with Kazakhstan and Belarus, established the Eurasian Economic Union, which was later joined by Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. The past twenty years have been characterized by continuous growth of the Russian economy, with the exception of 2014, that was negatively affected by the conflict in Donetsk. They reorganized the army, moving from a division-type structure to a more mobile brigade-type structure consisting of smaller units. They kept Ukraine under political pressure, tried to slow down its approach to the EU and NATO, and treat Belarus and Kazakhstan as quasi-proxy states. The main goal of the Russian attack launched in February 2022 is to integrate the breakaway areas and increase their territory, as well as to defeat Ukraine’s western integration efforts (Szilágyi I. 2018).

After 1990, the attention of the European Community, the USA, and NATO was focused on Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, not least on the Baltic states. Less atten-

¹²⁴⁴ Intermediate – Europe in the short XX. In the 19 th and 20 th centuries, it is the transition area between the Oder – Trieste and the Dnieper – Kyiv – Odessa line, the northernmost regions of which are Lapland (Finland), the Kola Peninsula (Russia), and the southernmost are Thessaly, Crete (the southernmost parts of the Balkan Peninsula).

tion was paid to the states of the Balkan peninsula, and their integration has become delayed nowadays. The civil war of 1992-1995 and the events in Kosovo in 1999 also showed that the region was pushed out of Russian control and its situation was determined by the dominance of American foreign policy. In the last two decades, however, we have witnessed the presence and strengthening of Russian foreign policy, which has brought significant results in the case of Serbia and the Bosnian Serb Republic. Both countries¹²⁴⁵ are staunch allies of Russia.

The EU integration process has stopped in the region, Serbia still has a realistic chance of becoming a member in this decade. For the heart of the Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Crna Gora, Kosovo and Albania, the Union does not offer any concrete vision. Besides Russia, Turkey's foreign policy activity in the region is also due to this. Affection of the regional migration crisis can cause economic and political disintegration processes (Németh B.– Orosz A. 2017.).

Changes in Hungary's political geography after the system change

With the fall of socialism, a new chapter began in the life of our country and its neighbours. Currently, our region is not a collision zone between individual federal systems, but can reorganize itself along the lines of unified economic and political values in the community of European states. Among our neighbours, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria are the ones with whom we did not have a long-standing dispute at the time of the regime change. In addition, the Carpathian garland opens the way to the south for Hungarian geopolitical aspirations, which we have not been able to exploit successfully in the last hundred years (Cholnoky J. 1929., Prinz Gy. 1942., Bali L. 2012.).

In 1990-92, Hungary's international environment changed significantly. Dependence on the Soviet Union ended and it became obvious that the Comecon and the Warsaw Treaty were also in their final days. The democratic transition began in each of the neighbouring countries. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the centre of gravity of a significant geopolitical shift took place between the states actively shaping the political relations of the Carpathian Basin. In the new situation, Hungary's importance and geopolitical room for manoeuvre increased. If we compare the situation in 1990 with today's one, we can conclude that among the 6 states shaping the political relations of the Carpathian Basin, Hungary ranked second to last in 1990 based on territorial size and population.

¹²⁴⁵ The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, not an independent country, but an independent entity.

SOME POLITICAL GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNGARY AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES IN 1990

STATE NAME	AREA (KM ²)	POPULATION (PERSON)	POLITICAL ALLIANCE	MILITARY ALLIANCE
Austria	83 878	7 678 000	independent	independent
Czechoslovakia	127 902	15 600 000	Comecon	Warsaw Treaty
Yugoslavia	255 950	23 271 000	"unbound"	"unbound"
Hungary	93 030	10 374 000	Comecon	Warsaw Treaty
Romania	238 397	23 500 000	Comecon	Warsaw Treaty
Soviet Union	22 402 200	293 047 000	Comecon	Warsaw Treaty

SOURCE: AUTHOR'S OWN EDITING

Nowadays, the picture is completely different, we came in third place among the 8 interested countries. The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia broke up in peaceful conditions, and Yugoslavia broke up during a bloody war. The disintegration of neighbouring states brought positive changes to Hungarian foreign policy after the system change. Our geopolitical weight relatively increased in the region¹²⁴⁶, and with the democratization of the neighbouring countries, the Hungarian minority's ability to assert their interests significantly improved. In several cases, they managed to become a government factor, for example in Romania, Slovakia and Serbia.

In terms of our neighbourhood policy, the past thirty years can be divided into two main parts, from 1990 to 2010, a period that closely followed the Euro-Atlantic policy, and then

¹²⁴⁶ Among the governments after the system change, the Orbán I government was the first to make legislative concessions for our compatriots living abroad who self-identify as a Hungarian. LXII of 2001. law, Status entered the public consciousness as a law. Primarily, it provided travel, teacher, student and education discounts for those with a Hungarian Identity Card arriving in the mother country. On December 5, 2004, it was put to a referendum on the successful initiative of the World Association of Hungarians, that „a non-Hungarian citizen who declares himself to be of Hungarian nationality, does not live in Hungary, and whose Hungarian nationality was declared Hungarian in LXII TV. He verifies it with a „Hungarian identity card” according to § 19 or in other ways specified in the law to be created” (quoted from the ballot paper). As a result of the effective counter-campaign of the ruling MSZP-SZDSZ government coalition (they painted the nightmare of an influx of 23 million Romanian workers), the referendum was unsuccessful due to the low participation rate (37.49%). Even though 51.57% of voters supported it. The unsuccessful referendum had a negative effect on the relationship between the Hungarian state and Hungarians abroad for years. This was only changed by the new political direction of the FIDESZ – KDNP coalition, which formed a government for the second time in the spring of 2010. The XLIV of 2010 was created based on the first decisions of the new government. law on Hungarian citizenship 1993 LV. on the amendment of the law, which enables dual citizenship with preferential naturalization. The main prerequisite for obtaining it is proof of Hungarian origin and connection to culture.

from 2010, a period that followed it critically. The last twelve years are characterized not only by a critical attitude, but also by the frequent strengthening of initiatives led by independent Hungarians on the European foreign policy scene, especially in Central Europe.¹²⁴⁷

Croatia

Croatia has been an active factor in the Carpathian-Balkan region since 1918, when Croatia was part of the Kingdom of Serbs-Croatians-Slovenes and then Yugoslavia.¹²⁴⁸ The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the main pillars of the „Balkan balance” in the period after the Second World War.

It is rare for a country to be located on the border of four different cultural areas of Europe: the „Alpine region”, the Pannonian basin, the Mediterranean – Dinaric Mountains (maritime

¹²⁴⁷ The historical precedent for the creation of the Visegrad cooperation was given by the meeting of kings in 1335, where Róbert Károly of Hungary, III. Kázmér of Poland and King János of Luxemburg of the Czech Republic concluded a political and economic alliance to counterbalance the regional role of Vienna (e.g. the right to freeze goods). In 1991, on the initiative of the Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall, the cooperation was revived, which today includes the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. After BREXIT, the weight of the alliance continues to increase in the EU's decision-making mechanism. The sum of the parliamentary votes of the four countries is close to that of Germany and exceeds that of France. They take a different position on certain policy issues compared to Western European countries. They strongly oppose uncontrolled migration, they consider it justified to strengthen the external border protection of the Union, they can only imagine the realization of carbon neutrality with the further use of nuclear energy, they reject the gender theory, they believe in the primacy of Christian social values. Regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war, Polish and Czech political thinking is characterized by frontal Russophobia. Taking into account its energy policy interests, Hungary pursues a well-considered pro-peace policy. Poland, Slovakia and Hungary have accepted hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees so far. More than ten thousand people on a daily basis.

¹²⁴⁸ The placement of the Croatian state in the division of the European space is problematic, researchers of individual nations think differently about it. Hungarian geography clearly accepts the spatial category of the Balkans (Balkan – peninsula), while Croatian vehemently rejects it. The continuous aspiration of Croatian geography is the debalkanization of Croatia's geographical situation, this shows a sharp parallel with the daily European political usage, where the term Balkan does not even appear anymore. The concept of the Western Balkans, used around the turn of the millennium, also wore out and was transformed into Southeast Europe (BALI 2012). In his 2012 work entitled *Historical Geography of Croatia*, Glamuzina questions the geographical existence of the Balkan Peninsula itself, arguing with German geographer August Zeune's views on the Balkan spatial category and Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijić's opinion on the delimitation of the peninsula (GLAMUZINA 2012, ROGLIĆ 1950). A geographical monograph presenting our southern neighbor was published in 2013, which presents its geographical features in 597 long pages. The first main chapter of the book is entitled „Geographic location, constituent parts and borders”, the sub-chapter title of which clearly states that „Croatia – Adriatic-Central European country” (MAGAŠ, 2013, GLAMUZINA 2013, KLEMENČIĆ 1994, RÁCZ 2013, FELETAR – PETRIĆ 2006).

Balkans), and the „continental Balkans”. Further addition peculiarities of the spatial structure resulting from the shape of the country (the shape of the body of the state, its borders). The country with an area of 56,542 km² has a land border of 2,028 km, 1,755 km of which is in contact with the states of the Balkan Peninsula, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Crna Gora, almost 41% of its total borders are with Hungary and Slovenia, they are also EU members.. We should also mention the cultural influences affecting the area. The area bordered by Orthodoxy and Islam, where German and Italian influence continues, with Hungarian influences as well (Cvrtila V. 2000., Glamuzina, N. 2012, Magaš, D. 2013).

With regard to Euro-Atlantic relations, Croatia has continuously aligned itself with the mainstream foreign policy of the European Union without criticism for the past thirty years, except in matters affecting its territorial integrity and borders, as well as the political aftermath of the national defence war.¹²⁴⁹

Main aspects of bilateral relations between 1990 and 2010

After the regime change, Hungary soon realized that Croatia could be a decisive partner in asserting its geopolitical interests, as evidenced by the fact that it was one of the first to recognize its independence. The experiences of historical coexistence stemming from a common past were significant influencing factors in this. It became extremely important for both states to counterbalance the increasing aspirations of the Greater Serbia in the 1980 s and to eliminate the Serbian military superiority that existed at the outbreak of the war, thereby creating regional security. This was closely related to the suppression of the Russian position in the Balkans and the protection of the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina. Currently, Serbia is a strategic partner for Russia, its most significant „base state” in Europe and the Balkans. The presence of the Russians gave Serbian nationalist forces a positive charge in increasing their ability to assert their interests, which was a factor that increased instability. In addition to the assertion of macro-regional interests, there was a significant need to maintain our bilateral economic and political relations at an intensive level. Our country greatly helped the preparation of Croatia’s accession to the EU by transferring its experience and by continuously supporting Croatian interests in international forums (Bali 2012).

When the Antall-government was formed in 1990, no one seriously expected the breakup of Yugoslavia. Hungarian politics and public opinion were both caught off guard by the pa-

¹²⁴⁹ In the autumn of 2015, after a short hesitation, Croatia gave up its efforts to stop the wave of migrants and criticized the institutional system of the Hungarian legal border closure and the construction of the technical border protection system. A short-term declaration dispute between the governments of the two countries also arose. The Croatian-Slovenian maritime border dispute has not yet been resolved.

triotic war unfolding next door. Our politicians and the leaders of our border municipalities found themselves in a completely unfamiliar situation. Close to our borders, in our neighbourhood, there were no war events in the previous 35 years. In addition to directing the internal democratic transition, the newly formed Antall-government also had to deal with its first major foreign policy challenge. In order to protect the ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina, it had to express a cautious opinion against Croatian and Slovenian aspirations for independence (Gulyás L. 2005).

In September 1990, the Croatian government asked Hungary to buy 30,000 submachine guns for the Zagreb police. The Minister of War Lajos Für and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Géza Jeszenszky thought it was time to restore friendly relations with the Croatian nation, which has lived in a state community with us for almost 800 years, as a „quasi compensation” for the tensions that can be traced back to 1848. Our former foreign minister believes that this shipment only provided moral support to Croatia and essentially did not contribute to the escalation of armed conflicts. The Croatian request was approved by an interministerial committee, together with other arms trade treaty parties. After the completion of the first shipment, Federal Minister of War Kadijević informed Hungary in a sharp-toned message that the Yugoslav government had not agreed to any kind of arms shipment to Zagreb. After that, we shut down the arms’ business. Until the fall of 1991, until the outbreak of armed conflicts, our country took a position in favour of maintaining Yugoslavia in the form of a confederation. Based on the dissolution of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Hungarian government, made up of mostly historians, foresaw that the dissolution of Yugoslavia could have serious economic and political consequences. Even before the Croatian and Slovenian declaration of independence, József Antall warned his Western partners about the dangers of the emerging conflict. His words were confirmed, as the soldiers of the Yugoslav People’s Army launched an operation against Slovenia on June 27, 1991. The Hungarian government was under a lot of pressure because of the 400,000 Hungarians were living in Yugoslavia at the time. But we could not deny our sympathy to our neighbouring Croatia, which had the right to self-determination, and we could not agree to confront Serbia that was holding the Vojvodina Hungarians’ hostages. Our interest was to avoid armed conflict and maintain friendly relations with the member states of the USSR. Antall had been advocating the cessation of armed clashes all along. He was motivated in this by the fact that Serbia was not disputing the right of self-determination of the Croats, but aimed at uniting the Serbians in one state. Thus, in agreement with the EC, our country recognized the independent Croatian state on January 15, 1992 (Jeszenszky G. 2003).

Following the recognition, the Hungarian Consulate General in Zagreb was elevated to the rank of an embassy on January 18, and the Croatian embassy began operating in Budapest on July 5. In parallel with the establishment of diplomatic relations, several high-level meet-

ings took place, on April 13-15 Stipe Mesić, the president of the Sabor, visited our country. On December 16, a treaty on friendly relations and cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Croatia was signed, which was signed by Croatian Prime Minister Hrvoje Sarinić and Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall. The agreement established the bilateral relations between the young Croatia and our country along the lines of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, as well as the Paris Charter adopted on November 21, 1990. From 1992, the inter-ministerial meetings became continuous, and in November, six party Hungarian delegations visited Zagreb for the first time and six new agreements were signed. And on December 15, the Hungarian-Croatian intergovernmental Joint Committee on Minorities began its work in order to prepare the minority protection agreement. The next day, December 16, the so-called „basic agreement” on friendly relations and cooperation will be signed. From 1993, foreign minister and state secretary level visits became regular, and the deepening of relations was helped by the fact that HDZ and MDF, the strongest party in the Hungarian government, had cordial relations with each other. In his foreign policy regarding Croatia, József Antall always followed the directives of the EC and then the EU. During the war, our country strictly adhered to the arms embargo for the region and took in thousands of Croatian, Hungarian, and Bosnian refugees who became stateless (Bali L. 2009).

The new coalition formed in the summer of 1994 initially pursued a more restrained foreign policy with Croatia, which also cautiously welcomed the change of government. However, the visit of Minister of War György Keleti in September and State Secretary of Foreign Affairs István Szent-Iványi in October dispelled fears. In 1995, several important steps were taken to further develop relations. On April 5, an agreement on the protection of minorities was signed in Osijek, which regulated the situation of the Croatian and Hungarian nationalities living in each other's territory in accordance with European standards. In October 1995, the prime minister of the Hungarian Social Party-Alliance of Free Democrats coalition, Gyula Horn, visited Zagreb, it was the first trip of the new prime minister to Croatia. In February 1996, he paid a short visit to the Hungarian contingent serving in Okučani. The Hungarian Technical Contingent settled in Croatia on January 31, 1996 with 416 people. The task of the unit was to help with post-war reconstruction. Relations were still balanced (Bali L. 2009).

Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of the newly formed HCA-HCP-HDF-ISP¹²⁵⁰ government, visited Zagreb in January 1999, and in the same year, Hungary provided 200 million in support for the reconstruction works in the Drava region and Eastern Slavonia. After the stagnation after the conclusion of the Dayton Agreement, the regional cooperation between the two countries was revived, and the twin city relations were also revived. The deepening of these,

¹²⁵⁰ Hungarian Civic Alliance-Hungarian Civic Party-Hungarian Democratic Forum – Independent Smallholder Party

for example, played an important role in the promotion of cross-border infrastructural developments. Such was the V/B branching of pan-European corridor No. V on the Budapest-Zagreb-Rijeka line and the joint development and use of the port of Rijeka (Töreki A. 2005).

In February 2001, the free trade agreement had been under preparation since 1998, was born, as a result the volume of bilateral free trade traffic began to increase continuously. Already in 2003, Hungarian exports to Croatia surpassed the previous year by 36% and exceeded 300 million dollars, making it four times the amount of our southern neighbour's exports to our country. The intensification of diplomatic relations was indicated by the fact that a Hungarian government delegation led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán visited Zagreb and Eszrecin in January 2002. The Hungarian and Croatian heads of government jointly opened the Hungarian Consulate General in Eszék and participated in the dedication ceremony of the church in Kórógy. Orbán also met with representatives of the Hungarian minority and handed over the first Hungarian identity cards to Croatian citizens of Hungarian nationality who are entitled to it. More high-level meetings took place in the spring. An agreement was reached on encouraging investments, and on one occasion Ferenc Mádl and Stjepan Mesić named a street and inaugurated a statue in memory of the late Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall. The amendments to the minority law adopted by the Croatian Sabor on December 13, 2002 enabled the representation of native nationalities in parliament and in local governments, which further improved the situation of Hungarians (Bali L. 2009).

In the second half of 2003, trade tensions arose between the two countries, due to the raised situation our country suspended part of the free trade agreement. However, this did not disturb diplomatic relations, László Kovács, the foreign minister of the HSP-AFD government established in 2002, assured his Croatian counterpart of Hungary's support in promoting Croatia's European integration efforts in Berlin in early 2004. This was very necessary, because the Croatian cooperation with The Hague was not considered appropriate by the Union due to the case of General Gotovina.

The development of Croatian-Hungarian relations was intense in the first 12 years, but neither side could observe an ad hoc strategy for the development of bilateral relations that spanned individual government periods. The series of joint Croatian-Hungarian government meetings began in January 2006, the first was in Budapest. Nine inter-ministerial agreements were concluded, energy, transport and social problems were among the priorities, and the Hungarian-Croatian Chamber of Trade and Industry was established in parallel with the meeting. This step was helped by the fact that, with the conclusion of the free trade agreement, the commercial and economic relations of the two countries were significantly stimulated. It became important to coordinate strategic planning, this was the primary and most important goal of organizing the joint government meetings.

Among the items on the agenda was the coordinated development of the V/C corridor, consequently the connection points of the economies of the two countries could be expanded,

for example to Bosnia-Herzegovina, thus improving the viability of the poorly functioning Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion.¹²⁵¹ The joint modernization of the energy supply system and the provision of gas and oil supplies from Adriatic ports could reduce the dependence of both countries on the instability of the world energy market. The 2012 football European Championship and the temporary Hungarian consulate to be established in Split during the tourist season were also discussed.¹²⁵²

Among the most important topics of the second meeting held in Zagreb in May 2007 was the accession of our southern neighbour to the EU and NATO. For our country, it was important that the peripheral state of the union should have been as small as possible and occupy a place in the same political and economic alliance as possible with the neighbouring countries. And for Croatia, there was a new opportunity to get closer to the core areas of Europe. In 2008, significant new resources were opened up for both parties through the programs of Trade Tax that enabled the more intensive development of border rural areas and the possibility of promoting weak cross-border ties. This was made possible by Hungary's EU membership on May 1, 2004. They were satisfied with the establishment of the Hungarian major at the Strossmayer University in Eszrecin, starting in the fall of 2007 that resolved a question that had been lingering for ten years. Thus, in addition to primary and secondary school, it is now also possible to study in Hungarian at the university level in Eszék. Before that, higher Hungarian education was only available within the framework of the Department of Hungarian Studies in Zagreb.

The next government meeting took place in Barcs in September 2009. The meeting took place with the participation of Hungarian Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai and Croatian Prime Minister Jadranka Košor, and the discussion of common energy and environmental protection issues. The chosen location was unique, as Barcsa is the only city directly on the Croatian-Hungarian border, as a gateway city. Government Decree 293/2009 established the Hungarian-Croatian Cross-Border Regional Coordination Forum, the purpose of which is to define the widest possible range of cooperation areas and to explore the possibilities of practical developments.

In the 2002-2010 period, bilateral relations touched on issues of economy, infrastructure (connecting the highway network), energy management, and sports diplomacy. The HSP-AFD governments either avoided or only touched those issues affecting national political relations. The main results of the cross-border Interreg programs from 2007-2013 only became tangible after 2010.

¹²⁵¹ The Danube – Drava – Sava Euroregion practically does not work.

¹²⁵² The joint EB was not organized. The consulate in Split operates seasonally during the summer.

Bilateral relations between 2010 and 2022 during the Orbán governments

With the inauguration of the 2nd Orbán government, a new period began in Hungarian foreign policy. The previous „follower” attitude, especially in matters concerning Eastern and Central Europe, has been replaced by the spirit of initiative. In several cases, Hungarian governments have criticized the EU’s „me stream” direction, due to its views on migration, border protection, the energy issue, Eurasianism and Christianity, and gender ideology. The V4 countries effectively represented their interests in several cases, in some cases supplemented by Austria and Slovenia.

Since 2010, the FIDESZ – CDPP¹²⁵³ governments have started active national political activities. The creation of the institution of dual citizenship did not meet with resistance from the Croatian political elite. In the first half of 2011, Hungary assumed the presidency of the EU. Our country made significant efforts to speed up the Croatian accession process and to conclude it as soon as possible. „Hungarian diplomacy successfully stood up for the enforcement of Croatian interests within European institutions” (Szilágyi I. 2012. p. 18). In addition to Hungary, Croatia’s traditional friend Germany contributed to a large extent to the solution of the accession problems. On December 9, 2011, the Croatian accession treaty was signed in Brussels. As a result, Croatia became a full member of the Union on July 1, 2013 (Szilágyi I. 2012).

The aftermath of the 2008 MOL – INA transaction „haunted” every Orbán government. In 2012-2013, the Croatian judiciary found former prime minister Ivo Sanader and MOL head Zsolt Hernádi guilty, who were also sentenced to prison terms. An international arrest warrant was also issued against Hernádi, however, did not have any impact on the international level. The Croatian state turned to an international arbitration court to settle the case that established the fact of corruption and the involvement of the Croatian party in it. On December 24, 2016, then Prime Minister Andrej Plenković announced that Croatia would buy out MOL’s stake in INA. This has not been done so far. In 2022, both parties see the situation as a mere economic problem, which also has current political implications. According to Viktor Orbán, it is a thorn under the nail¹²⁵⁴ that does not affect long-term relationships, but has a negative effect on everyday well-being (Gazdag F. 2021. 254 p.).

Since 2010, the Hungarian state has been dedicating more and more financial resources to revitalizing the cultural, religious, and economic life of Hungarians across the border. One

¹²⁵³ Hungarian Civic Alliance – Christian Democratic People’s Party.

¹²⁵⁴ <https://figyelo.hu/hirek/javulhatnak-a-horvat-magyar-kapcsolatok-22865/> Viewed: 2021. 12. 09.

of the institutionalized forms of this is the Gábor Bethlen Fund¹²⁵⁵ that provides regular support to certain Hungarian communities in Croatia. In addition, Croatian-Croatian relations are also active, consequence of their result that had been determined during Interreg tenders.

Although the period between December 2011 and January 2016, marked by the name of Prime Minister Zoran Milanović, was repeatedly loud with diplomatic messages, it did not leave its mark on the everyday social and economic relations. On January 3, 2014, the Liszt Institute – Hungarian Cultural Center opened its doors in Zagreb¹²⁵⁶ that is dedicated to promoting Hungarian culture and science. On March 5, 2020, Péter Szíjjártó and the rector of the University of Rijeka signed the founding document of the Hungarian Language Lectureship, thus making it possible to get to know Hungarian culture and learn the language at a third Croatian university in addition to Eszék and Zagreb.¹²⁵⁷

Further successful steps were also made in the field of national politics forward. In 2019, the base organization DUHC of the sea-side-plateau county got a new headquarters in Rijeka, which is called Anna-villa.¹²⁵⁸ The economic development program for Hungarians in Croatia (Eastern Slavonia) was also launched, thanks to which 527 small and medium-sized entrepreneurs were awarded 1.8 billion HUF in support. MOL also recently carried out a 540 million euro improvement in its refinery in Rijeka.

In recent years, in 2020-2021, despite the COVID-19 epidemic, more than 400,000 Hungarians annually spent their holidays in Croatia (mostly on the Adriatic). In 2019, before the pandemic, there were 644,000 people. These numbers also prove that Hungarians are very interested in the country. This should be strengthened further by the development of transport links, such as the extension of the M6 motorway to Ivándárda, Eszék, the latest target date of which is 2024. In addition, the Murakeresztúr – Kotoriba road bridge is under planning that would strengthen Croatian-Croatian connections, while the M6 – its development would help the relations of Eastern Slavonian Hungarians with their motherland.

Instead of a summary

Croatian-Hungarian relations have been balanced over the past thirty years. They were able to find appropriate solutions to the common challenges that arose. The situation of national minorities is satisfactory. The Hungarian government's relationship to European domestic politics is different from the Croatian one. We insist more strongly on preserving our

¹²⁵⁵ Explaining

¹²⁵⁶ <https://culture.hu/hu/zagreb/rolunk> Viewed: 2021. 11. 14.

¹²⁵⁷ <https://uniri.hr/vijesti/osnivanje-lektorata-madarskog-jezika/> Viewed: 2021. 10. 05.

¹²⁵⁸ <https://kepesujsgag.com/otthonra-talaltak-a-fiumei-magyarok-is/> Viewed: 2021. 11. 22.

nation-state competences within the Union, and we also do not abandon the policy of economic opening to the east. Among their future common foreign policy goals should be the acceleration of the accession of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to the European Union and the accession of Croatia to the Schengen zone. In order to further deepen social and economic relations, the number of road border crossing points should be increased and interstate rail passenger traffic should be normalized.

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SUMMARY

A HORVÁT – MAGYAR POLITIKAI KAPCSOLATOK FŐBB ÖSSZEFÜGGÉSEI MAGYARORSZÁG SZEMPONTJÁBÓL 1990-TŐL 2021-IG.

Összefoglaló: A Szovjetunió felbomlásával és szövetségi rendszereinek (Varsói Szerződés, CSTO) szétesésével a kétpólusú világrendszer véget ért. Közben - Európa nyugati határai lassan, de biztosan kelet felé mozdultak. A rendszerváltás után Magyarország gyorsan felismerte, hogy Horvátország kulcsfontosságú partner lehet geopolitikai érdekeinek érvényesítésében, amit az is bizonyít, hogy az elsők között ismerte el függetlenségét. Ebben jelentős szerepet játszott a közös múltból származó történelmi együttélés tapasztalata. Az elmúlt harminc évben a horvát-magyar kapcsolatok kiegyensúlyozottak voltak. Képesek voltak megfelelő megoldásokat találni a felmerülő közös kihívásokra. A nemzeti kisebbségek helyzete kielégítő. A magyar kormány európai belpolitikai megközelítése eltér a horvát kormányétól. Mi erőteljesebben ragaszkodunk nemzetállami kompetenciáink megőrzéséhez az Unión belül. A tanulmány célja az elmúlt harminc év fejleményeinek bemutatása.

Kulcsszavak: rendszerváltás, Horvátország, horvát-magyar kapcsolatok, politika