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**Changes in the Politico-geographical Position
of Hungary in the 20th Century**

by

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1. Introduction

The geographical position describes on the one hand the global determination of a country (absolute geographical position), and its (relative) position compared to the other countries. The politico-geographical position shows the place of a country in the international political space. The politico-geographical position is a category that changes in course of history and has a relative content and value. The judgement of the politico-geographical location of an individual country has changed very much both at international and national level ...

The changes of the politico-geographical location of a country are influenced by global, continental, neighbourhood and internal processes. In the 20th century, the continental and the global processes were predominant in determining the politico-geographical position of almost all countries.

The territory of Hungary and its character changed within extremely broad frameworks during the 20th century. When making historical analyses, we always have to be aware which country borders the assessments are based on, because the transition processes can only be assessed realistically if the real situation and the real politico-geographical environment are taken into consideration.

Not only the territory of Hungary, but also its status in its region, and its regional and continental power position changed very much during the 20th century. In the first period of the 20th century, Hungary was part of a European great power (only middle power by many opinions) which was historically determined in many respects. After 1920, Hungary became a small state, forced within an internationally limited sphere of action, while in the period of the enlargements of 1938-1941, Hungary increased in figures (territory, population, economic performance, number of the army troops), but its possibilities were in reality more and more restricted by the direct influence and later control of the 3rd German Empire.

Following World War II, Hungary gradually integrated into the politico-geographical structures of the divided world and the divided Europe. In 1956, a significant part of the Hungarian population questioned this integration and also the inner structure of the country, but finally it was the international determinations and the crude military force that created an “order” built on the old realities. Hungary, determined by its small size, was integrated into the socialist system, above all into the economic, political and military structure of the Soviet Union.

From 1988, the legitimacy of the integration into the “peace camp” was gradually questioned in Hungary, followed by the disintegration of the country from its former treaty of allied countries – which treaty changed fundamentally in the beginning, still it could not avoid falling apart afterwards –, and by 1991 Hungary re-gained its sovereignty in all respects. This fundamental turn was allowed by the favourable internal and external conditions and possibilities.

After 1991, Hungary became part of the “grey zone” that emerged between the stable West, and the “East” (a part of the ex-socialist countries and the successor states of the Soviet Union), struggling with repeating crises. It was Hungary’s own decision to break away from this zone, also to become a member of the NATO and the European Union. The Hungarian population legitimised its determination for the NATO membership in a referendum.

The politico-geographical position of Hungary and the changes of that can be analysed and judged in several spatial respects in any period of time:

- within the state structure (period of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy);
- in the relationships and connections to the neighbouring states;
- in spatial community aspect (Central Europe);
- functional large space (“In-Between Europe”, grey zone);
- at continental level (Europe) and
- at the level of the global processes.

In the individual historical situations, it was always different elements that were dominant. In our opinion, the politico-geographical position of

Hungary was mainly shaped by the global and European processes (World War I and World War II, and the divided, bipolar world). These macro-structural effects determined the development of the neighbourhood environment of Hungary (Treaty of Trianon and of Paris, the Soviet–American deals made in Malta). Still, in the analysis we only shortly look at these essential processes and focus on the neighbourhood connections, because we do believe that the Hungarian public thinking has been more thoroughly touched by the neighbourhood connections, and because of the Hungarian minority living in the neighbouring countries, these neighbourhood connections still have a dominant influence on the development of our European politics in many respects.

Until 1988 our analysis is mainly a summary, a review, while the processes that have passed since the systemic change are dealt with in more details. Our primary objective is the introduction of the historically changing politico-geographical position of Hungary, and an analysis of the adjustment of the country to the new global, European and neighbourhood situation continuously changing since the 1990s.

2. The politico-geographical position as a historically changing, relative category

We have to take it as natural that each country looks at the world, the continent which it is in, and the neighbouring countries from its absolute geographical position. In the Hungarian historical and political thinking too, a kind of Hungarian worldview was born, in which Hungary had a central position. Even if not often, but a Budapest centred map of the world was talked about, however, that did not become a dominant element of either the public thinking or the school education. In the Hungarian education and public thinking, the Europe-centred worldview became more prevalent.

The politico-geographical position of Hungary can be stated as a relative category, which has had and still has both inner and outer content and determination. The inner content can be defined as the determination and orientation of the values of the current political elite, or in a broader sense, the “neighbourhood conscience”, “sense of safety”, “spatial community conscience” and “legitimacy of the alliance” by the whole of the society.

The inner determinations of the politico-geographical position can be considerably different at the different social groups: even the leading political elite can judge differently the directions and the content of the foreign orientation and the alliance connections of the country. (For example, the neighbourhood of the 3rd German Empire after the annexation of Austria had a different meaning for those who sympathised with the Germans and those who urged an English orientation.) It is characteristic of the Hungarian development that the politico-geographical position of the country and the favourable or unfavourable nature thereof were judged differently by the political emigrants in different periods of time and with different ideological backgrounds (after 1849, 1919, 1945, 1956) than by the current state power.

The lack of a total social consensus took a special form with respect to the judgement of the Hungarian–Soviet “fraternal and everlasting friendship” and the alliance and neighbourhood of the Soviet Union. For a significant part of the Hungarian society, this alliance connection and obligation

remained unacceptable, although this aversion could not be stated and revealed for several decades.

The outer content of the politico-geographical position mainly means the judgement of the participation of Hungary in the neighbourhood, spatial community, European and global processes. The judgement of both the neighbours and the continental actors may change in a short time, and as it is proved by the Hungarian development, it has changed several times and radically during the 20th century.

In the 20th century, the current Hungary adjusted itself to the European territorial, economic and power structure, together with its neighbours of the time. Hungary and its neighbourhood made the most changeable region within the often changing European structures.

Hungary has existed within borders which significantly changed many times, and the self-definition of the geographical position of Hungary in the 20th century has also changed very often. Hungary has already been considered as an “Eastern” and “Western”, Southeast European, Balkan, South European, Southwest European, Central European, Central-Eastern European, East-Central European etc. country (RING, É., ed. 1986 I-II.) Each definition of the space had direct outer and inner political elements. These self-defining efforts, partly co-existing in history, also showed that no consensus was achieved in the Hungarian society in this respect, either.

It is a dominant feature of the broader region of Hungary that after the elimination of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, it has been a buffer zone between the empires or great powers almost all through the 20th century. A dominant element here is the space of influence and the pressure of Germany and Russia. In comparison with them, the rising Italian and the completely devastating Turkish power should be considered as auxiliary in importance. The different imperial and power efforts were usually escorted by efforts concerning certain large regions and functional spatial communities.

The perception of Hungary by the neighbours can also be problematic. The population, the political elite and partly the scientific life of the successor states considered Hungary not in its actual form after 1920, but they saw the size, significance and possibilities of Hungary before 1918. The succes-

sor states did not really make their foreign political and alliance efforts according to the real conditions of power.

In the early 20th century, the state structure and the inner politico-geographical position also developed in an incredibly complex way (within the historical state borders, Hungary–Croatia, and the two states of the Monarchy, Austria and Hungary). It was partly the debates about the inner structure that finally led to the significant change of the external conditions and the disintegration of the state structure.

The ethnic neighbourhood environment of Hungary was quite stable in the 20th century, but the weight and role of some ethnic groups have significantly changed. While the Ukrainians for example hardly played any role in the Hungarian processes for decades, after 1991 Ukraine became the most populated and from military aspects the strongest neighbour of Hungary. The transition of the ethnic space was complemented by the voluntary and forced international migrations, and the occasionally very different natural movements of the different ethnic groups.

The territorial division of the Hungarian ethnic group and nation after 1920 basically changed the connections of the now independent Hungary to its neighbourhood, its bilateral inter-state connections, and the conditions of the foreign and national policy. The current Hungarian foreign policy had to give an answer, among other things, to the dividedness of the nation.

The direct neighbourhood of the great powers (Germany 1938–1945, Soviet Union 1945–1991) always had a dominant effect on the development of Hungary. The neighbourhood turned to occupation for a shorter or longer period in both cases. After 1945, the Soviet Union was an inner and an outer factor at the same time, because of the occupation (which was even legitimised until 1955), and in effect it determined the possible frameworks of the development of Hungary.

In the period after 1988, the inner development of Hungary was defined by the lasting inner crisis of the Soviet Union, its rapidly weakening world power and world political positions, and by the internal transformation of the neighbouring socialist states. This new situation offered new possibilities for Hungary to change its politico-geographical position.

The Hungarian foreign policy always had to consider the facts coming from the absolute politico-geographical position of the country (BALOGH, S. 1986; HERCZEGH, G. 1986; JUHÁSZ, GY. 1969; SZÛRÖS, M. 1985, 1987), as well as the rearrangement processes going on at global, continental and neighbourhood level (KENNEDY, P. 1992; FISCHER, F. 1992, 1996; ROURKE, J. T. 1991; LENDVAI, É. F. 1997). We could as well draw the conclusions from the historical failures or even tragedies of the 20th century Hungarian state–national–foreign policy that the Hungarian foreign policy was almost always wrong, almost always misjudged the long-term development of the external conditions – but this judgement would only be part of the truth. Most of the neighbouring countries also experienced the tragedies of the 20th century, so it is rather regional and continental features than individual problems (the incompetence or lack of authority of the politicians, maybe foreign politicians of the individual countries).

3. The politico-geographical position of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy within Europe, the situation of Hungary within the Monarchy, 1900–1918

Because of the complicated state structure, our analysis must contain at least two (and introversive and an extroversive) approaches. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy seemed to be and acted as a single unit “outwards”, to Europe and the world, at the same time, the state structure was often debated from the inside, both by the two major nations making the state and by the minorities. The economic and military performance, and the political effectiveness and stability of the Monarchy was considerably weaker than in the case of countries with a more homogeneous ethnic composition. Inside, the signs of the lack of the unity already appeared in many respects.

3.1 The politico-geographical position of the Monarchy within Europe

Europe on the turn of the 19th and 20th century showed the results of the long-term historical processes and the consequences of the extremely intensive and influential rearrangement processes of the last third of the 19th century. The state policies and philosophies of the modern state building, and the traditional dynastic approach co-existed and influenced each other in the alliance-making efforts of the individual states (POUNDS, N. J. G. 1997).

Europe in the beginning of the 20th century was the Europe of the historical empires and the large countries. The Monarchy in the beginning of the 20th century was a traditional, historically accepted great power, and considered as a participant in shaping the European processes, being part of the European balance of power. The Monarchy, despite its colonisation efforts, remained a basically European, inland power, without a real weight in world politics.

Considering its territory, the Monarchy was the second largest country in Europe (676 443 km²), following Russia. The centre of the territory of the Monarchy was the Vienna–Budapest axis, thus the country was called the

“Danubian Monarchy” by many. The Monarchy, although it had an Adriatic coast of significant length, important ports and a considerable fleet, could still be taken as an inland power.

By population, the Monarchy was the third country in Europe (with 51 million inhabitants), after Russia and Germany. The population of the Monarchy was extremely complex, neither state founding nations (the Germans or the Hungarians) had a dominant weight within the whole of the Monarchy, in fact, within their own countries.

The economic performance of the Monarchy within Europe was lower than its weight by territory or population. The modernisation of the economy was belated compared to England, France or Germany, also, it had a specific structure. Compared to Russia, the Monarchy had a competitive, modern economic structure.

The European and neighbourhood environment of the Monarchy showed both favourable and unfavourable characters in 1914 (Figure 1.). Italy, Liechtenstein, Germany, Russia, Rumania, Serbia, Montenegro and the Adriatic Sea meant different historical connections and experiences, and the neighbourhood contained versatile possibilities and constraints.

Figure 1
The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1914



The sphere of action of the foreign policy depends on the objectives, values, directions and value system defined by the leading elite. A foreign policy option for the Monarchy was offered by the connections to Germany, Russia, or Italy, also, the closeness to the marginal powers from geographical aspect, above all Turkey, and the relationship and connections with the European great powers marginal in the geographical sense of the word (Great Britain and France), and the rising USA.

The foreign policy objectives and orientation of the two dominants, state-forming nations of the Monarchy were different in almost all neighbourhood relations. (The judgement of the neighbourhood of Switzerland and Liechtenstein was not different in the Austrian and Hungarian foreign policy approach.)

Italy was a potential ally and an enemy at the same time. The French–Italian and the Italian–English connections were largely influenced by the competition for the colonies in Africa. For Italy, the basic issue was the optimisation of the European and colonisation efforts. For the Austrians, the birth of the single, united Italy, and the gradual displacement of Austria from Italy was a historical loss and grievance. The 1882 triple treaty of Germany, Italy and Austria–Hungary satisfied the minimum needs of all contracting parties, but the Italian claim for Trieste and its environs and for other territories complicated the connections immediately. There was no conflict concerning territorial claims, or any other interest conflict between the Hungarian party and Italy, in fact, because of the fact that Italy gave home to Lajos Kossuth in his exile, the majority of the Hungarian society felt sympathy, hope and respect for Turin for decades. In World War I, Italy finally fought against the Central Powers, and although the military role of Italy was not really dominant, it sometimes absorbed significant forces.

Germany, created with the leadership of Prussia, from an enemy gradually became the most important ally for Austria. The friendship of the Austrians towards Germany is based on linguistic and cultural grounds, and after getting over the shock caused by the creation of the Little German Unity, the country was open towards the new German Empire. For the Austrians,

the relationship to Germany for a long time depended on the often changing conditions of the relationship to France, Italy and Russia. For the Hungarian party, the relationship to Germany was not so important in itself, rather in the light of the German–Russian relationship and the connections between the Hungarians and Russia. Germany finally shaped its alliances and external relations according to its own interests. Although a dominant force of the Central Powers, Germany proved to be weak in the prolonged World War I.

Russia, by its assistance given for the repression the Hungarian war of independence in 1849, achieved the sympathy of the Austrians, while the same action evoked a long-term hatred in the Hungarians against Russia. In the relationship between the Monarchy and Russia, the potential alliance, the neutral co-existence as competitors, and the possibility of becoming enemies of each other were all present. Both the Monarchy and Russia (together with Germany) were interested in the division and the further invasion of Poland, so this common interest could as well have made them strategic allies for each other (the alliance of the three emperors). Finally, the relationship between the Monarchy and Russia turned to hostility, due to the competition in the Balkan area. During the events and battles of World War I, the Monarchy proved to be weak against Russia, and was only able to “hold” the Russian front with the assistance of Germany. The revolution in 1917 brought fundamental changes in almost all respects, both in the situation of Russia and the politics of Europe.

The relationship between the Monarchy and Rumania was determined by the dual and often changing interests and relationships of the latter state. In 1883, Rumania allied with the Monarchy, in a fear of the Russians, then it more and more openly stated its territorial claims towards the Monarchy, above all Hungary. In the middle of World War I, Rumania clearly became an enemy, it was defeated and forced to sign a separate peace treaty, still, at the end of the war, Rumania found itself among the winners.

The connection between the Monarchy and Serbia was mostly a definite hostility, mainly depending on the development of the relationship of the Monarchy to Russia. There were huge differences between the two countries

in all respects. The opposition of the Monarchy and Serbia led to the chain reaction of the declarations of war in World War I. Serbia then became one of the biggest winners of World War I, if we look at its territorial gains.

The neighbourhood connection between the Monarchy and Montenegro was determined by the economic dependence of the latter, but this small state often received an interest exceeding its weight. During the world war, Montenegro became a military enemy of the Monarchy.

By the Adriatic Sea, the Monarchy was considered as an inland-sea power, but it never became a real sea power. The Adriatic Sea was important in merchant shipping, only. Both the biggest port of the Adriatic Sea (Trieste) and the only important seaport of Hungary (Fiume/Rijeka) had significant turnovers.

The relationship between the Monarchy and Turkey was often burdened with conflicts, because of Bosnia–Herzegovina (1878, 1908) and the so-called Sanjak area. Later, because of the location of the new states created by the achievements of the national movements in the Balkans, Turkey ceased to be a direct neighbour of the Monarchy. However, because of their common interests, they related to each other as “close neighbours”, because of the Balkans. Turkey finally joined the war on the side of the central powers. The fear of Turkey of the Russian extension was bigger than its aversion towards the increase of the weight of the Monarchy in the Balkan area.

The relationship between the Monarchy and the geographically peripheral great powers (Great Britain and France) was contradictory both before and after the turn of the century. The connections were determined by the mutual and multilateral relationships to Germany and Russia, then the support for the nationalist movements aiming at the secession from the Monarchy became the focal point of the debates. There were no insoluble, direct oppositions between the Monarchy and the two sea powers; still, they were confronted during the world war, because of the power politics and the complex interests of the alliances.

The leading elite of the Monarchy did not recognise the growing importance of the USA in the world economy and the world politics. The Monarchy only attributed a secondary importance to the USA, while the Czech na-

tionalist movement, which aimed at the secession from the Monarchy, was probably among the first ones to realise the probable future role and possibilities of the States. The USA entered the war primarily not because of its bilateral connection to the Monarchy, but driven by European and global power aspects.

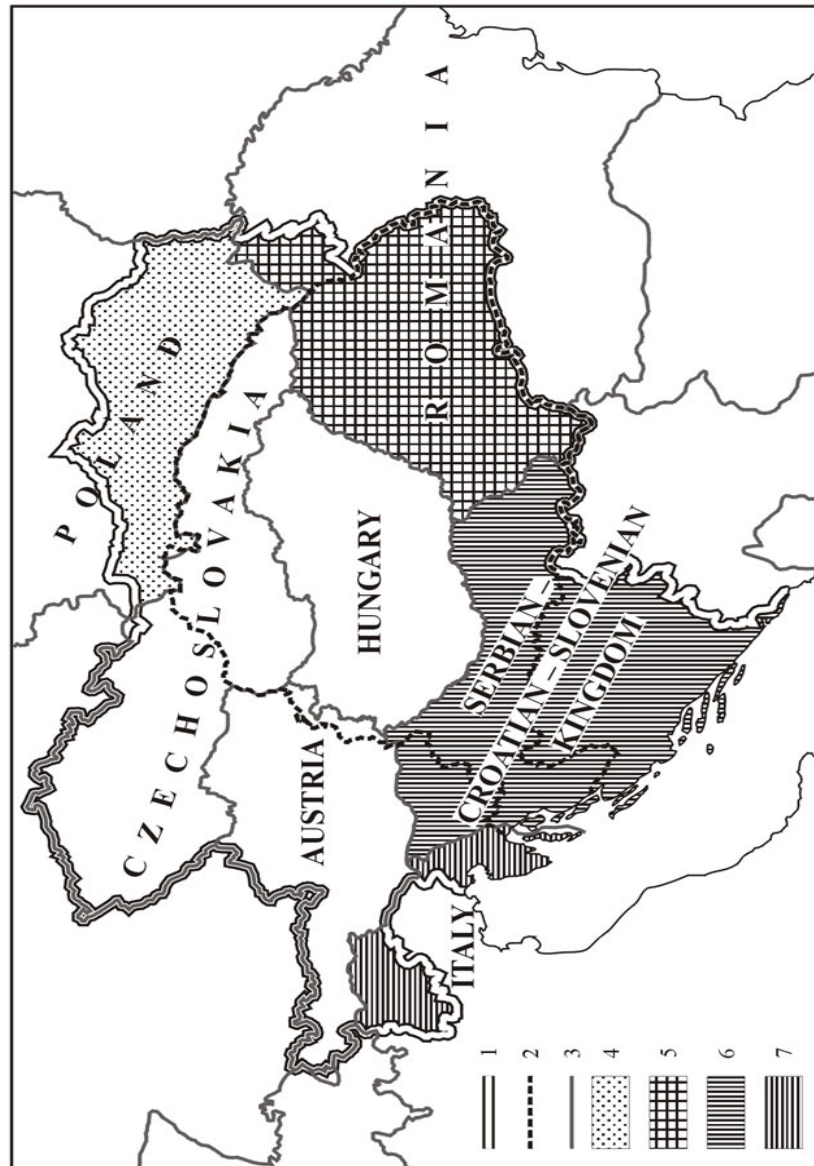
In World War I, Germany, the Monarchy and their allies entering the war later (Bulgaria and Turkey) were defeated by the Entente powers, even more by the United States of America that joined the war with new forces. The war, that was unjust and imperialistic on both sides and aimed at the territorial re-division of the world and Europe, finished a historical period and at the same time initiated new processes.

With the defeat in 1918, the disintegration process of the Monarchy accelerated within a short time (Figure 2.). A dominant element in this disintegration process was the change in the external conditions (in the eyes of the English, the Monarchy lost its significance in the European balance of power, the 14 points of the American president, Wilson were about a new order), as well as the internal transition, the national rearrangement process.

By the tearing apart of the Monarchy, the system of small states was created in Central Europe, and at the same time a political and power vacuum in the Danubian region, which the French tried to fill out. However, neither their economic nor their political weight was sufficient for a long-term influence on the whole of the region.

Figure 2

The division of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the sucesor states



Key: 1 – boundaries of the Monarchy, 1918; 2 – boundaries of the historical Hungary, 1918; 3 – state boundaries, 1920; 4 – territories to Poland; 5 – territories to Romania; 6 – territories to Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom; 7 – territories to Italy.

3.2 The politico-geographical position of Hungary within the Monarchy

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, created by the Compromise of 1867, was a complex state formation comprehended differently by the political elite of the contracting parties and sometime by their governments, too. The Hungarian political elite was divided about the issue of the mission of the Monarchy, within that, about the interests of Hungary. The “dispute of pub-

lic law” continuously had a significant influence on the Hungarian home policy.

In the 20th century, the inner political–territorial structures of the Monarchy were made even more complicated by the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Hungarian leading political circles objected to the annexation, later demanded that once it was done, the territory be annexed, by historical right, to the Hungarian Crown.

Hungary can only be considered as a political formation with a partial independence, a limited sovereignty within the Monarchy. In foreign affairs, military and security policy issues Hungary was not independent, however, it had a complete autonomy as regarded home affairs.

The Act on the Compromise, taking the separate situation of Hungary into consideration, talked of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia as parts of the Hungarian Crown, but Dalmatia was under Austrian reign all through the dualist period. (Within the Hungarian politico-geography, a separate school, the so-called “geography of public law” was created for the geographical analysis of the Hungarian connections to Austria and for the study of the pending territorial issues.)

Both in the Hungarian politics and the Hungarian science, especially in the politico-geography, a kind of conscious, proudly accepted and announced imperialistic effort could be seen (HAVASS, R. 1902). This Hungarian imperialism, which was seen as having a positive content at that time, saw the civilisation of the Balkans as its primary mission.

In accordance with the official statistical definition of the time, the “Hungarian Empire”, after the Hungarian–Croatian compromise and the embourgeoisment of the frontier region, consisted of Croatia–Slavonia as genuine associate countries, the port of Fiume and its environs, as a separate body annexed to the Hungarian Crown, and the Motherland. The Hungarian politico-geography treated Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as “non-united associate states” (LÓCZY, L. ed. 1918).

The historical Hungary in itself was considerable by European standards with its territory of 325 411 km². As an independent state, Hungary would have been the 6th biggest state in Europe. Considering its size and topog-

raphical position, it was actually the historical Hungary that maintained the spatial unity of the Monarchy, as it was larger in territory than the Austrian part without Bosnia-Herzegovina.

By population, Hungary with its 20.8 million inhabitants would have been the 7th most populated country in Europe in 1910. The number of population was significantly lower than in the Austrian territories, and the low population density (64 persons/km²) was especially striking. The real political problem was the heterogeneous ethnic composition of the population. The proportion of those with Hungarian mother language did not reach 50% in the whole of the Hungarian Empire (48.1%), and even in the Motherland in the narrower sense, the share of the Hungarians hardly exceeded 50% (54.5%). Only 57.4% of the population of the Hungarian Empire spoke Hungarian, thus the proportion of the population speaking Hungarian was less than 10% more than the share of those with Hungarian as mother tongue. In Croatia–Slavonia, despite the 900 years of common history of the states, only 6.5% of the population spoke Hungarian. The number and share of the ethnic minorities was more significant along the state borders, and for the majority of them, the attraction of the (Rumanian, Serb) nation states on the other side of the border was tempting. The centrifugal forces gradually strengthened in political sense, and these forces could only be counterbalanced by the centripetal forces in the times of peace.

The major parts of the borders of the historical Hungary were so-called internal borders, towards the Austrian territories. Hungary only had international, external borders to Rumania and Serbia, although the border to Serbia was at the same time the border of the most delicate political conflicts of interest of the Monarchy.

Economically, Hungary was in a special situation within the Monarchy, because its territory was the richest part of the Monarchy in minerals, and its natural resources were the most important. However, its economic performance, looking at the real division of production, did not reach the weight and volume of the Austrian territories, although the lagging behind of Hungary gradually decreased. Because of the belated development, several sectors of the Hungarian industry were significantly more up to date than the industry

in the Austrian territories. As regards agriculture, Hungary became the Monarchy's granary, after the anti-inundation works and the regulation of the rivers.

Politically, the representation of Hungary as whole was weak, as the dominant factor of the politics was the weight of the ruler. Francis Joseph—who was the Austrian emperor and the Hungarian king in one person—played a dominant role in the formation of the policy, especially the foreign policy of the Monarchy, in addition to the legal structures of the constitutional monarchy—or sometimes opposite to them.

As regards foreign policy, in certain periods of the dualism, the Hungarian interests, then considered as of primary importance, were asserted. At the same time, we have to know that the Hungarian prime minister (István Tisza), who opposed to the war (in a fear that the unfavourable outcome of the war would jeopardise the unity of the country), could not prevent the declaration of war on Serbia. A significant part of the Hungarian elite recognised that the interest of Hungary was the maintenance of the status quo and not the questioning of that.

IV. The situation of the Hungarian politico-geography in the time of the transition after World War I, 1918–1920

With the military defeat and the starting disintegration of the Monarchy, the historical Hungary found itself in a new situation. The most important issues were how Hungary was able to “come out” from the Monarchy, on the one hand, and the collapse caused by the world war, on the other.

The civil democratic revolution of 1918 (the so-called “Daisy Revolution”, October 1918) declared the secession of Hungary from Austria, then the republic was announced. The new leadership at the same time attempted to preserve the territorial integrity of the historical Hungary. These efforts were unsuccessful: among the ethnic minorities of the historical Hungary, the Croats were the first to announce their secession from Hungary, followed by the Slovaks and then the Rumanians.

The acquisition of the independence and the restoration of the state sovereignty began in an extremely tough situation, within very difficult conditions: war defeat, lack of separate, independent foreign affairs and military affairs, the secession efforts of the ethnic minorities, worsening relationships to the neighbouring countries and the winning European great powers, the opposition to the USA, the objective conflict between the Hungarian national goals and the 14 points declared by the president of America.

Mihály Károlyi, as the president of the new Republic of Hungary, tried to create a new, entente-friendly foreign policy orientation from the autumn of 1918. Károlyi had to experience that, apart from his own personal political contacts, the new Hungary had no real contacts towards the winning great powers. The winning great powers saw as their primary objective the restriction of the spatial connections and the role of Germany (after 1917, the Soviet-Russian threat was also occasionally mentioned). In this objective, a range of the new successor states fitted much more than perhaps the surviving historical Hungary.

The peace conference seating in Paris in January 1919 found an internally disintegrated Hungary, helpless in all respects and unable to assert its interests. Mihály Károlyi did not wish to accept the memorandum contain-

ing the decisions of the peace conference, which ordered the evacuation of the Hungarian territories East to the Tisza river, he resigned instead.

After the Communist take-over in March 1919, the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic sought the strategic alliance of Soviet-Russia. This orientation could not receive a broad support by the majority of the Hungarian society. The political views, values and objectives of the Communist central power and those of the majority of the society were essentially opposite to each other.

In spite of the temporary military achievements (the re-occupation of the major part of Upper Northern Hungary), the events of the internal civil war, the invasion of Hungary by different foreign powers (Czechs, Serbs, Rumanians, French) in August 1919 created a hopeless situation that left extremely strong marks in the Hungarian public thinking. The most shocking experience was the marching in of the Rumanian troops into Budapest, and the Rumanian invasion (ROMSICS I., ed. 1998).

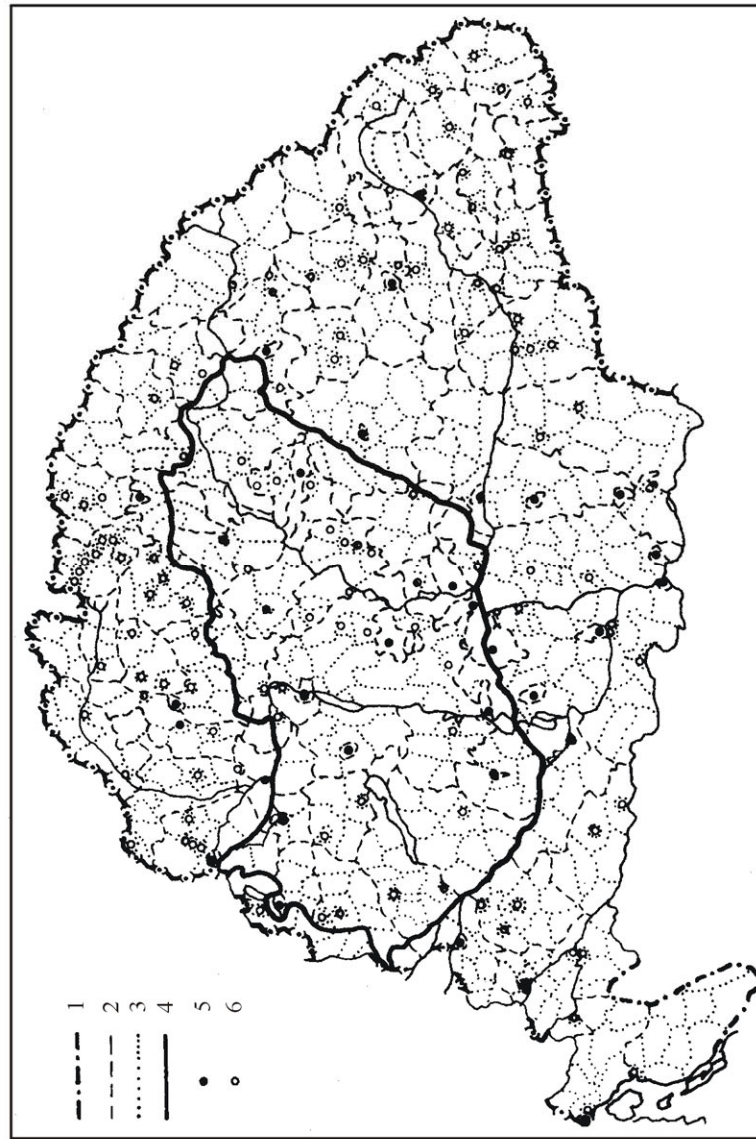
The short period following the war raised a host of tasks and challenges (the task of creating the independent state existence, decision on the basic issues of the socio-economic arrangement, formation of the new foreign policy orientation), to which the Hungarian society sought the solution in extremes, to a large extent because of the winning great powers and their allies in the neighbouring states, and the communist effort of take-over and its failure.

The Horthy-system, shaping from the autumn of 1919 and then consolidating, signed the Trianon peace treaty concluding World War I in the summer of 1920, partly because of its own external legitimacy, but more importantly under the weight of the external constraints and forces. In accordance with the peace treaty, Hungary lost approximately two-thirds of its former territory and population (Figure 3., Table 1.). The tragedy of the peace treaty was further exacerbated by the fact that some one-third of the Hungarian ethnic population was now outside the new Hungarian borders (Figure 4.).

The peace treaty of Trianon created a state territory without historical preliminaries and geographical bases. The new borders of Hungary did not

Figure 3

The territorial division of the historical Hungary

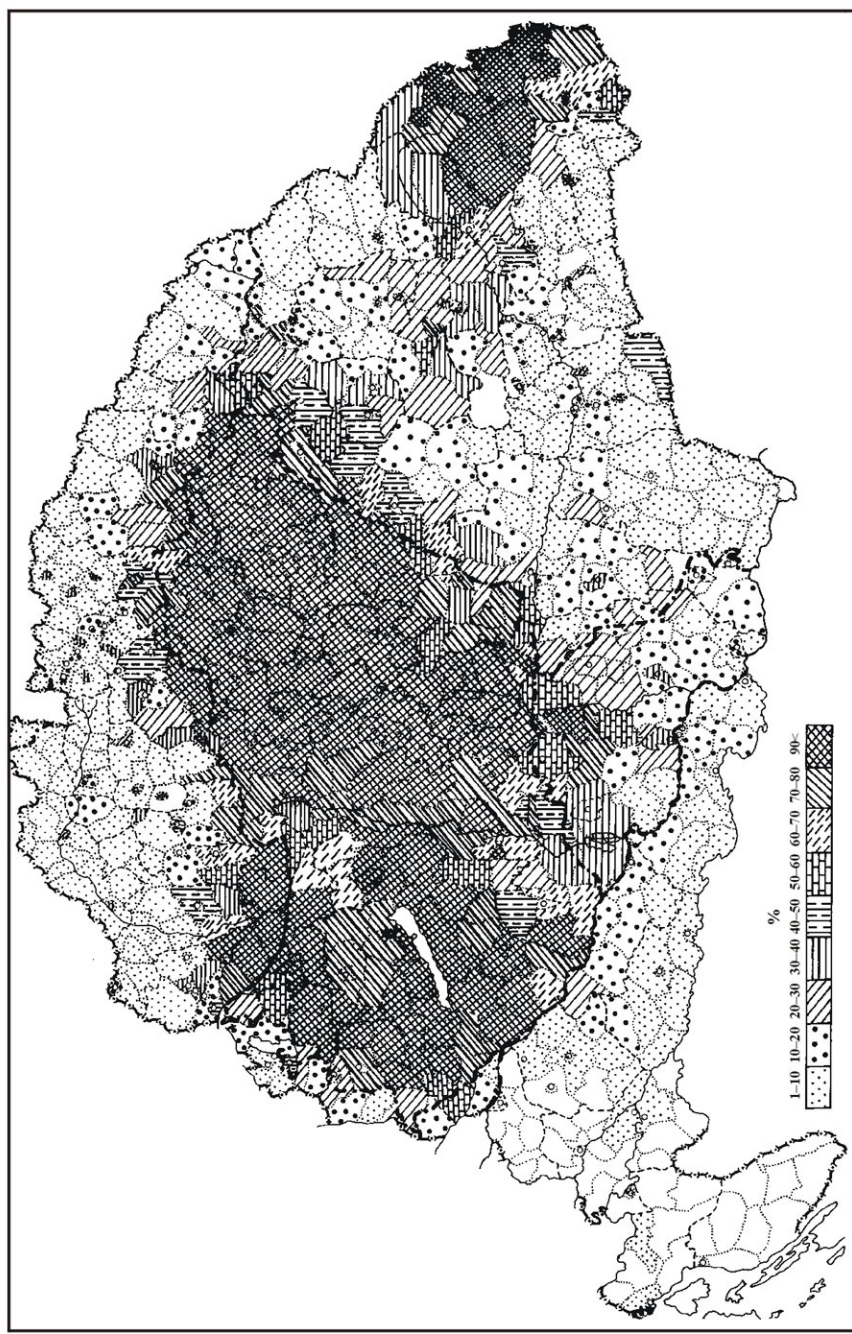


Key: 1 – historical state boundary, 2 – boundary of counties, 3 – boundary of districts, 4 – new state boundary, 5 – city of county's right, 6 – town.

coincide with the previous border in a single point. Hungary became, from a basin-country, a country in the bottom of a basin, and the living space of the Hungarian ethnic population was divided according to the interests of the successor states.

Figure 4

The territorial fragmentation and distribution of the Hungarian ethnic population, 1920



5 The changes of the politico-geographical position of Hungary in the period between the two world wars

The Trianon Peace Treaty, the Sopron referendum and the minor territorial exchanges created a new Hungary, under international control and strict military supervision. Hungary became one of the weakest states in the region. In the new Europe and new neighbourhood environment the new Hungary had to get used to the military supervision, the insignificance in power, the helplessness and the consequences coming from being a small state. (*Table 2*).

Table 2

Hungary and neighbouring countries, 1923

Country	Territory (km ²)	Population (million)	Population density (head/km ²)	Number of Hungarians (thousand)
Hungary	93010	8.5	92	7,147
Austria	83833	6.5	78	10,400
Czechoslovakia	14394	13.6	97	702,000
Romania	294267	16.2	55	1,481
Yugoslavia	248987	11.9	48	457,000

In the period between the two wars, the Hungarian society and politics were filled with the awareness of the unfairness of the Trianon arrangements. The Hungarian society could not resign itself to the new structures. In the life of Hungary between the two word wars, the morally declared and socially legitimized goal (the territorial revision) and the foreign policy ordered to this goal were confronted with the European power and neighbour-

hood realities. The states of the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia) were each much stronger in military respect than Hungary.

The aspects of the territorial revision in between the two world wars almost exclusively determined the foreign policy of Hungary, including the relationship with the great powers and the neighbourhood connections. In this period, the connections to the great powers and the neighbourhood connections were partly overlapping, as both Germany and the Soviet Union became neighbour states to Hungary.

a) Relationships to the great powers

The rearrangements of the world economy and the world power in the period between the two world wars affected the situation and possibilities of Hungary in a versatile and contradictory way. Despite the different attempts and efforts, it became more and more obvious that the winners of World War I were not interested (neither the big nor the small ones) in the peaceful revision of the forced and dictated peace treaty. Hungary, if it wanted to achieve its stated objectives, almost necessarily had to be on that side which questioned the European power and territorial structures created in Paris.

In the international and European political system, the League of the Nations had an important position, despite all of its problems. Hungary could only join after accepting the Trianon Peace Treaty, in September 1922, but did not become a major actor in the organisation (in April 1939, Hungary quit the League). The League of the Nations was seen as a negative creation by the contemporary Hungarian public opinion. This organisation was responsible for controlling the observance of the peace treaty, on the other hand, Hungary gradually got the possibility to demand that the rights stated in the peace treaty and guaranteed for the Hungarian minorities be kept by the successor states.

In the inter-war period, a new element in the political thinking and practice was the organising role of the ideological “values”: fascism in Italy, Stalinism in the Soviet Union, national-socialism in Germany, besides the former ideological values, such as liberalism and conservatism in Great

Britain, the USA and France. The ideological interests and real politics many times conflicted in the relationships of the great powers to each other.

The Hungarian relationships to Italy were mainly determined by the fact that Italy was the first great power to demand officially the review of the peace treaty made in Paris, including the “just peace for Hungary”. The support of the Italian diplomacy allowed the referendum in Sopron, as a consequence of which Sopron and its area were given back to Hungary (in December 1921). The Hungarian–Italian connections became more and more versatile, which finally led to the making of the friendship pact between the two countries in April 1927.

In March 1934, the Italian–Hungarian–Austrian agreement was signed, which prescribed a preliminary consultation in issues of common interest. Also, the mutual deepening of trading connections was supported. The making of this treaty revealed a kind of fear of the expected efforts by Hitler’s Germany. In April 1935, Italy made a statement at the international forum which said that after the remilitarization of Germany, Hungary too should have equal rights to arming. In 1936, the Italian–Hungarian–Austrian contracts were reinforced, which implied a kind of hostility toward Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union then. Italy assisted the Hungarian revisionist efforts first in 1938, then in 1940, with the 1st and 2nd Vienna Awards, respectively. Wide layers of the Hungarian society felt sympathy for Italy, which did not primarily mean sympathy for fascism, rather for the Italian state for its support of the revisionist demands of Hungary.

The German–Hungarian connections were quite different in the two periods of the inner development of Germany (the Weimar and the Hitlerian Germany). Germany before 1933 was a significant partner mainly only in the field of economy, without a major political weight and impact on the Hungarian efforts, while Germany after 1933 was more and more a direct political and power factor for Hungary. In the Hungarian historical thinking, attempts were made to have the “first and last henchman” approaches believed simultaneously (ZSIGMOND, L. ed., 1966), which could hardly be corrected even after several decades (VARGA, J., 1991, 1992).

Germany's effect was especially strengthened by the Anschluss (November 1938), as it became a direct neighbour to Hungary, and would have put its whole economic and military weight on Hungary, whatever foreign policy Hungary would have pursued. Hungary was mesmerised by the success of the territorial revision, however, it became more and more obvious that the Germans, given the new situation and conditions of power, were not interested in the complete Hungarian revision and were only willing to support the Hungarian territorial demands until the ethnic borders. (Hungary had a "historical" territorial claim towards Germany, because of Burgenland, also, towards its other ally, Italy, because of the port town of Fiume.)

Hungary joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in January 1939. (This act gave the Hungarian foreign policy a clear ideological content.) The anti-Soviet attitude of the leading Hungarian politicians was even stronger than the demand for the territorial revision. (The Hungarian political leadership did not wish to gain territories in collaboration with the Soviet Union.)

In March 1939, the Hungarian Army – with the approval of Germany – reoccupied the Sub-Carpathians, and reached the historical borders of the country. However, this territorial enlargement could not be justified by ethnographic arguments.

The Hungarian foreign policy was surprised by the German–Soviet collaboration in the division of Poland (September 1939). In the beginning of World War II, it became clearer than ever for the Hungarian leading elite that the ideological approach and the great power policy do not necessarily follow the same principles. Hungary did not have a direct military role in the conflict, however, it gave shelter to the large number of Polish refugees arriving at the country.

In August 1940, the arbitration of Germany and Italy gave North Transylvania back to Hungary. This territorial increase was one of the main elements that made Hungary join the three-power pact, in which Germany, Italy and Japan delimited their spheres of interest.

In the spring of 1941, Germany attacked Yugoslavia – partly moving through the Hungarian territory –, then, after the formal elimination of

Yugoslavia, Hungary also took military actions in order to defend the Hungarian minorities.

In June, Germany attacked the Soviet Union. (The struggle between the two great power neighbours of Hungary affected the whole of Europe, rearranging the power relations.) The war brought about a new situation in Hungary in all aspects, and the sphere of action of the Hungarian foreign policy became rather tight. Hungary, referring to the bombing in Kassa (the now Košice) – the circumstances of which are still argued – joined the invasion against the Soviet Union. (The Soviet Union considered the support of the territorial claims of Hungary in Transylvania, provided Hungary did not declare war on the Soviet Union.) This way Hungary became a directly involved party in a global and continental fight, on the outcome of which it could not have any influence at all.

After 1941, Germany, with its invasions, practically surrounded Hungary, and Hungary now was completely at the mercy of Germany in all respects. During the war, the Hungarian economy was integrated in almost all respects into the frameworks of the German war economy and the new German European order (UNKE, H. et al. n. d.).

On 19 March 1944, Germany seized the Hungarian territory, and used the human and financial resources of Hungary for its own war purposes. Hungary was thus not an independent state any more in the final phase of the war.

The relationship of Hungary and Great Britain was not overshadowed by historical conflicts, and the Hungarian public opinion only blamed Great Britain in the second place for the Trianon Peace Treaty. The relationship between the two countries was defined by the interest conflict and the different opinions about the Central European situation.

The negotiation between Germany and Great Britain in the autumn of 1938 considered Hungary inasmuch as the acceptance of the German territorial claims – implicitly – meant that Great Britain did not consider the territorial claims of Hungary against Czechoslovakia as a “tearing test”, and an occasional revision would not have conflicted with the English interests.

Great Britain later recognized the results of the Hungarian territorial revisions.

Pál Teleki's government was consciously trying after 1938 to decrease the overweight of the Germans and maintain the connections to Great Britain. The attack of Germany against Yugoslavia and the Hungarian collaboration only resulted in the disconnection of the diplomatic relations on the part of Great Britain, despite the threats of the declaration of war. It was the Hungarian declaration of war on the Soviet Union and the attack against the country that made Great Britain declare war on Hungary.

The Hungarian–French relationships were basically determined by the role of France in the creation of the Trianon Peace Treaty. France could not get over the web of its Central European efforts and illusions (as the dominant supporter of the Little Entente, its main objective was the preservation of the status quo created by the peace treaty), also, Hungary was unable to forget the shock of Trianon. In 1925, the two countries made a trade contract based on the principle of greatest commercial allowance.

The French foreign policy consistently and consciously supported Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania against Hungary. The different French interests concerning Hungary and Romania were reflected in the contracts made with the two countries: France made a contract with Romania that contained obligation of support and relieve, while “only” made a friendship and non-aggression pact with Hungary (June 1926).

In the early 1930s, the French government made an attempt to develop the co-operation of the Danubian states, but the French possibilities shrank to the minimum after Hitler took over in Germany. France was rapidly pushed out of the region both economically and politically.

The relationship between the Soviet Union and Hungary was defined by the transformations of the international political system, the ideological opposition, the avowed anti-Sovietism of the Hungarian leaders and the internal policy of Hungary. The Hungarian–Soviet relationship was heavily burdened by the historical experiences of the Hungarian elite in force about the communists, collected during the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The connections between the two countries were determined by the anti-

Communist attitude of the Hungarian government in the whole period. Particular businesses were occasionally made between Hungary and the Soviet Union (the issue and exchange of the communists arrested in Hungary and the war prisoners kept in Soviet-Russia).

Hungary was reluctant to recognize the Soviet Union (September 1924), and the complete settling of the diplomatic relations was prolonged, for home political reasons. The Hungarian leading class was almost never able to conduct a real politics towards the Soviet Union.

After September 1939, along the former Hungarian–Polish border, the Soviet Union became a neighbour state to Hungary. The neighbourhood relationship raised the issue of making a trading contract between the two countries. The agreement signed in 1940 settled the basic issues of the economic, transport etc. relationship between the Soviet Union and Hungary.

The declaration of war on the Soviet Union was a historical mistake of Hungary, a misjudgement of the interests and the power relations. In addition, this step not only made Hungary an enemy of the Soviet Union but also that of Great Britain.

The development of the relationships between the USA and Hungary was promoted by the fact that the Senate of the USA did not ratify the Trianon Peace Treaty, instead, it made a separate peace treaty with Hungary in August 1921. The public opinion of the USA recognized some injustices of the Trianon Peace Treaty. In April 1924, the two countries made a friendship, trading and consular agreement. The USA, because of its strengthening isolationism, could not become the representative of the Hungarian interests.

The economic connections between the two countries were significant for Hungary. In 1939, the USA had the 7th, in 1940 already the 3rd position in the import of Hungary.

In December 1941, because of the mechanical constraints of the alliance relations, Hungary declared war on the USA, although there were no bilateral problems of any kind between the two countries. This declaration of war by Hungary was a splendid example of a foreign political action that was irrational from the aspect of the national interests and derived from the alliance connections.

During World War II, Hungary thus declared war on both of the future super powers. The logic of Hungary's alliance connections with and alignments to the axis powers resulted in such a historical mistake of roles and power relations which Hungary was unable to solve after the war, in connection with either of the super powers.

b) Neighbourhood connections

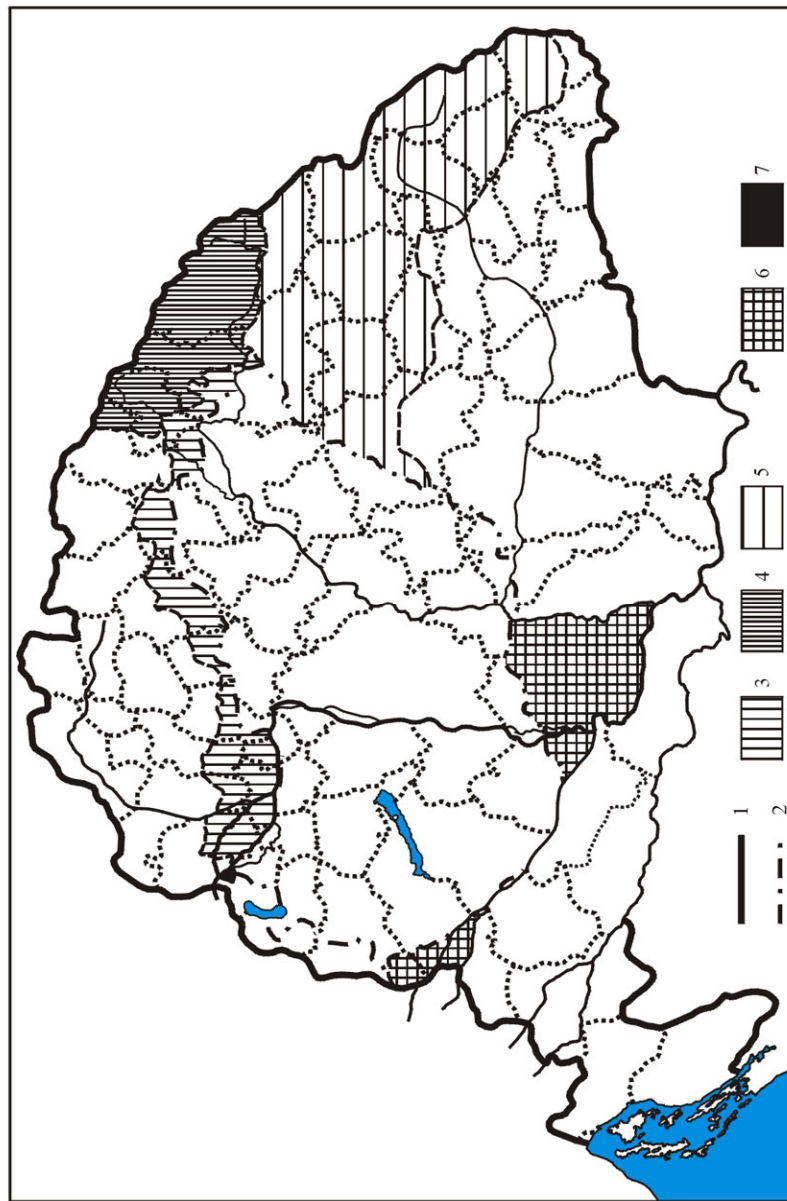
The beginning of the period was characterised by the complete isolation of Hungary, partly because of the joint efforts of the Little Entente (after March 1921: Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia), and partly because of the specific Burgenland-policy of Austria. In the field of bilateral connections, the first step forward was made towards Austria, followed by Yugoslavia at the end of the inter-war period. The Czechoslovakian–Hungarian and the Romanian–Hungarian relationships remained tense all through this historical era.

Starting in 1938, Hungary gradually eliminated the territorial structures created in Trianon, with the support or recognition of the great powers. Hungary's neighbourhood environment, politico-geographical position and sphere of action in foreign policy continuously changed, and its neighbourhood radically changed before and during World War II (Figure 5.). It is a tragedy and at the same time the irony of this age that the enlarged Hungary was more and more pressed by the neighbourhood, territory and power of Germany.

The Hungarian–Austrian connections had totally new political, economic and territorial conditions after the rearrangements following World War I. The relationship between the two countries was burdened not only by the conflicts deriving from the common historical past, but also the international settling of the borders after the war. The majority of the population of Burgenland spoke German as mother tongue, but this was the only place along the Hungarian borders where the nationality boundaries were applied when drawing the state borders.

Figure 5

The changes of the territory of Hungary, 1938–1947



Key: 1 – boundary of historical Hungary; 2 – boundary of Trianon; 3 – territories from Czechoslovakia, 1938; 4 – territories from Czechoslovakia, 1939; 5 – territories from Romania, 1940; 6 – territories from Yugoslavia, 1941; 7 – territory to Czechoslovakia, 1947.

As a result of the complicated situation that emerged in the area (the Hungarian aristocracy and the nationalists wanted to create an independent state called Lajta Banate), the acquisition of the territory became problematic. The Czechoslovakian and the Serbian government promised an armed

support to Austria for the occupation of West Hungary, which it did not wish to use.

In December 1921, at the Sopron referendum, Sopron and its environment decided upon belonging to Hungary. The political connections of the two countries gradually improved. A kind of conscience of interdependence appeared in the two, now small, states. This was important especially for Hungary, since Austria was the only free access to Europe for Hungary.

In January 1931, the Hungarian–Austrian friendship pact was signed. The connections of the two countries were gradually integrated into the triple alliance made with the Italians. The triple collaboration could not stop Germany's efforts to annex Austria.

The relationship of Hungary and Czechoslovakia was defined by an opposition in the whole of the inter-war period. The situation of the Hungarian minority – although it was the best among the successor states – and the declared territorial demands of Hungary almost paralysed the inter-state connections.

The Munich Pact, signed by four powers in September 1938 (Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy), decided that the Hungarian–Czechoslovakian issue be settled bilaterally, allowing a three-month period for the two parties to come to an agreement. In October, the negotiations between the two parties started, but they could not agree upon the line of the common border. With the 1st Vienna Award, Hungary reached its goals, with the exception of the towns of Pozsony (the now Bratislava) and Nyitra (the now Nitra).

The Slovaks first declared their autonomy on 6. October 1938, then also their secession from the Czechs on 14. March 1939. Carpathian Ukraine declared its independence on 14. March, too. With these internal decisions, Czechoslovakia, created in Trianon, ceased to exist as regarded international law.

The relationship of Hungary to the new Slovakia was basically not better than the relationships had been between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In Slovakia (its territory was 38 116 km², its population 2.6 million people), the number of the Hungarian minority decreased to a large extent, some 100

000 Hungarian ethnic population remained as fragments in the territory of the new country. In the spring of 1939, Slovakia made a 25-year military contract with Germany, in which Germany accepted to protect the new borders and represent the foreign political interests of Slovakia. Slovakia in reality functioned as a puppet state of Germany. In the formation of its inner structures it followed the example of Germany.

When in March 1939 Hungary invaded the territory of Sub-Carpathia with a unilateral military action, this action almost led to a war between Hungary and Slovakia. On 24. March 1939, Slovak planes bombed the town of Ungvár that now belonged to Hungary. The two countries, on German pressure, ended the open hostility, and agreed on the exact state borders in April.

The relationship of Hungary to Romania was determined by the fact that Romania received the largest territory and population in the Trianon Peace Treaty, and the largest number of Hungarian ethnic minority, partly living in one single block, was also there.

In territory, Romania was almost three times bigger than Hungary after Trianon, also, its population and economic performance significantly exceeded that of Hungary. In military respect, Romania had an overwhelming advantage over Hungary. Romania actually became a regional middle power in the period between the two world wars.

The Hungarian–Romanian economic connections were defined by the political relations. The Hungarian import exceeded the export all the time. The Hungarian export to Romania showed the features of a developed country.

In August 1940, Hungary defined its open territorial claims against Romania in a memorandum. The bilateral negotiations did not bring any result. Romania asked for arbitration, and the 2nd Vienna Award gave North Transylvania back to Hungary. This decision did not solve the connections of the two countries, in fact, it made them even more complicated in many respects, and both of them were more and more looking for the favour of Germany.

The relationship between Hungary and Yugoslavia was almost always tense between the two world wars, deriving from the consequences of the breaking out of World War I and the tensions of the ethnic minority issues. Hungary now was a terrestrial country, without any seacoast, and its access to the seas was under Yugoslav control both on the Danube river and towards the Adriatic Sea. (Rijeka belonged to Italy after 1924.)

In 1934, the assassination of King Alexander in Marseilles made the relationship between the two countries even tenser, as Yugoslavia accused Hungary of supporting the Croatian assassins.

Italy made attempts from 1939 to alleviate the Hungarian–Yugoslav problems and to settle the relationship between the two states. In December 1940, the Hungarian–Yugoslav friendship pact was signed. The pact offered a basis for new relationships for the two countries, carrying the possibilities of the long-term reconciliation. The pact was compatible with both the current German and Italian interests.

After the inner turn in Yugoslavia in 1941, the relationship between Hungary and Yugoslavia became tense again. After the making of the Soviet–Yugoslav friendship pact, Yugoslavia became the enemy of Hungary again. A part of the German troops marched through Hungary against Yugoslavia. Hungary only interfered later, after the former elimination of the Trianon-made Yugoslavia, and seized a part of its historical territories.

Croatia declared its independence on 10. April 1941, legally eliminating this way the Yugoslavia made in Trianon. Croatia then had a territory of 125 000 km² and a population of 7 million people. It was not the historical territory of the country, but a much larger area, integrating Bosnia-Herzegovina, too.

The ethnic and religious composition of the country was extremely versatile, at the same time, the Hungarian–Croatian relationship was not burdened by ethnic minority problems, because only a limited number of ethnic minorities lived in both countries.

After 1933 – especially following 1938 –, the neighbourhood connections were mostly shaped by (the relationship to) Germany in the region of Hungary. The small states were competing against each other and were used

against one another to some extent, at the same time, they tried to exceed each other in meeting the demands of Germany. This way they were practically enemies to one another, however, their connections to Germany made them allies. This situation is perfectly reflected by the saying of the time which depicted these circumstances as the “misery of the small states”.

6. The dilemma of the loser Hungary and the victorious great powers, 1944-1948

In March 1944, Germany invaded Hungary. Although the head of state could keep his position, Horthy's possibilities to influence the political processes were rather limited. The Hungarian government in reality only executed the demands of the Germans, the real sovereignty of Hungary ceased to exist.

In 1944, Hungary became a buffer zone in the fights of the world powers and the European powers, the fronts of the battles remained in the territory of Hungary for months. After September 1944, the present territory of Hungary was divided between the areas of German occupation and the Soviet "liberation". The zone of the Soviet influence gradually grew the territories under the control of the Germans and the allied Hungarian forces shrank day after day.

The turn of 1944 and 1945 was one of the most tragic times in the history of the divided Hungary (divided by territorial, power and ideological respects). Such a confusion of (partly legitimised) values and the denial of the same values were present in Hungary that had never been experienced in the previous history of the country.

The attempts of Hungary to "jump out" were all unsuccessful, so the country found itself among the losers at the end of the war, which was a negative fact in the eyes of all the dominant international actors in the given period of time.

In December 1944, the Contemporary National Assembly was founded in the territory occupied by the Soviet Union, then the Contemporary National Government was created, too. This government declared war on the fascist Germany and in January 1945 it made a cease-fire agreement with the Soviet Union and the Allied Powers.

The agreement was actually the ratification of a limited sovereignty, and the Allied Control Commission was founded for the implementation and supervision of the lines of the agreement. (This body operated until September 1947, the deposition of the peace treaty of Paris.) The cease-fire agreement

also contained that the state borders as of 31 December 1937 were considered as standard (BALOGH, S. 1988).

In the conference held at Yalta in February 1945, the “Yalta world order” was created. It basically determined the long-term frameworks of the development and the possibilities of the politico-geographical position of Europe, including Hungary. The bases of the potential division of Europe were laid down in Yalta, although not put down in international contracts, only in informal, verbal agreements, which, however, were respected by all parties for a long while.

By April 1945, the whole territory of Hungary was under a Soviet occupation. Publicly the Soviet Union consistently stated that it did not want to interfere into the internal socio-economic order of Hungary, but the presence of the Red Army, the Soviet leadership and dominance of the Allied Control Commission in themselves basically influenced the inner development of Hungary, including the sphere of action of the Hungarian foreign policy.

The British and American concepts of the creation of new states by the division of Germany (e.g. the South German State with Vienna as the capital city, which would have involved Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, Austria and Hungary) failed (ROMSICS, I. 1998). The Soviet Union had no interest in the creation of state formations that it was unable to influence. Also, in the territories occupied by the Soviet Union, the different attempts of federation – which were stated with different objectives and according to different political values –, were not supported by the Soviet Union (GYARMATI, GY. 1992).

During the preparation of the peace treaty to be made with Romania, in connection with Hungary a debate around Transylvania happened among the winners after September 1945. All the interested parties were under the influence of the experiences collected before and during the war. The USA were more willing to accept some correction of the borders drawn at Trianon (although it would not accept completely the 2nd Vienna Award), but finally the opinion of the Soviet Union was given priority and the whole of Transylvania remained within the borders of Romania.

In Hungary, there were significant political powers interested in the creation of the “last henchman” image. This image served the political and historical defaming of the inner bourgeois forces, and the manipulation of the foreign relations and the external image of Hungary. This label became an element in the negative self-image of a part of the Hungarian society, contributing to the inner moral decay of the Hungarian society.

The parliamentary elections held in November 1945 were won with an overwhelming majority (57%) by the Smallholders Party that also included bourgeois powers, but the party was unable to realise its political victory achieved at the elections in either the home or the foreign policy of the coalition government. The situation following the elections well demonstrated the narrow sphere of action of the inner forces when their efforts did not fit clearly into the Soviet concepts.

During the preparation of the peace and the settling of the relationships with the neighbouring countries, it soon became clear that there was no winning great power with a dominant interest in Hungary, which would have made them defend under all circumstances the interests of Hungary. The loser country, Hungary did not receive any support from the great powers for the assertion of its interests.

Churchill’s speech held at Fulton (5 March 1946) “anticipated” in a sense the forthcoming processes, but the speech might have also included “between the lines” that Churchill could clearly see the consequences of his dealings with Stalin about the interest zones in Central and Southeast Europe. The anticipations stated in the speech were soon justified by the history of the era and the region.

As opposed to the neighbouring countries recognized as winners (Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia), and partly the sooner “escaped” state (Romania) and the one that was treated specially, because it was considered as the first victim (Austria), Hungary had weak positions of negotiation. By the acquisition of Sub-Carpathia, the Soviet Union became a direct neighbour to Hungary. There was practically no basis for Hungary to assert its interests against the neighbours. In many respects, Hungary was in a subordinate position compared to its neighbours, mostly because of the Soviet Union.

The relationships between Hungary and the neighbouring states were heavily burdened by the home political efforts of some countries. In their Košice programme announced in April 1945, the Czechoslovakian government made the Hungarian minority responsible for the disintegration of Czechoslovakia. The Hungarian ethnic minority was deprived of practically all their rights. The mass executions and revenges in Yugoslavia in 1944-1945 took some 40,000 Hungarian victims, the massacres of the Hungarians in Romania did not demand so many dead.

The evacuations (of Germans) from Hungary, the formally bilateral (Hungarian– Czechoslovakian) evacuations of Hungarians from Slovakia, which were settled in agreement but in practice were mostly unilateral, made the relationship between the population of the countries go wrong in many respects. Such bad images of the neighbours emerged in the societies that made it very hard to create bilateral connections in the future.

It became very important in the economic connections that the Soviet Union acquired the former German properties, also, the completion of the compensations made the role of the Soviet Union dominant in many respects. In 1946, the Soviet Union achieved a key position in several strategic sectors of the Hungarian economy. The Soviet Union became one of the strongest internal and external actors in the Hungarian economy at the same time.

The Hungarian preparation of the peace took place within unfavourable circumstances, both with the respect to the home and foreign policy. The demands stated by certain parties and persons for border alterations based on ethnic grounds divided the Hungarian home political life, on the one hand, and burdened the relationships to the neighbour states, on the other. Nobody had any doubt that against the Soviet Union, Hungary would be unable to have the ethnically based borderlines realised at the peace talks.

On 10 February 1947, Hungary finally signed a “usual” peace treaty of the defeated states in Paris, which further decreased the territory of Hungary with the Pozsony (now Bratislava) bridgehead. The peace treaty complied with the needs of the great powers and satisfied most of the demands of the

neighbouring states. For securing the tasks connected to the occupation of Austria, the Soviet Union could station troops in Hungary.

The Truman doctrine announced in March 1947 on the enclosure of the Soviet Union and the stopping of world communism, opposite to its intentions, accelerated the formation of the Hungarian dependence on the Soviet Union. The occasional uncertainties of the Soviet concepts about the status of Hungary were replaced by efforts aiming at the achievement of a clear alignment.

During the debate on foreign policy in the Parliament in March 1947, the Hungarian political parties turned out to be basically divided about the issue of the orientation of the foreign policy. The majority felt that the world political ambitions of the Soviet Union and the western powers were “above us” and Hungary had no real chance to influence these processes. In the new world political situation, the “bridge role”, i.e. that Hungary should be a kind of intermediary between the “East” and the “West”, was stated parallel to the need for the declaration and enactment of the “eternal neutrality” of Hungary, while the left-wing parties wanted to deepen the relationship to the Soviet Union.

At the announcement of the Marshal Plan in June 1947, Hungary was not in a situation either from home or foreign political aspects to accept the American assistance. Behind the decision, the integration of the foreign political efforts and the economic connections could be seen as clearly as never before.

In the autumn of 1947, the theory of the two world systems was stated in the Soviet Union (Zdanew-doctrine), which modelled the division of the world in all respects. Zdanew defined the USA as the lead power of the “imperialist camp”, while as the leader of the “socialist peace camp”, the Soviet Union. In Zdanew’s view, in this situation of the world politics, each state had to choose which camp to join. For Hungary, the possibilities of the “choice” were limited by the Soviet occupation.

With signing the friendship, collaboration and mutual assistance pact with Yugoslavia (December 1947), the all-embracing settlement of the relationships to the neighbouring countries started. The Hungarian–Yugoslav

connections were the fastest developing among the neighbouring countries of Hungary, in fact, it was felt by many sometimes that the Yugoslav connections were a kind of alternative against the Soviet Union.

The friendship, collaboration and mutual assistance pact made with Romania (January 1948) and the Soviet Union (February 1948) settled the “orientation debate” in the field of foreign policy. Hungary had made contracts with its dominant neighbours, which contained clear spatial and social alignments.

By the summer of 1948, the internal political struggle had come to an end. The left-wing parties, especially the Hungarian Communist Party, enjoying the support of the Soviet Union, received key positions in all respects, and the later created Hungarian Workers’ Party had essentially a monopoly of power, by which it determined the further development of the country.

From the summer of 1948, the connection between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia gradually became tense, which was immediately reflected, almost as a mirror image, by the deterioration the Hungarian–Yugoslav bilateral connections. It became evident that the Soviet Union dominated the foreign policy of the allied smaller states and defined their sphere of action. Along the Hungarian–Yugoslav border, a war psychosis could be felt for years, with a large number of minor border incidents.

7. In the alliance system of the Soviet Union, 1949-1991

The whole of this period of time, its essential processes and turning points were determined by the relationship between the USA and the Soviet Union. In this divided situation of the world power and the competition of the super powers, Hungary was only in the foreground during the revolution of 1956. The “harmonised foreign policy” of the socialist countries always articulated primarily the purposes and interests of the Soviet Union, the sphere of action of the small states was strongly reduced, although it did not cease to exist. From the late 1960s, Hungary – driven by its real national interests – was a factor relieving the tension between the world systems, later it became something like an intermediary.

After the political turn in 1948, the politico-geographical position of Hungary was basically determined by the belonging to the socialist alliance system. The state borders (2 246 kms altogether) mostly connected Hungary to socialist countries (84.1%), within that, 56.9% were “alliance, military integration borders” after 1955. Only 15.9% of the length of the Hungarian state borders joined Hungary to Austria, whose border regions along Hungary had been occupied by the Soviets before the signing of the Austrian political treaty, then Austria became neutral. By the temporary values, such a politico-geographical position of the country was seen as favourable.

The politico-geographical position of most states in Central Europe was internationally determined in most aspects, but the given countries had particular and individual features, too (ENYEDI, GY. 1978). These features partly came from their different historical development, and partly from the ambitions of the current political leadership.

7.1 The building out and questioning of the socialist alliance system, 1949–1956

In the classical period of the cold war, the relationship between the two alliance systems was defined by an open opposition. Both in Europe (1949

NATO, Germany) and in the Asian region (China, Korea), the relationship between the two great powers sharpened, and their different intentions were openly revealed.

After the world political processes and the internal turn, Hungary was organically built into the power and economic structure of the Soviet Union, it became part of the “socialist camp”. It is worth noting that in 1949, it was the economic relationships that were laid down in an international treaty and organised into an international body: the COMECON was born (20. January 1949), as an organisation for the economic co-operation of the socialist countries (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Soviet Union).

The Hungarian–western (especially the Hungarian–American) connections were defined by the negative consequences deriving from the opposition of the two world systems. This was true both for the economic (political trials, expropriations) and the political connections (the closure of both Hungarian consulates by the American party).

As a result of the multilateral compromise made by the great powers, Hungary became member of the UNO in December 1955. The membership in the given period of time only meant that Hungary could fulfil its socialist alignments to the socialist camp at this forum, too. Later the membership offered a broader possibility to join the international processes.

The Soviet economic, social, institutional etc. system was copied in Hungary to almost 100%. In almost all sectors of the Hungarian economy, Soviet advisors appeared, and the security–military structures of the country were re-built after the Soviet example, led by the Soviet advisors. The Hungarian–Soviet economic connections rapidly developed, and the Hungarian economy was in almost all respects linked to the bilateral connections.

The COMECON set autarchy as an objective at the level of the organisation, as the preparation for World War III was an everyday topic. In addition, the strive for internal autarchy appeared in almost all of the small socialist states. The preparation for the war led to such structural distortions, which determined the whole period of the state socialism.

Compared to the opposition of the two world systems, in most of the period the neighbour state connections – with the exception of the Soviet Union, of course – were of secondary importance.

– Among the socialist neighbour states, Czechoslovakia was the last with whom Hungary settled the relationships. The two countries signed the friendship, collaboration and mutual assistance pact in April 1949. (The two countries had joined the COMECON before the relationship between each other was settled.) This meant that the “alliance connection” was practically void of any content in the case of the smaller states, only the relationship to the Soviet Union had significance “within the camp”.

– Romania made spectacular steps for the improvement of the situation of the Hungarian ethnic minority, thus the connection between the two countries developed better in this period (compared to the other states). The Hungarian minority was not a separating factor in the relationship between the two states yet.

– The development of the Hungarian–Yugoslav connections was astonishing in the first half of the 1950s. Along the border between the two countries, minor military conflicts were everyday affairs, and fortification works never seen before were implemented on both sides, especially in Hungary.

– The regions of Austria bordering Hungary were under Soviet occupation until 1955, but the role of the invading power in home affairs was much more limited. The control of the Austrian border was extremely strict on the Hungarian side. A system of technical object was established, which made the “iron curtain” until 1989.

The complete dependence on the Soviet Union, the sovietisation of the Hungarian society, the mass appearance of externals alien to the Hungarians, the problems of provision after the deformation of the economic structure, the omnipresence of the personality cult and the deterioration of the public feeling first appeared in the internal socio–economic–political crisis in 1953.

The signing of the Warsaw Treaty in 1955 cannot be separated from the Austrian political treaty, as the evacuation of the Soviet troops from Austria eliminated the legal grounds of their presence in Hungary, written down in

the Paris peace treaty. A new legitimacy was needed for the Hungarian stay of the Soviet troops.

The foundation of the COMECON and the signing of the Warsaw Treaty created the institutional system that determined the intra-regional processes for decades (Figure 6.). Hungary became part of the socialist camp, and within that, the Soviet Union dominated the connections of Hungary.

Although the correction of the crimes and mistakes committed during the building of the Socialism started in Hungary, it was a rather ambiguous process. From the summer of 1956 on, a significant part of the Hungarian society turned against the created structures, the former practice and the unlimited and one-sided dependence on the Soviet Union.

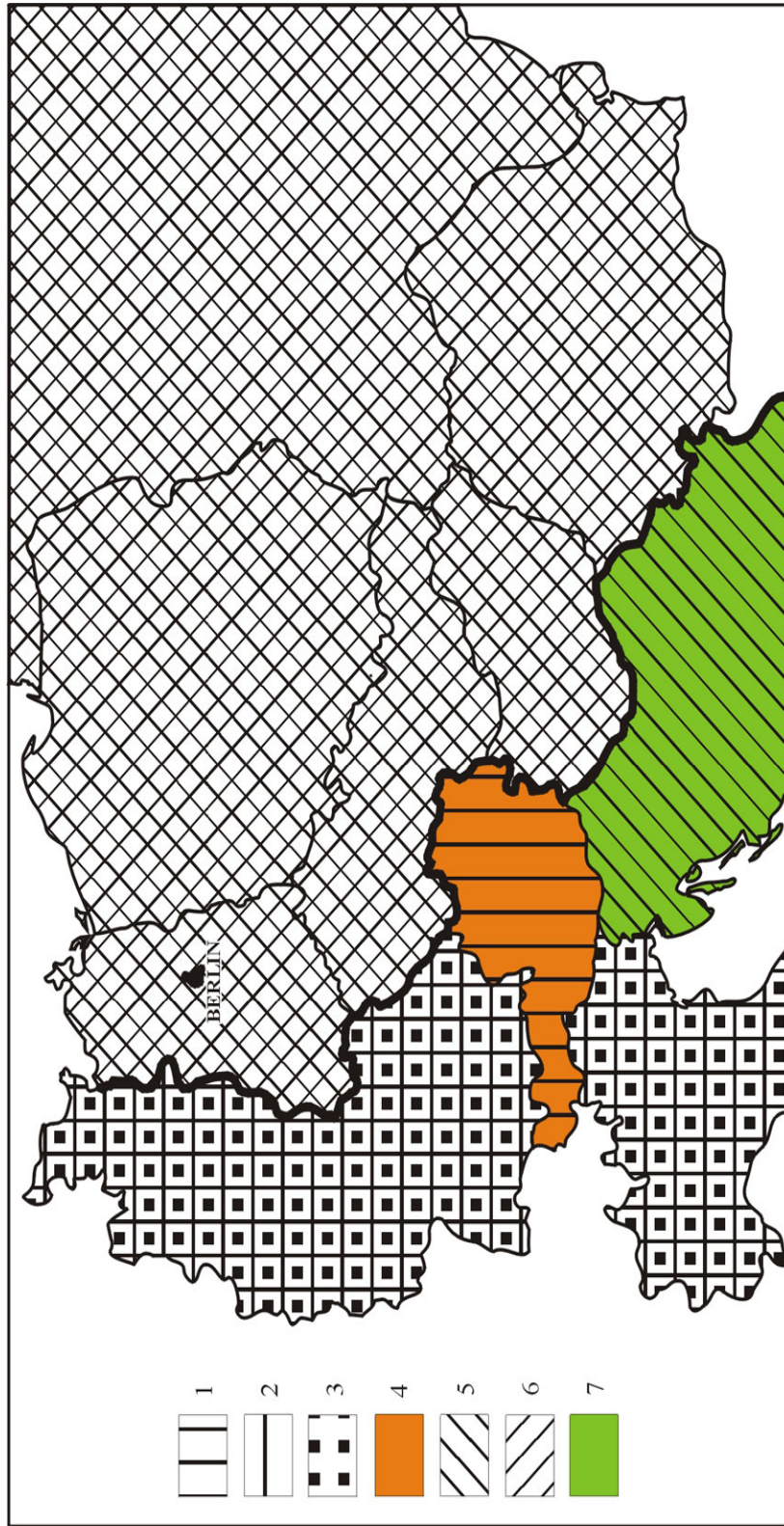
The Hungarian revolution in October 1956 carried in almost all respects the consequences of the subtle development and new interests of the Hungarian society after 1945. The major part of the Hungarian society supported the values of the revolution, at the same time, there were societal forces interested in the conservation of the status quo.

As regards the foreign political orientation of Hungary, the most important elements were the declaration of the secession from the Warsaw Treaty and of neutrality. The majority of the Hungarian society supported the new foreign political guidelines, but besides the declarations there was no power or possibility for the assertion of the decisions of the society.

The short-armed fight for independence that emerged from the revolution, the struggle of the Hungarian troops against the Soviet Union was hopeless from military aspects, but its political and moral content, and its message had a long-term effect both in space and time. The Hungarian society had to experience that the “West” remained inactive, all the support that the revolution got was nice talks, encouragement and humanitarian aids – the free world did not break “rules of the Yalta game”.

Figure 6

The divided Europe, 1955



Key: 1 – capitalist countries, 2 – NATO members, 3 – EEC members, 4 – neutral countries, 5 – socialist countries, 6 – WT members, 7 – non-allied states.

7.2 The interaction of the home and foreign policy (Hungary as the “most cheerful barrack” of the socialist camp)

The creation and maintenance of the “most cheerful barrack” image carried both foreign and home political elements and determinations. As regards home policy, it implied that the power sought a kind of compromise with the majority of the society, and as for foreign policy, it meant that after 1956 the Hungarian leadership tried to alleviate and not aggravate the international conflicts during most of the period.

After the Soviet intervention in November 1956, such a social aversion against the Soviet Union was born which determined for a long time the anti-Soviet feelings of the majority of the Hungarian society (although this could not be openly declared). At the same time, the internal political–power consolidation cannot be understood without the disappointment which was triggered by the participation of the “West” in 1956, and the negative evaluation of that.

The keeping of the “Hungarian issue” before the public eye in the UNO did not mean a real external pressure on the open and rough dictatorship in 1957-1958. The dictatorship gradually became softer after the physical and legal showdowns. This kind of consolidation of the inner system created the possibilities for the acceptance of the system signed with the name of János Kádár by the West.

From the 1960s, the formerly eliminated or frozen inter-state connections with the capitalist states of Europe (France, Great Britain) were gradually settled. After 1964, the settling and re-definition of the Hungarian–Austrian relationships accelerated.

From the mid-1960s, a kind of internal acceptance of the socialist system was basically achieved. Following the economic reform attempts of 1968, the international recognition of the processes taking place in Hungary basically changed. These Hungarian processes were seen more and more positively in the West and with more and more reservations in the “East”. The Hungarian political leadership continuously had to “make excuses” for the inner economic reforms, however, in matters of foreign policy, they stuck to the “common directives”.

The Hungarian participation in the military intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 worsened the developing bilateral connections with the Western

countries. With the support of the intervention, Hungary tried to save its own internal reforms, but in reality it did not improve the evaluation of the Hungarian reforms “within the camp”.

The Hungarian–Romanian connections were influenced by the political favour done for János Kádár (the detention of Imre Nagy and his companions in Romania). The tensions gradually emerged between the two countries. The individual politics of Romania (towards China, Czechoslovakia and the USA) influenced the relationship less than the gradual worsening of the situation of the Hungarian minority living in Transylvania. The turns of the Romanian home policy sometimes created significant tensions in the connection between the two states.

Within the relationships to the neighbours, the Hungarian–Austrian connections became more and more specific. Both parties were able and wanted to demonstrate the political advantages of the policy of peaceful co-existence of the different socio-economic systems. The improvement of the connections were also helped by the fact that Hungary gradually became a small socialist state with the most acceptable internal circumstances.

When the Soviet–American connections grew colder, Hungary obtained a kind of intermediary role in the East–West relationships. Hungary had a vested interest in the easing of the tensions and the process of the extension and deepening of the European security and co-operation. The economic, financial and political connections of Hungary gradually opened up towards the western countries.

In 1973, the Hungarian Prime Minister made an official visit to the USA, which was meant to demonstrate that, the settlement of the Hungarian–American relationships started after 1956. (One prerequisite for this was the release of József Mindszenty, archbishop of Esztergom.) The Hungarian–American connections were settled in almost all respects with the return of the Holy Crown in 1978 and the closing of the debates connected to the right of property. The ups and downs of the Soviet–American connection had a negative effect on the Hungarian–American connections, too, but these were no more “mirror translations” of the former.

The relationship with the socialist countries was particularly demonstrated by the “socialist passport” introduced in 1972. The red passport was valid for five years, but only with a separate, special permission to Yugoslavia (by Hungarian will) and the Soviet Union (by Soviet consideration). The introduction of the passport meant for the majority of the Hungarian citizens that a part of the socialist camp opened up for them. (Before 1972, the possibilities of individual travels to the socialist countries were rather limited. In the socialist “camp”, it was an alliance based on inter-state connections and not on the ones between the societies.)

Induced by the energy crisis of 1973, a Yugoslav–Hungarian–Czechoslovakian agreement was made in 1974 on the construction and joint use of the Adriatic petroleum pipeline. In the given situation, the construction of the pipeline was mostly an economic measure, but it also suggested the possibility of the decrease of the dependence on the Soviet energy in the future.

The process of easing and the strives for the collective security of Europe were compatible with the Hungarian interest in all respects. The acceptance of the Helsinki Proclamation created favourable possibilities for the expansion of the sphere of action of Hungarian foreign policy. (It is interesting that the Helsinki agreement further aggravated the inter-state and inter-party connections with Romania. The Romanian leadership – probably because of the worsening inner economic difficulties – consciously misunderstood and misinterpreted János Kádár’s speech held at Helsinki.)

The intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1979 made it even clearer – although it could not be a secret for the leaders of the smaller socialist states before, either – that the leaders of the Soviet Union acted primarily in accordance with their own geopolitical purposes and values, and paid but little attention to the short and longer term interests of its own allies. The bilateral worsening of the Soviet–American relationship and its negative economic effects were mostly suffered by the smaller socialist countries.

Within the alliance system, Hungary was tied to the Soviet Union by a thousand links. These links started to develop in different ways in different

fields in the 1980s. There were minor disturbances in the political co-operation every now and then, debates already occurred in the economic relationships, mostly triggered by a stronger defence of the national interest of Hungary; at the same time, the firm military connections were almost considered as a taboo.

The role of the Soviet Union was dominant even in the political connections within the socialist alliance system, also, the Soviet Union dominated the relationship of the individual states to it. In the Hungarian–Soviet political connections there were no sharp conflicts which appeared to the public, only minor tensions and frictions occurred occasionally. These tensions were partly in connection with the different evaluations of the Hungarian economic reform steps and partly with the Hungarian demands for the increase of the supply of oil.

The Hungarian state and party leadership did not criticise publicly the political practice of the Soviet Union, but there were quite a few hard negotiations between Leonid Bresnev and János Kádár. After 1985, with the election of Mikhail Gorbachew as secretary-general of the party, the former Hungarian reforms were more positively evaluated, however, there were reservations on the Hungarian side concerning the reforms of Gorbachew.

The relationship of Hungary to the neighbouring socialist states was not free from conflicts in the 1980s, in fact, the relationship was rather tense with Romania, mostly because of the rapidly worsening situation of the Hungarian minority. In the case of the connections to Czechoslovakia, it had ups and downs, primarily because of the debates about the construction of the Danubian river barrage system and the development of the situation of the Hungarian minority.

In the Hungarian–Yugoslavia connections – compared to the previous decades – a relative consolidation was dominant. Yugoslavia was engaged with solving its inner problems, struggling with the difficulties and contradictions of the transition in the post-Tito era.

The Hungarian economy organically integrated into the division of labour of the COMECON, and especially of the Soviet Union. The socialist economic “commitment” gradually decreased, partly by the assertion of the

national interests and partly the gradual joining to the western world economy.

The basic structure of the Hungarian foreign trade in 1985, measured with the total value of the turnover, was the following: the proportion of the socialist countries, within that the COMECON countries, was dominant both in import (54.4%) and export (58.6%); the share of the developed capitalist countries was significant: 38.5% and 30.8%, respectively; the third world countries only accounted for 7.1% of the Hungarian import and 10.6% of the export.

The most important foreign trade partner of Hungary was the Soviet Union, with a 30% share from import and 33.6% from export. This weight of the Soviet Union in the Hungarian foreign trade was based on both economic and political–ideological grounds. Hungary’s second most important foreign trade partner was the Federal Republic of Germany, with an 11.4% share from import and 7.8% from export.

In the second half of the 1980s, the development of the cross-border connections appeared as a new element along the western and southwestern borders of Hungary. The counties along the western borders of Hungary gradually joined in the activity of the Alpine–Adriatic Working Community (first as observers, then as members). It is worth noting especially when we consider that Hungary was unable to develop cross-border connections with its socialist allies. Across the Hungarian–Soviet border, apart from the huge material flows of the foreign trade, there were no regional and social connections. On the Soviet side of the Hungarian–Soviet border, a kind of “socialist iron curtain” existed during the whole period.

In 1989, the “non-rouble account” turnover was already dominant in the Hungarian import (61.6%), parallel to the sharp decline of the rouble-account turnover (38.4%). In export, a similar “account rearrangement” took place, 62.2% of the total export was already non-rouble account. (Among the socialist states, the non-rouble account trade increased, although rouble account was still prevalent this year. The non-rouble account import from the Soviet Union amounted to 34 million USD, that of the Hungarian export 239 million USD. As the secretary-general of the Hungarian Socialist

Workers' Party, Károly Grósz almost demanded the shift to the complete dollar-account trade and the overall use of the world market prices.)

Looking at the breakdown of the import by countries, the COMECON countries amounted to 36.9% in 1989, EEC countries to 29% and the EFTA countries to 13.8%, leaving little for the rest of the world (17.6%). The breakdown of the export by countries was slightly different (COMECON: 41.8%, EEC: 24.8%, EFTA: 10.7%, rest: 22.7%). In the rouble-account trade, the proportion of the Soviet Union was still prevalent in 1989. By territorial structure, the Hungarian foreign trade was mostly neighbour-oriented –especially because of the Soviet Union – and thus naturally Europe-oriented.

As regards military structures, Hungary was fully integrated into the organisation of the Warsaw Treaty, in reality the military doctrine of the Soviet Union, and thus was subordinate to the Soviet Union. The Hungarian army was dependent upon the Soviet Union in all respects (technical supply, plan of operations etc.).

The military political situation of Hungary was basically determined by its place in the regional structure and “enemy image” of the Warsaw Treaty, and by the Soviet geo-strategy. Within the alliance system, Hungary was considered as a southwestern European state by its strategic position. At the same time, from this aspect Hungary was not in the main front of the opposition between the two world systems, it was a “battlefield of secondary importance”. (When the Russian troops left Hungary, they turned out to have accumulated such an amount of war technique, which showed that they had prepared for significant actions.)

The stationing of the Southern Soviet Army in Hungary did not only mean an external oppression but also an internal one in some cases. The regional distribution of the Soviet military objects (Figure 7.) clearly indicates that they prepared for an attack towards the West on the one hand (external application), on the other hand, the allocation of the Soviet ring around Budapest was very important (potential application for internal oppression).

The Hungarian army was bigger in the number of troops but weaker in gun power than the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary. The weakness and

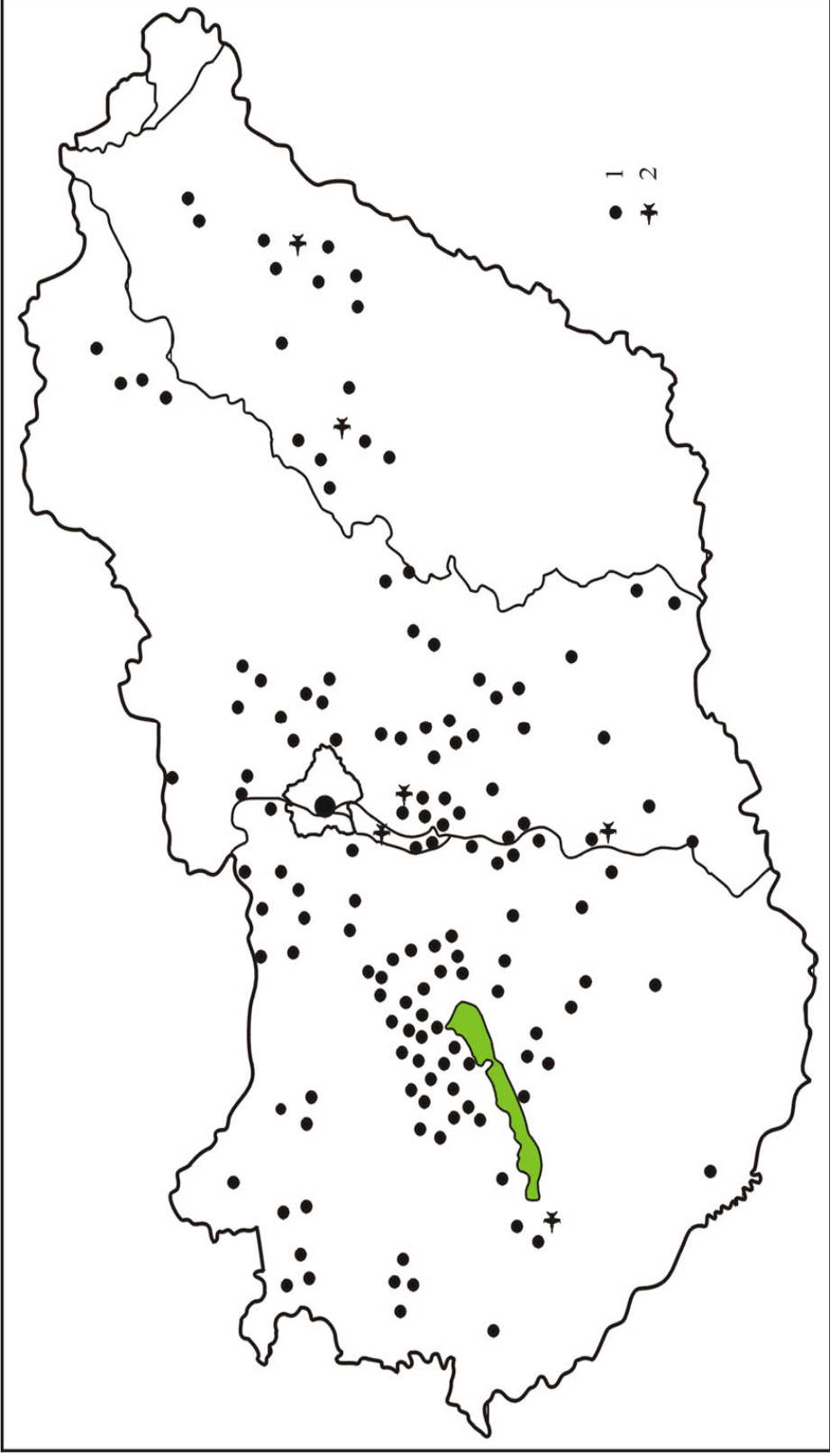
outdated technical level of the Hungarian air force was especially striking compared to the Soviet air force stationed here. This structure indicates the potential helplessness of the country and the Hungarian army.

The military connections remained stable until the moment of the systemic change. In January 1988, the “Friendship 88” military exercises were organised, with the participation of Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Soviet divisions. In accordance with the new European political, safety and military policy agreements, western observers were watching the manoeuvres all the time. In October 1988, the Military Council of the Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty Member States was seated in Budapest, and they looked at the possible consequences of the decrease in the military force. Following the counselling session – with the participation of western observers again – Hungarian–Soviet military exercises were done.

In December 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev announced at the general assembly of the UNO the start of the decrease of the number of troops in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In November 1989, the ministers of defence of the Warsaw Treaty only negotiated in Budapest about the “creation of adequate protection”. From this time on, there was a possibility for transforming the Warsaw Treaty into a real defence organisation.

Figure 7

The allocation of the Soviet military bases in Hungary, 1989



Key: 1 – settlements with military bases, 2 – airports with concrete runways.

In January 1990, as part of the actions designed to strengthen trust in Europe, the Hungarian–Canadian “Open Sky” military exercises “opened up the Hungarian air-space” for the pilots of a NATO country.

Hungary, within its limited possibilities, played a pioneer role in the building of the East-West connections. Because of its geographical position and basic economic difficulties, Hungary had a vested interest in the improvement of the East-West connections. In the period of the tensions between the super powers, Hungary consciously tried to ease and not aggravate these tensions. The Hungarian foreign policy was recognised for its consistent conflict-solving behaviour.

Hungary was the first among the socialist countries to realise the importance of the European Economic Community, except for the German Democratic Republic, which was in a specific situation because of the inner trade of the two Germanies. Hungary already negotiated – at professional level – with the EEC about the improvement of the conditions of trade as soon as in 1982. The enlarging EEC became more and more important in the Hungarian foreign trade. Hungary had a vested interest in the development of the bilateral connections.

The neighbourhood connections showed a particular situation in the last years of the socialism, if we look at them from the side of the “statistical permeability of the border”. Looking at the average length of state border per one road or railway border station, we can see that from this aspect – after 1988, in almost all respects –, the Austrian border was the most permeable, while the Soviet border the least so. With the introduction of the world passport in 1988, masses of Hungarians went to Austria for shopping purposes, but Hungary could not neglect the safety expectations of the “socialist camp”, e.g. the “iron curtain” constructed on the border could only be broken down at the end of the historical period. The two governments made an agreement in February 1989 on the elimination of the sealing of the border, and the technical sealing was broken down within a few weeks after that.

In summary, both internal and external processes and determinations contributed to the creation of the “most cheerful barrack” situation. The

dominant content of this category were the relatively high living standards compared to the other socialist states, the regulated but at the same time predictable freedom of movement for a major part of the society, and the safety of public provision.

The external conditions for the birth of the “most cheerful barrack” were to a large extent provided by the improvement of the relationship between the two super powers and world systems. The Hungarian political leadership – for their own and Hungary’s interests – always followed a foreign political direction easing the tensions both during the times of friendship and hostility.

c) From the economic crisis through the social crisis to the political systemic change

The aggravating difficulties of the Hungarian economy were to a large extent the consequences of the negative effects of the change of paradigm in the world economy and the deficiencies of adaptability. The Hungarian economy reacted late and at the cost of huge economic losses to the vast re-arrangement processes in the world.

By the late 1970s, the possibilities for the economic growth became rather limited. Parallel to the increase of the amount of foreign debts, the economic–financial connections of Hungary to the West partially changed, a financial dependence gradually appeared. Hungary’s application for the membership of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in November 1981 should be considered as the recognition of the economic hardships and not as the first sign of a new political orientation. From this time on, the economic situation and solvency of Hungary received a wider home and international publicity.

The introduction of the emergency situation in Poland and the discussion of its consequences gave a new momentum to the Hungarian intellectuals to assess the situation, and the need of the so-called “Finlandisation” was gradually stated. Although they had no real chance for a broader analysis of

the topic, the need for the loosening of the Hungarian–Soviet connections received more and more attention outside the official circles.

The evident presence of the economic difficulties disintegrated the net of the internal compromises that had been achieved and seemed as a kind of national consensus. Before 1985, within the frameworks of the openly not (yet) questionable single-party system, the statements of the political leadership were considered as the only assessments of and influences on the situation of Hungary. (From the underground existence, many things could already be questioned at that time, as the first volume of the newspaper called “Beszélő” [“Parlour”] was published in October 1982.)

At the new-system elections held in 1985, 25 representatives who got into the Parliament were not nominated by the Patriotic People’s Front. Among the MP-s, 77% were still members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, but the elections created the personality conditions for the appearance of a more critical group (which could not be called an opposition at that time, however).

The voluntaristic attempt made at the acceleration of the economic growth, given the outdated economic structure, drove Hungary to the brink of insolvency by 1988: the amount of foreign debts reached 18 billion USD. The stock of debts turned into a self-inducing process of indebtedness.

With the discussion in Monor in 1985, the quasi-public organisation of the forces of opposition started. The versatility of the programmes and efforts was given from the very first moments of the start. After 1985 – parallel to the deepening of the economic crisis and the gradual extension of political publicity – the process of the reconsideration of the national affairs (first the river barrage system on the Danube), and their assessment quite different from the official standpoints started, as well as the public confrontation of the different opinions.

After 1986, on constitutional grounds, the establishment of different alternative associations and organisations started. Some of these organisations still accepted the political umbrella offered by the Patriotic People’s Front (e.g. the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre Friendly Society), but in the draft of the

programme declaration, radically new claims were stated concerning the international situation of Hungary:

- back to Europe (the Hungarian nation, as a sovereign state should be able to freely join again the political, moral and economic community of the European peoples and states, and the European culture);

- Central European integration (the nations in Central Europe, on the grounds of mutual benefits, without any external intervention, should make an economic and political alliance to allow the democratic solution of any ethnic minority issue);

- a single Hungarian nation (all the Hungarians – 16 million of them – should be part of a single Hungarian nation. The Hungarian government has to represent the minorities at the international forums);

- an independent Hungary (Hungary, on the ground of the present national interests, should reconsider the system of its international connections created during the Stalinist era).

The social organisations gradually widened, movements (Hungarian Democratic Forum) and federations (Federation of the Young Democrats, Alliance of the Free Democrats) appeared, which were not called parties but were parties in reality. These political formations also dealt with the foreign policy orientation of Hungary, without any prior commitments.

The Hungarian refugees fleeing from Romania, the ethnic minority policy and the so-called settlement systematisation programme in Romania evoked demonstrations which did not only question the “alliance” of the two countries but gradually started to carry the critique of the Hungarian political system, as well.

The party conference held in 1988, with the removal of János Kádár, brought fundamental personality changes in the leadership of the HSWP, but in most of the issues no consensus could be achieved within the party. The labelling of the tragedy of 1956 as popular rising by Imre Pozsgay questioned the legitimacy of not only the party but also of those persons who were active participants in breaking down the popular rising. In fact, there were not only historical but also hard power and personal debates concerning the issue of 1956, not only in the society but also within the party.

The leading organs of the HSWP approved of the introduction of the multi-party system in February 1989. From this time on, the building out of the politically achieved, legally legitimised, real multi-party system accelerated.

One of the most essential issues of the political party programmes and declarations published in 1989 was the reconsideration of the alliance connections of Hungary, as well as the assessment of the possibilities and constraints. Each significant force had to confront with the issue of the Warsaw Treaty and the COMECON. In real political approach, most parties considered the reform of these organisations as a minimum purpose, and the “approved” secession of Hungary as a maximum one. In most political declarations, the support of the neutrality of Hungary was present. Several parties stated the need for the simultaneous elimination of the NATO and the Warsaw Treaty, and the creation of a collective European security system.

In June 1989, the National Round Table talks started about the present and future of Hungary. The stake was the peaceful, compromise-based transformation. The main focuses of the negotiations were home political issues, but there were debates on the orientation of the Hungarian foreign policy, too.

The Hungarian government, by “letting go” the refugees of the GDR in September, clearly broke with the former political practice of the socialist states. The “mass opening of the iron curtain” had an international effect and affected the internal circumstances of the GDR.

At the 16th congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, organised in 6-10 October 1989, the HSWP dissolved itself without a legal successor, and the Hungarian Socialist Party was founded. The dissolution of the former state party created a new situation for everybody. The HSP was forced into a political competition in the new situation, carrying the burden of the political past of its leaders.

The democratic transitions taking place in the neighbouring socialist countries questioned the very essence of the former economic, political and military structures, and the unity of the “socialist camp”.

In the sphere of action of the Hungarian foreign policy, a new element was the possibility to deepen the inter-state co-operations with Yugoslavia, Italy and Austria. The neutral Austria, the non-committed Yugoslavia, the NATO member Italy and Hungary belonging to the Warsaw Treaty conducted consultations at high level about the tighter economic and political collaboration of the countries in the region. In addition to this initiative, it is worth noting that the government handed in Hungary's application to join the Council of Europe.

In March 1990, the Hungarian and the Soviet governments made an agreement upon the complete evacuation of the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary. After the signing of the agreement, the evacuation of the troops started almost immediately. The start of the evacuation also carried a home political message, namely that the Hungarian Socialist Party was able to restore the national sovereignty and the foreign political representation of the independent country.

In the election campaign of 1990, a cardinal issue was the orientation of the Hungarian foreign policy and the issue of Hungary's neutrality. Looking at the detailed opinions of the different parties about the foreign policy and the alliance policy, we can see that there was a broad agreement among the parties in the following issues:

- the Hungarian sovereignty has to be restored;
- Hungary has to return to Europe.

In April, the heads of state and prime ministers of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary negotiated about the extension of the co-operation among the transforming democracies. In reality, this was when the process of the construction of the "Visegrád Group" started. The basic issue was the harmonisation of the common participation of the Warsaw Treaty's more developed, western countries, more advanced in the democratic transformation, with the potential leadership of Poland.

In the last decade of the state socialism, the economic and political crisis, and the systemic crisis were connected to each other and became a self-inducing process. The previous internal social consensus and legitimacy

ceased to exist, and the rearrangements in the world policy amplified the processes of the search for a new orientation.

8. Hungary in the “grey zone” (Out of the Warsaw Treaty and the COMECON – but where?)

The changes of the economic, social, political and power structure of Hungary were parallel to the global transformation of the former world system. The European structures significantly changed and the former alliance system ceased to exist. The shaping “grey zone” brought a new sphere of action, a kind of liberty, new responsibilities and challenges, and also fears for Hungary.

At the multi-party parliamentary election of 1990, the Hungarian Democratic Forum won (with 156 mandates out of the 376), but they did not achieve an absolute majority. After the foundation of the new Parliament – before the new government entering into office – the revision of the relationship between Hungary and the Warsaw Treaty, and the necessity of the settling of the situation were almost immediately put in the schedule. The Parliament rejected the possibility of the unilateral secession and asked the new government to start negotiations on the secession.

The Hungarian Democratic Forum was only able to found a government with its coalition partners (Independent Smallholders Party and the Christian Democratic People’s Party). The foreign policy part of the government programme was real political one inasmuch as the new government declared that it respected the previous international contracts, at the same time, it set new objectives according to the new political situation, giving priority to the efforts aiming at the European integration.

The co-operation of the countries in the Adriatic–Danubian region was given a new emphasis after the Hungarian elections (Pentagonale). The “inter-block” formation played an important role in maintaining the stability in the region; it showed a direct political support for the democratic transformation by the West.

The Hungarian Parliament made a very important declaration both from home and foreign political aspect on 31. May 1990, the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty. The Parliament stated that it con-

sidered the state borders of Hungary as realistic, and it wished to shape the neighbourhood connection of the country on this ground.

Hungary joined the EFTA (June 1990), took up the diplomatic relations with the NATO (July 1990), the European Economic Community opened its embassy in Budapest (November 1990). The creation of the diplomatic relations between the NATO, the EEC and Hungary, still a member of the COMECON and the Warsaw Treaty, was a recognition and a kind of support of the foreign policy of the new Hungarian government.

In September 1990, the Hungarian government contributed to the GDR's secession from the Warsaw Treaty. As a consequence of the creation of the German unity, this measure was logical in all respects, at the same time it reinforced the basis of the legal perception of Hungary, i.e. the possibility of secession from the treaty. In October, the Hungarian government reinforced its wish to secede from the military organisation of the Warsaw Treaty until the end of 1991. (Thus the need to secede completely from the organisation was not mentioned yet at that time.)

In January 1991, Hungary participated with ambulance units in the action called "Desert Storm" against Iraq, which aimed at the elimination of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. The action took place under the auspices of the UNO, but in effect using the military power of the USA. Hungary demonstrated its new international sphere of action and also its commitment to the western values.

The new government paid a greater attention than ever before to improving the situation of the Hungarian ethnic minorities living beyond the borders of Hungary. The statement of the Prime Minister, József Antall, that he wished to be "the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians in spirit", signed the start of the elaboration of a new national policy, and the foreign policy became an executive of this policy. The neighbourhood policy to a large extent was identical with issue of the Hungarian minorities, especially in Romania.

The Hungarian relationships towards the EEC and the NATO gradually strengthened. It was not a "double-dealing" policy but the quest for the opportunities in an extremely complicated international and internal situation.

The USA and Western Europe themselves were not prepared for such developments, such rapid transitions in the East. The approach to Europe was indicated by the fact that Hungary became a full-power member of the Council of Europe.

In the neighbourhood policy, the Hungarian–Czechoslovakian relationship was still affected by the issue of the hydroelectric station at Bős, in fact, the disagreements were deepened by the Czechoslovakian announcement in January 1991 of continuing the constructions in their own territory. The result of these works was the diversion of the Danube River. (The case was taken to the International Court at the Hague, but the decision of the court in itself did not solve the tensions of the different objectives and types of actions of the two countries.)

In February 1991, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary signed a co-operation agreement. The co-operation of the Visegrád countries was an attempt to fill out a political–power vacuum, but Poland was too weak in all respects to become a recognized, leading factor in the region.

At the special meeting of the Political Consultative Body of the Warsaw Treaty in Budapest on 25. February, the previous military contracts were considered as null and void, in addition, it was stated that the military organisation of the Warsaw Treaty would cease to exist as of 31. March 1991. On 19. June, the last Soviet soldier left the territory Hungary.

On 28. June 1991, Hungary approved of the elimination of the COMECON, and this way its economic relationships not only to the ex member states but also to all regions changed. A few days after that, a decision was made on the complete elimination of the Warsaw Treaty, and not only its military institutional system. On 1. July 1991, Hungary became a free country in all respects, outside any block, outside any economic integration, and without the presence of any foreign troops.

The tension in the Yugoslav region, which gradually turned to a civil war after August 1991, had a negative effect on the relationship between Hungary and Yugoslavia. The debates were especially sharp about the shipment of arms from Hungary to Croatia, later the armed violations of the frontier by Yugoslavia.

Parallel to the transformation of the neighbourhood environment, in November 1991 Hungary signed the association treaty with the EEC. The signing of this association treaty was of vital importance for the collaboration between Hungary and the EEC, as Hungary now had a contractual relationship with the EEC, which, although does not lead to the actual membership, can be considered as the first step in the process of the accession.

The attempted coup in the Soviet Union in August 1991, then the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December of the same year created a fundamentally new situation for Hungary. With the birth of the independent Ukraine and the new Russia, and the establishment of the CIS, new state structures, new power relations and a new system of interests were created along the northeastern borders of Hungary and in the wider eastern region.

The new stresses in the neighbourhood policy are indicated by the fact that Hungary was among the first ones to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia on 15. January 1992, and established the diplomatic relations with the new neighbours. Hungary stressed its neutrality in the Yugoslav crisis (especially because of the Hungarian population of the Vajdaság/Voivodina area), but actually it sympathised with the Croatian and Slovenian efforts, and supported them as far as it was possible.

The Hungarian–Sereb relations were not only burdened by these measures of Hungary, but also the fact that Hungary joined the punitive sanctions initiated by the international community. During the control of the sanctions, new relations were created between Hungary and the Western European integrational organisations. (Hungary suffered a great financial loss, but politically gained a lot with the keeping of these sanctions. However, the real winners were the Hungarian and Yugoslav smugglers living in the border region.)

The Hungarian government wanted to settle its relations to its neighbours, the successor states of the Soviet Union, and its most important partners. The first document of this type was the treaty between Hungary and Germany, signed in February 1992. This was followed by the Hungarian–Lithuanian, the Hungarian–Croatian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian treaties. (This latter was questioned by many, which led to an internal crisis of

the coalition, and the government was only able to have it passed by a few votes from the opposition.)

With the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in January 1993, a new state and a new situation emerged along the northern borders of Hungary, too. The proportion of the Hungarian minority increased within the new borders of Slovakia, which did not solve but in many aspects complicated the relationship between the two countries.

In summary, the neighbourhood environment of Hungary was fundamentally rearranged in the early 1990s (see Figure 8. and Table 3.). The positions of Hungary definitely strengthened compared to the new successor states. The majority of the Hungarian society and the political elite showed a great self-control in connection with the transition processes going on in the neighbouring states, and this self-control was typical of the major part of the Hungarian minority living in the neighbouring countries, as well. Hungary and the Hungarian populations were seen as a factor in the stability of the region.

The free trade association made between the neighbouring states (CEFTA) meant both the appearance of new chances and forms of cooperation and – especially as concerns the export of agricultural products – the open conflict and awkward management of the different interests. Still, the CEFTA plays a positive role within the connections of the ex-socialist countries, because it gives an opportunity for the experience and handling of some expected consequences of the EU integration.

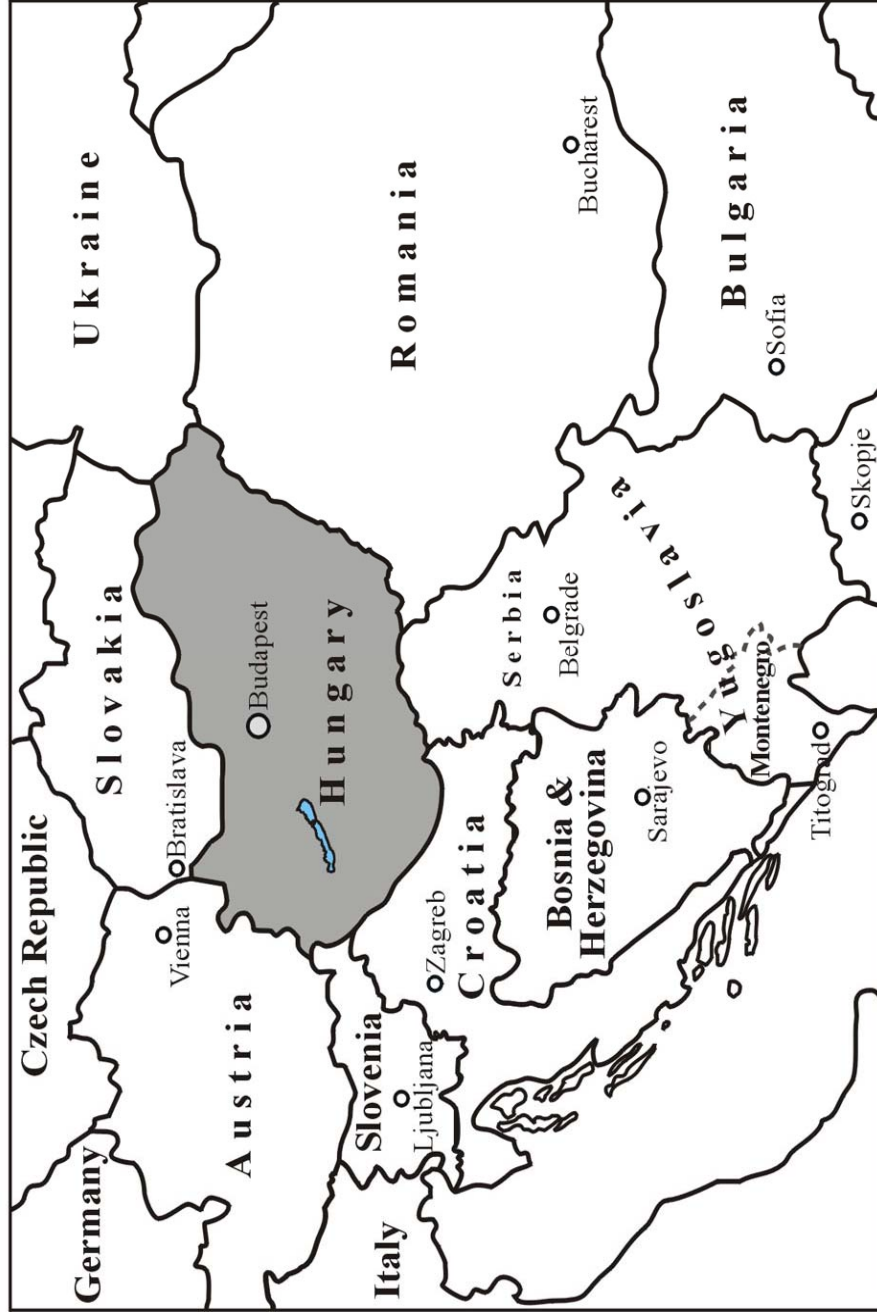
Table 3

Hungary and neighbouring countries, 1993

Country	Territory (km ²)	Population (million)	GDP/capita (USD)	Ratio of state nation	Number of Hungarians (thousand)
Hungary	93030	10.3	3300	92%	10,222
Austria	83859	7.9	23120	93%	16,000
Croatia	56538	4.8	2020	75%	26,000
Romania	237500	22.8	1120	89%	1,598
Slovakia	49036	5.4	1900	86%	567,000
Slovenia	20253	2.0	6310	88%	10,000
Ukraine	603700	52.1	1350	73%	155,000
Yugoslavia	248987	10.7	900	62%	385,000

Figure 8

The new neighbour states of Hungary, 1993



9. At the door of the NATO, in the waiting room of the European Union

The new socialist–liberal parliamentary majority after the elections of 1994 was a large-scale continuity as regards the foreign policy orientation of Hungary, it was only the neighbourhood relations where something changed – which is not to say that new efforts were pursued, maybe the attitude changed slightly. The Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Slovak treaties made by the new coalition served both the settling of the bilateral connections and the Hungarian efforts to become a NATO and a European Union member state. The new socialist–liberal coalition continued, in fact, it accelerated the preparation for both the NATO and the EU accession.

9.1 At the door of the NATO

Within the new global and continental circumstances, the issue of the enlargement of the NATO naturally raised and still raises the question of the security of Ukraine and Russia. The programme called “Partnership for Peace” was a kind of need for the strengthening of the trust in January 1994. As the Treaty wanted to prove that it did not consider as enemies the two, militarily most powerful successor states of the Soviet Union, it had to integrate them in some way within the frameworks of the common security system. The special contractual relationship made with the two countries gave a kind of minimum guarantee for the two Soviet successor states.

Among the small ex-socialist countries, a sort of natural competition started for getting in the first round of the NATO enlargement. The membership was mostly an external guarantee of the security, on the other hand, a high-level recognition of the internal democratisation for those who were striving for the accession.

The decision of the NATO in July 1997 on the invitation of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary was basically the sign of the inner compromise of the member states, also, the recognition to some extent of the democratic development that had taken place in these three countries.

The NATO membership of Hungary, after the successful referendum and the completion of the ratification procedure by the member states, was achieved in March 1999. In the present political and military constellation, and in the complicated economic interest system, Hungary became a NATO member sooner than it is acceded to the European Union. In the beginning of the internal transformation process, the opposite situation seemed to be more possible.

Hungary is in a very special situation in the present territorial structure of the NATO, it is an "inland island", given that it has no common inland border with any of the present member states. This isolated location will not be a problem if the NATO orientation policy of Slovenia is continued, which seems to be the case, also, if a similar effort takes place by Slovakia after the elections in 1998. (The internal political debate of Austria about the advantages and disadvantages of the eternal neutrality and the NATO membership will probably last for years.)

Hungary belongs to the Southern Headquarters of the NATO – which increases the importance of Slovenia –, and this connection will probably exert its effects in other respects, too. Hungary as a NATO member is situated close to the location of the protracting Bosnian crisis, and the air-base of Tászár will be an important logistic centre in the coming period of time.

The NATO membership does not affect the sovereignty of Hungary formally (not all of the military and political consequences of the accession are automatic), but in practice, every new connection and every issue of the security policy is given a new emphasis now that Hungary is within the Treaty.

The most important interest of Hungary, beyond its own security, is that Romania and Slovakia, in addition to Slovenia, should also be integrated within the treaty in the second round. The security of the country would increase thereby, also, the major part of the Hungarian ethnic minority would

belong to one alliance system and share the same democratic political values.

9.2 In the waiting room of the European Union

The European Union reached a new era of its history by the late 1990s. It has to give an answer to the questions of the deepening of the integration, the introduction of the common currency and all its operational experiences gathered so far. All of this has to be achieved within such circumstances when new efforts of the assertion of national interests within the EU emerge.

In the Luxembourg summit of the EU held in December 1997, the circle of the countries invited for the accession negotiation was settled, and Hungary became a part of the 5+1 formation. The accession negotiations and the enlargement itself were of secondary importance compared to the implementation of the inner reform. This situation has far-reaching consequences, and not only for Hungary.

The accession negotiations with the European Union can last for a long time, and the former date in the “hypothesis of the accession works”, 2002, might be prolonged with a number of years. The chances of this are strengthened day after day by the different involvements and interests of the EU countries in the enlargement, and because of their increasing conflicts of interests.

The foreign trade relations of Hungary are already dominated by the EU, thus the accession – despite the visible and invisible risks of both parties – is urgent from this respect. However, it is also the long-term interest of Hungary to join a well-functioning EU with a clear structure and clear objectives.

With the NATO membership and hopefully the European Union membership within a foreseeable future, Hungary will definitely become part of the Euro-Atlantic integration organisations and processes. By these processes, Hungary turns from “the West of the East to the East of the West”, and not only in a topographical sense.

10 Summary

The politico-geographical and geopolitical situation of a country is determined by external (world political, continental and neighbourhood) and internal factors. The external environment in the broader sense means those general conditions within which the internally defined, legitimised purposes and interests can range. The internal legal and social legitimacy is especially important in the field of the “alliance connections”, but can also be seen in the field of the “enemy image”, too.

Until World War I, the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, as one of the traditional great powers of Europe, was part of the European power equilibrium. The relationship of the Monarchy towards the other great powers could develop in several different ways.

The alliance system of the Central Powers, including the Monarchy, was defeated in World War I. The Monarchy, as a joint effect of the war defeat and the secession efforts of its ethnic minorities, disintegrated.

Hungary restored its territorial sovereignty, but had to face the secession of the ethnic minorities of the historical Hungary and the promises of the winners made during the war. Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory and population, in a way that one-third of the Hungarian ethnic group was given to the successor states.

In the period between the two world wars, Hungary acted, more exactly struggled within the constraints of and possibilities for creating the conditions for the achievement of the socially defined and legitimised purpose, the territorial revision. Hungary had no power position, weight and possibility at all for the implementation of this objective on its own, thus it necessarily was connected to those countries which questioned the former peace treaty.

During World War II, both the real politics and the ideological barriers appeared in the foreign policy of Hungary. As regarded the Soviet Union, the ideological barrier was dominant, even when the territorial claims of

Hungary went hand in hand with those of the Soviet Union (in connection with Romania).

After the defeat in World War II, both the old and the new political forces had to accept the fact that the territory of Hungary was liberated by the Soviet Union, and the Red Army was present in the Hungarian territory. The Soviet Union dominated even the internal processes, partly through the Hungarian Communists and partly directly.

The belonging of Hungary to the socialist alliance system was mostly a connection to the leading power of the alliance, the Soviet Union, and the bilateral relationships with the other member states were of secondary importance. Both the Warsaw Treaty and the COMECON were actually single-pole organisations, despite the formal declaration of the equality of the member states. The essence of both organisations, especially that of the military one, was dominated by the situation coming from the size and world political position of the Soviet Union.

The bipolar world after World War II, the divided Europe, and the opposition of the capitalist and socialist systems and military blocks developed with ups and downs after 1975 – starting from the acceptance of the Helsinki Proclamation –, but the tendency was the decrease of the opposition.

The economic and political crisis of the socialist countries bore new dangers after the 1980s, but the conflict of the two world systems ceased to exist in reality, as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The transition period was mostly determined by the world powers and the world policy, the possibilities of Hungary to influence it was limited. In the new situation that emerged from the late 1980s, the possibilities of Hungary fundamentally changed. From 1990 on, a new situation gradually appeared around and for Hungary. The elimination of the Warsaw Treaty, the evacuation of the Soviet troops, the disintegration of the COMECON, as well as the internal socio-economic and political transformation, the elimination of the former political institutional system and the systemic change – these all offered new possibilities for Hungary to shape its internal conditions and its international relations.

During this decade, the Hungarian state socialist system, as a consequence of the external and internal transformations, was first questioned, and then it failed at the democratic, multi-party elections of 1990. This date is one of the most important turning points of this period of history, as it established the independence of Hungary, outside any military block.

Not only the world political environment of Hungary changed basically, but its European connections, and also its neighbourhood relations were essentially transformed. Hungary had already established connections towards the Western European integration organisations, and in the new situation the Hungarian political leadership and public opinion defined as a basic objective and value the accession to the transforming European Union, and started the conscious preparation for the accession process and the expected membership.

The changes taking place in the neighbourhood of Hungary can be seen in the disintegration of the former socialist federations and an increase in the number of independent neighbour states. The newly independent states (Slovakia, Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia) have less weight than their predecessor states in many respects, increasing the sphere of action of Hungary in its neighbourhood environment. The development processes of the neighbouring states were burdened by uncertainties, especially the civil wars raging in the Yugoslav region raised security challenges for Hungary, at the same time, these bloody events accelerated the convergence of Hungary and the NATO.

The accession to the Euro-Atlantic military organisation (in March 1999) basically changed the external security policy situation of Hungary. Hungary is now within the frameworks of the European stability.

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