

THE MAJOR POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE CROATIAN-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS IN THE CHANGING GEO-POLITICAL SPACE, IN THE CARPATHIAN-BALKAN REGION

GLAVNI POLITIČKI ASPEKTI HRVATSKO-MAĐARSKIH ODNOSA U PROMJENI GEOPOLITIČKOG PROSTORA KARPATSKO-BALKANSKE REGIJE

Lóránt BALI

Katedra za Poduzetničku ekonomiju

i ruralni razvoj

Fakultet Georgikon Keszthely, Mađarska

Panonsko sveučilište

balilori@freemail.hu

Primljeno / Recieved: 15. 3. 2012.

Prihvaćeno / Accepted: 20. 5. 2012.

Rad ima dvije pozitivne recenzije

Pregledni rad / Review

UDK / UDC 323.22 (497.5)

SAŽETAK

Geopolitički značaj Mađarske nakon promjene ustrojstva u znatnoj mjeri se promjenio. Slijedom toga otvorile su se nove mogućnosti u odnosima sa susjedima, na koje utjecaj položaj nakon Trianona otkinutih djelova velike Ugarske i Karpata kao čimbenika koji određuju okoliš. U toj situaciji za mađarsku vanjsku politiku postoje dvije mogućnosti. Jedna: obavezno preuzimanje odgovornosti prema otkinutim djelovima velike Ugarske, a druga: ojačanje prirodnih i već povjesno potvrđenih mogućnosti za povezivanje. Ovamo pripada smjer određen Južno-Panonskim bazenom i Alpama odnosno mogućnosti nastale zahvaljujući priključivanju Europskoj Uniji.

Key words: Carpathian-Balkan transition, Hungary in the changing geo-political space, corridors, Croatian-Hungarian political relations

Ključne riječi: Preobrazba Karpatsko-Balkanskog prostora, Mađarska u promjenljivom geopolitičkom prostoru, koridori, hrvatsko-mađarske političke veze

INTRODUCTION

The frequently changing Central European states were repeatedly forced to redefine their relations with their neighbours. Our state founder ancestors' geostrategy has had an impact on our relations with our neighbours for nearly a thousand years. The wreath of the Carpathian mountains has brought together an economic and political unity for a thousand years, which was redrawn and chopped up during Trianon. In the short twentieth century, the Hungarian foreign policy was not able to respond properly to the problems of the neighbourhood conflicts. Between the two World Wars that was prevented by the unconditional affection to the revision, and after the Second World War by the foreign policy of state socialism led by the Soviet Union. With the fall of socialism, a new chapter has begun in the life of our country and its neighbours. Our region is currently not a buffer zone between some federal systems, but can reorganize itself along unified economic and political values in the community of European states.¹ Among our neighbours, we don't have a significant, long-standing argument with Croatia, Slovenia and Austria. In addition, the Carpathian mountains will open the way for Hungarian geopolitical ambitions to the south, what we were unable to exploit successfully in the

¹ The patriotic war in Croatia caused a withdrawal for a few years.

last ninety years.² The study aims to outline these efforts and to ground them scientifically, and present the Croatian-Hungarian inter-state relations.

GEOPOLITICAL “SELF REDEFINING” AND SHIFTING OF PRIORITIES

Hungary

In the early 1990s, Hungary's international environment has changed significantly. Its dependence from the Soviet Union ceased to exist and it has become apparent that the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact is dying to survive. In all the surrounding countries the democratic transition has begun. With the decomposition of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, a major geopolitical shift in focus took place between states actively shaping the political relations of the Carpathian Basin is. In this new situation Hungary's geopolitical importance and scope has increased. If the conditions in 1990 are compared with those in 2008, we can conclude that out of the six states shaping the political relations of the Carpathian Basin the Republic of Hungary on the basis of population and territorial size was standing on the penultimate place in 1990. Today, the situation looks completely different, in the line of the 8 countries interested we got third place. (Kitanics, 2008)

The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia has dissolved between peaceful circumstances, while Yugoslavia dissolved in a bloody war. The Hungarian foreign policy has always denied having any kind of interest in generating the decomposition processes. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that on the long-term after the stabilization of the situation the decomposition of neighbouring countries will result and has already resulted in positive effects for Hungary. Its geopolitical weight has increased in the region more than before. With the democratization of the neighbouring countries the terms of advocacy for Hungarian minorities have improved significantly. In several cases they could become a government factor, such as in Romania and Slovakia.

The independent states Slovenia and Croatia has become our strategic ally besides Austria with which we don't have any significant disagreements concerning minorities or any other interstate problems. In contrast, as a consequence of Trianon the protection and the situation of native Hungarian minorities living in the Highlands³, Transcarpathia, Transylvania and Vojvodina sometimes causes considerable conflicts, even nowadays. Without having to fall into the mistake of geographical determinism, the best chance for the current Hungarian government to deepen its economic and political ties and validate its interests is with the countries not affected by the wreath of the Carpathian basin. Taking into account the morals of the past one and a half decades, Serbia is an exception. Therefore, on the medium and long-term, only Austria, Slovenia and Croatia can be considered as the only reliable strategic partners. Hence the topicality of my choice of issue (*Figure 1*).

Croatia

Since 1918, since Croatia is the part of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, then part of Yugoslavia, has been an active factor in the Carpathian-Balkan region. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was one of the main pillars holding the “Balkan balance” in the interwar period and in the subsequent period. This is demonstrated by the war acts of recent years loaded by ethnic tensions, which also influence the happenings of today (Gulyás, 2008).

² At the turn of the 19th and 20th century the idea of geographical determinism had a great influence on, which said that the natural environment's influence on the socio-economic space is almost exclusive. This natural influence may be temporarily limited, but not on a long term. The socio-economic spatial structure in the Carpathian Basin is uniform, regardless of several parts belong to which state. Processes taking place in each sub-area are in a strong interaction with other regional processes. The major representatives of the idea are Gyula Prinz, Jenő Cholnoky and Pál Teleki.

³ The Slovakian language law has given rise to a conflict that has influenced the use of mother-tongue rights of Hungarians living in the Highlands.

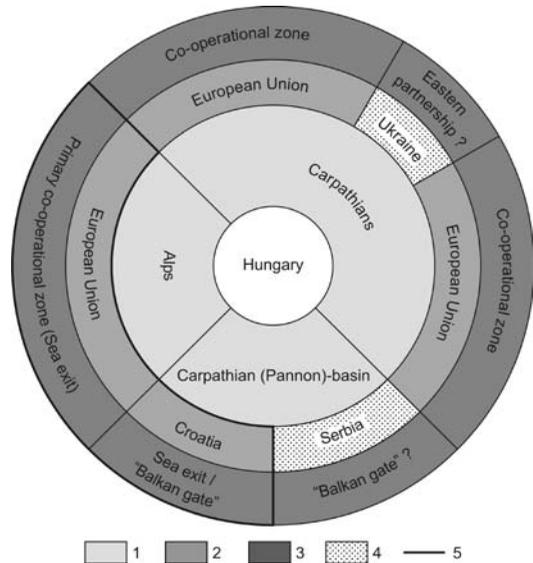


Figure 1: The geopolitical and geoeconomical environment of Hungary in 2011.

Explanation of symbols: 1. Geographical environment, 2. European Union, 3. Geopolitical and geoeconomical environment, 4. Area with the ability of limited integration, 5. Primary co-operational zone
 Edited by: Lóránt Bali, 2011

Before referring to the new elements of self-definition, it is worth outlining what geographic factors influence the country's geo-political determination. Such a country which is located at the border of Europe's four different cultural areas is very rare: "Alps area", Pannonian Basin, Mediterranean, Dinaric-Mountains "Continental Balkan". This is further complicated by the difficulties arising from the shape of the country. From a spatial point of view, it is important to examine the nature of the boundaries and what characterizes them numerically. The country's area of 56,542 km has a 2,028 km long land border. On an 1,755 km-long section of the entire stretch it has contacts with two Balkan states with the most tense situation, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and, along only 41% of its total borders it is connected to an EU-Member State (Hungary, Slovenia). (Cvrtić, 2000) We must also mention the cultural influences that affect the area. The area affected by paroslavism and the Islam where German and Italian influence is constant, which is further associated with Hungarian efforts prevailing low.

Over the past ten years, the Croatian geo-politics and its neighbourhood politics has significantly restructured. The over-rigorous interpretation of military aspects has reduced. Croatia is increasingly exploiting the fact that it is situated in the contact-zone of the above-mentioned sub-regions. It is trying to fulfill a kind of linking role between the above-mentioned four sub-regions, thereby fulfilling the expectations of the EU (Figure 1). In addition, it is consciously trying to distance himself from the Balkans, as a political concept and clearly declares himself to belong to Southeastern Europe⁴.

DOMINANT GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS DEFINING BILATERAL RELATIONS

After the regime change Hungary quickly realized that in validating our geopolitical interests Croatia can be a competent partner, as evidenced by the fact that our country was among the first states to acknowledge the independent Croatian state. In this common, positive historical experiences from the past were significant influential factors. Compensating the high-Serb intentions amplifying in the 80s and the elimination of existing Serb military superiority at the outburst of the war both became very important to the two states, thereby creating a regional security. This is closely related

⁴ I would like to call the reader's attention to the Balkans today, as the political space appears empty. Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Slovenia, as EU members are not considered »balkans«, even Croatia are not so who is at the same time approaching towards accession. Thus, only Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and considered to be clearly in geopolitical terms a Balkan country. The perception seems to be location-dependent, as several Hungarian cities want to win the name of »the gate of the Balkan«: Szeged, Pécs. Pécs, so much that as Europe's Cultural Capital in 2010 it officially gave himself this name.

to the reduction of the Russian intentions to gain position and the protection of the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina. Serbia is currently a strategic partner for Russia⁵ the most “basic state” in Europe and the Balkans. The presence of Russians has given positive charges to the Serbian nationalist forces to increase their lobbying, that is the factor strengthening instability.

Besides the macro-regional interests there was a significant demand for maintaining bilateral economic and political relations intensive. Preparations for Croatia’s EU accession was helped by our country to a large extent by transferring its experience and by the constant support of Croatian interests on international forums.

CORRIDORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION

For Hungary the Carpathian-Balkan region⁶ has priorities. The traditional cohesive spatial structure of the Carpathian Basin, and transport axes intersecting Hungary traditionally follow the east-west, northwest-southeast, northwest-southwest directions (Pap, 1999):

- a) Southwestern “Adria” Corridor
- b) Southeastern “Pontus-Levante”
- c) Southern “Suez”
- d) Southwestern “Slav”

From the point view of my topic it is worth investigating the southwestern “Adria- Corridor” and “Slav” axis and what possibilities it includes for the development of neighbourhood relationships (Figure 2).



Figure 2: »Andrew Cross«
Source: József Tóth (2008):
Spatial structure, population and settlement geography studies.
Publisher Imedias. pp.124.

In the direction to the V / B corridor has already fully developed towards Rijeka and Venice, it ensures the access to the sea for Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary. The M7 motorway has reached the border in Croatia, just like the M70 the Slovenian one. The railway development has also been significant, the first rail link of Hungary towards Slovenia has been built. In the current situation it seems not to have finally decided whether Koper or Rijeka (Fiume) should ensure access to the sea for Hungary.

As a result of the above-mentioned developments a peripheral, multicultural area at the Hungarian-Croatian-Slovenian tripartite border has been returned to the circulatory system of the socio-economic mainstream effectively in a multicultural. Peripheral features can still be found, since both the Croatian-Slovenian Medimurje and the Hungarian Pomurje have been scenes of the abstraction of

⁵ As a result of the difficult reaching of Serbia’s hopeful accession to the EU it gains little publicity.

⁶ According to the representatives of Hungarian geography and geopolitics the Carpathian-Balkan Region consists of the Northern part of the Balkan peninsula and the Carpathian Basin. The name Pannonia is usually used in a historical context, the areas west from the Danube are called so.

capital in the state socialism era, moreover, in the 1990s compared to their arrears they obtained few investments. (Bali, 2009/C)

Examining the V/C corridor, the “Slav” axis reveals a different picture. The section running from Budapest to Ploče is a primary line from the point of view of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but for Croatia and Hungary it is only secondary, but only secondary at a national level, on a mezoregional level it is still primary. For the South-Transdanubian Region, and Eastern Slavonia the full development and building of the corridor is essential. This allows the more widespread exploitation of their comparative economic advantages. On the Hungarian side a significant step forward has taken place, since the finished M/6 motorway has already reached the Croatian-Hungarian border. (Bali - Kolutáczi 2008)

THE MAJOR MOMENTS IN CROATIAN-HUNGARIAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNTIL 1998, UNTIL THE FALL OF THE HORVÁTH GOVERNMENT

When we consider the relations of the two countries, we do not have to investigate the pre-and post-Tudjman period separately. Our bilateral co-operations are not substantially influenced with European criticism of the “tuđman Croatia”. It is more worth differentiating between the period before and after 15 January, 1998. Before all that, we had to develop the bilateral relations with our neighbour struggling for territorial integrity, then we had to and still have to co-operate with our neighbour aspiring for the EU membership with whom there are more and more common opportunities to deepen regional, economic and cross-border relations.

At the beginning of the Antall government starting its mandate in 1990, no one expected Yugoslavia’s disintegration. Hungarian public opinion and policy was both affected unexpectedly by the unfolding war. Our politicians, municipal leaders in the border have found themselves in a totally unfamiliar situation. Close to our frontiers, in our neighborhood there hasn’t been warlike actions in the preceding 35 years. Besides the conduction of the internal democratic transition the newly formed Antall government also had to deal with its first significant foreign policy challenges as well. In order to protect the ethnic Hungarians in Vojvodina a careful opinion has to be represented against the Croatian and Slovenian independence. (Gulyás, 2005)

In September 1990 the Croatian government asked our country, that it wishes to buy thousands of weapons for the Zagreb police. Lajos Für Secretary of Defense and Géza Jeszenszky Minister of Foreign Affairs thought it is high time that after the tensions going back to 1848 we need to restore friendly relations with the Croatian nation that has been living in a State Union with us for almost 800 years. Our former Foreign Minister believes that this consignment is not more than just a moral support for Croatia and did not substantially contribute to the escalation of armed conflicts. Croatia’s request was approved by an inter-ministerial committee, along with other arms contracts. After the fulfillment of the first cargo Kadijević Federal Minister of Defence has announced in a sharp toned message for Hungary that the Yugoslav government has never contributed to any forms of weapon transport for Zagreb. Subsequently, the weapon business has been stopped. Until the autumn of 1991, the unfolding of armed fights our country has committed itself to maintain Yugoslavia in the form of confederation. The Hungarian government principally consisting of historians foresaw starting with the decomposition of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire that the disintegration of Yugoslavia might have serious economic and political consequences. Before the declaration of independence in Croatia and Slovenia Jozsef Antall had warned its western partners for the dangers of the emerging conflicts. His words came true, as the soldiers of the Yugoslav People’s Army launched an action against Slovenia on 27 June, 1991. The Hungarian government had to bear a heavy weight as a result of the 400 thousands Hungarians living in Yugoslavia. But we could not refuse our sympathy from the neighbouring Croatia having its right to self-determination and could not risk to face Serbia holding the Vojvodina Hungarian minority as hostages. Hungary’s interest was to avoid armed conflict, and to maintain friendly relations with Yugoslavia. Antall always urged to stop the armed clashes. He was best motivated by the fact that Serbia has not challenged the right of self-determination of the Croats, but its goal was to unify the Serbs in one state. Thus, our country in agreement with the EC, on 15 January, 1992 acknowledged the independent Croatian state. (Jeszenszky, 2003)

After the acknowledgement the Zagreb Hungarian Consulate was raised to the rank of Embassy on 18 January in the current year, and the Croatian Embassy started to operate in Budapest on 5 July. In parallel with the establishment of diplomatic relations several high-level meeting has taken place. On 13-15 April Stipe Mesic, President of the Sabor made a visit to our country. On 16 december the signing of the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between the Hungarian Republic and the Republic of Croatia has taken place that was signed by the Croatian Prime Minister Hrvroje Sarinič and the Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall by their initials. This treaty has founded the bilateral relations of Croatia and Hungary along the guidelines of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Chart adopted on 21 November, 1990. From 1992 inter-ministerial meetings has become continuous. And in November the same year a six-party Hungarian delegation visited Zagreb for the first time, and six new agreements were signed with Croatia. On 15 December the Croatian-Hungarian Intergovernmental Joint Committee on Minorities started its operation in order to prepare the agreement for the protection of minorities. From 1993 the visit has become regular at a Foreign Minister and Secretary of State level. The deepening of relations was helped by the fact that the HDZ and the Hungarian government's strongest party, the MDF had a good-tempered relationship with each other. In Jozsef Antall's foreign policy concerning Croatia ha has always followed the directives of the EC, then the EU. During the war, our country strictly adhered to the embargo on weapon transport in the region, moreover, we embraced thousands of Croatian refugees. (Bali, 2009 / A)

The new coalition was initially formed in the summer of 1994 with a more moderate foreign policy with Croatia. Our Southern neighbour did similarly in the beginning, welcomed the change of government cautiously. The visit of György Keleti, Secretary of Defense in September, István Szent-Iványi Secretary of State in October, however, dispersed the fears. In the year 1995, several important steps has been done by the two parties to further develop their relations. One was the agreement on the protection of minorities in April, 1995 signed in Osijek, which regulated the position of Croatian and Hungarian minorities living in each other's area in accordance with European standards. In October 1995, the Prime Minister of the Socialist Party-Free Democrats coalition Gyula Horn visited Zagreb, Croatia, that was the first route of the prime minister. Then in February 1996 he held a short visit to the Hungarian contingent serving in Okučani. The Hungarian Technical Contingent emigrated to Croatia on 31 January, 1996 with 416 people. The unit was responsible for assisting in post-war reconstruction. The relationships still remained without problems. (Lukács – Deák – Havasi, 2008)

In January 1999, Viktor Orban the Prime Minister of the newly-formed Fidesz-MPP-MDF-FKGP made a visit to Zagreb, and in the same year, Hungary provided a 200 million support to the reconstruction work in Drávaszög and Eastern Slavonia. After the stagnation during the war, and after the Dayton Peace Treaty regional cooperation has intensified between the two countries and twin town relationships revived. Cross-border investments aiming to improve the infrastructure has played an important role in deepening relationships. Such is the V numbered pan-European Corridor's V / B branch along the Budapest-Zagreb-Rijeka line and the joint development and use of the port of Fiume (Bali, 2009 / A).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CROATIAN-HUNGARIAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE 90S

A significant change in the system of criteria of cooperation has taken place following the outbreak of the civil war in Yugoslavia. Along the Southern border since 1991 the reception of refugees causes the main challenge. After the open Croatian-Serb conflict in the neighbourhood of the Hungarian-Croatian border acts of war has been carried out. Some areas of Croatia inhabited by Hungarians has become a Serbian territory (Baranya-triangle, Eastern Slavonia, Western Srem). The target settlement of refugees from Croatia were the border towns Mohács, Nagyharsány, Siklós, Harkány. The largest refugee camp was operating in Nagyatád (Hajdú, 1998). Along the borderline east from Barcs the contact has almost completely gone. The previously dominant forms of cooperation except for shopping-tourism have disappeared. Their place was take over by black market and gray trade. This

included all forms of illegal trade, including the weapons, currency, and smuggling. These activities were largely limited not only by the law enforcement agencies but the Drava as a border river. Almost all forms of economic co-operation has completely eliminated, while its volume in terms of the national economy dropped to zero. This was further exacerbated by the fact that Hungarian economy had to face notable structural crisis in the early 1990s, its performance dropped significantly. For Hungary following a foreign economic orientation intended to strengthen its relations with the West Croatia's role was devalued. Moreover war unreliability and insecurity has contributed to this and made the situation worse as a result of which Hungarian businessmen and investors shunned our southern neighbor. The two countries' former relations completely disappeared and virtually confined to private trade. From a Hungarian side only the fuel import volume was notable. The slump reflected in bilateral economic relations is further confirmed by the decline of border traffic. While in 1990 the total number of passengers was 11.9 million people was full of passengers, in 1996 it is only 700 thousand people. (Golobics – Merza 2002, Bali 2009/B)

After the 1998 elections Croatia's devaluation has become increasingly felt in Hungarian economic policy perspectives. This process is most visibly manifested in the Hungarian intention to join into to the renovation of the Rijeka port renovation. For Hungarian foreign trade a reliable Adriatic port is essential. Koper is however, more appropriate in several respects and was so in the last one and a half decades. This is due to difficult access to Rijeka, moreover along several Croatian and Hungarian stretches the railway superstructure does not comply with the requirements to hold high-speed trains. The most commonly used and most reliable rail routes in the 1990s were the following: Murakeresztúr - Čakovec (Csáktornya) - Zidini through Most-Ljubljana-Koper: Gyékényes-Koprivnica Zidini-Zagreb Most-Koper, Gyékényes-Zagreb, Rijeka (Fiume). In addition, Middle-Adriatic ports possess a large unused capacity. Their approach along the Zagreb-Ogulin –Knin line, however, is extremely difficult, even Rijeka's approach. (Erdősi, 2005)

After 15 January, 1998 a significant change happened in the life of our Croatian neighbour. With the release of the Baranya Triangle it has won back its full territorial integrity. This greatly helped the further expansion of our economic relations.

THE HUNGARIAN "CROATIA POLICY" AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

The millenium has brought significant political changes for our southern neighbor, which later influenced the movement of the country's foreign policy. Although Hungary maintained active relations with Croatia during the war, with the recovery of Croatia's territorial integrity, and with the closing of the Tudman era, a new chapter has begun in Hungarian "Croatia policy". In addition to the near EU accession of Hungary, the possibility of Croatia's accession became really very close. This gave basis for common spatial planning in terms of both transborder and cross-border relations. (Šimić, 2005) From that time on contacts has become significantly more intensive, of which improving the situation of minorities in Croatia will be an essential element. Its first major actor is Viktor Orbán the Prime Minister of the newly formed Fidesz-MPP-MDF-FKGP⁷ government. In January 1999, he visited Zagreb and in the same year, Hungary provided a 200 million support to the reconstruction work in Drávaszög and Eastern Slavonia. After the stagnation during the war, and after the Dayton Peace Treaty regional cooperation has intensified between the two countries and twin town relationships revived. Cross-border investments aiming to improve the infrastructure has played an important role in deepening relationships. Such is the No. V. pan-European Corridor's V / B branch along the Budapest-Zagreb-Rijeka line and the joint development and use of the port of Fiume. (Tőreki, 2005)

In February 2001, the Free Trade Agreement that has been under preparation since 1998 was born as a result of which the volume of bilateral free trade has started to grow. In 2003 the Hungarian export to Croatia surpassed the previous year by 36%, and exceeded 300 million dollars, this was four

⁷ Fidesz Hungarian Civic Party, Hungarian Democratic Forum, Independent Smallholders' Party

times that of our Southern neighbours' export to our country. The intensifying of diplomatic relations was indicated by the fact that with the leadership of our Prime Minister Viktor Orbán a Hungarian government delegation made a visit to Zagreb and Osijek in January 2002. The Hungarian and Croatian Prime Minister jointly opened the Hungarian Consulate in Osijek and then attended the dedication ceremony of the Kórógy church. Orbán has also met with the representatives of the Hungarian minority, and handed over the first Hungarian cards⁸ to those Croatian citizens with a Hungarian nationality who are entitled to this. In the spring of the same year several high-level meetings have taken place. An agreement has been born on the promotion of investments, moreover Ferenc Mádl and Stjepan Mešić has named a street and inaugurated a statue in memory of our former Hungarian Prime Minister József Antall. The changes of the Croatian Sabor adopted on 13 December, 2002 allowed the parliamentary and municipal representation of indigenous nationalities in the Minority Act, which further improved the situation of the Hungarian minority. (Bali, 2009/A)

In the second half of 2003 trade tensions arose between the two countries, which led our country to suspend part of the Free Trade Agreement.⁹ However, this did not bother their diplomatic relations, as László Kovács the Foreign Minister of the MSZP-SZDSZ government formed in 2002 expressed its support to our Croatian counterpart in early 2004 in Berlin to promote its European integration aspirations. This was greatly needed, because the co-operation of Croatia with Hague due to General Gotovina was considered to be inadequate by the European Union.

JOINT CABINET MEETINGS

The development of Croatian-Hungarian relations was intensive in the first 12 years, but was ad hoc at the same time, furthermore strategies to improve bilateral relations throughout several governmental periods could not be observed on either side. In this regard, the recent period has seen a significant change. This was made possible by the "Hungarian uniqueness" that Croatia is one of our neighbours with whom we are not trying to solve common problems, but we are holding a joint government for the intensification of cooperation.

In January 2006 a series of joint Croatian-Hungarian cabinets began, the first was in Budapest. Nine inter-ministerial agreements were launched, energy, transport and social issues were included as the priorities. The meeting took place in parallel with the creation of the Hungarian-Croatian Chamber of Commerce. This step was advanced by the Free Trade Agreement with the help of which trade and economic relations significantly smartened between the two countries. The coordination of strategic planning became important, it was the primary and most important objective of the organization of the joint cabinet.

The agenda included the co-ordinated development of the V / C¹⁰ corridor that would result in the expansion of interfaces of the two countries' economy, such as towards Bosnia-Herzegovina bettering the viability of the poorly functioning Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion. The common modernization of the power supply system, ensuring gas¹¹ and oil supply from the Adriatic ports reduce both countries' dependence on the instability of the world energy markets. Besides this, the case of the tempo-

⁸ 2001. LXII. Law on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. The aim of the act is to provide the feeling of belonging to a unified Hungarian nation to those living in the neighbouring countries, ease their living on their homelands and finally strengthen national identity. In order to get access to several preferences you need to have the so-called Hungarian Card.

⁹ As a result of the BSE Spongiform Encephalopathy epidemic Croatia has banned trade with those countries that used bone flour or fish flour when feeding animals. The ban has besides Hungary has affected Romania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia as well.

¹⁰ The M7 motorway in Hungary belongs to the V/B corridor (from Budapest to Letenye), the M6 motorway belongs to the V/C corridor (from Budapest to Ivándárda).

¹¹ Hungary exports more than one and a half billion cubic meters of gas to Croatia, the two governments are planning to build 340 kilometres of new gas pipeline. They would like to build such a terminal that is suitable for transporting fluid gas to European distribution centres through a pipeline. Both Croatia and Hungary is interested in a new, alternative way of gas supply.

rary Hungarian consulate set up in Split in the tourist season and the 2012 European Football Championship¹² has already been discussed.

The most important topics of the second meeting held in Zagreb in May 2007, included the EU and NATO accession of our Southern neighbour. It is important for Hungary to be the border state of the Union on the smallest section possible and take a seat preferably within the same political and economic alliance with surrounding countries. For Croatia a new opportunity has opened to catch up with the core areas of Europe and with its membership stabilize the region. In addition, in 2008, as a result of the IPA programs significant resources were opened for both countries, which facilitated the more intensive development of rural border areas and the deepening of weak cross-border ties. Thus, significant external resources have opened up for the implementation of national action plans serving for national equalization.

In the autumn of 2007, the foundation of a Hungarian major at the University of Strossmayer in Osijek was noted with satisfaction with which a ten-year-running issue was resolved. Therefore, besides the primary and secondary education students can study Hungarian at a university level in Osijek. Before this Hungarian higher education was only solved within the framework of the Department of Hungarian Studies in Zagreb.

The next cabinet meeting took place in Barcs in September 2009. The cabinet meeting was held with the participation of Gordon Bajnai Hungarian and Jadranka Kosor Croatian Prime Minister and the common energy and environmental issues were discussed. The chosen location was unique, as Barcs is the only city situated on the Croatian-Hungarian border, it is a so-called gateway town. It is eventually important to mention that the first Croatian-Hungarian-related IPA budgetary period of 2007-2013 has been closed just after the meeting. Both countries has gained a considerable amount of money for common use that was expended on the development of transborder rural areas.

The commitment of the new Orbán Government to Croatia is certified by the fact that Orbán as a current president of the EU aims to manage the Croatian accession and the acceptance of Croatia as an EU member.

CONCLUSION

The Croatian-Hungarian relations were balanced, sometimes even completely friendly over the past two decades. The already NATO member Croatia is expected to be a member of the European Union in 2011 and hopefully will do everything possible to become a member of the Schengen zone as soon as possible. This will be the point where the bilateral and interstate relations will not be substantial anymore. From that time on the quality of co-operation and the efficiency of the calling and use of EU sources will primarily depend on the local economy, civil and local government actors.

The future success of both countries depends on how they can export¹³ the long-term democracy, "the Western" style of work, the ability and willingness to change into Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. If they fail to do so in the next ten years, then their EU and Schengenzone membership becomes worthless, and the efforts of the past two decades will be in vain.

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¹² The joint tender was unsuccessful, we did not get the right of organization.

¹³ Both countries have a significant experience in this. Croatia as a former member state of Yugoslavia, whereas Hungary could intensify its presence by following the modernization efforts of Benjamin Kállay common Hungarian-Croatian Minister of Finance.

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SUMMARY

The geo-political weight of Hungary in the Carpathian Basin has changed significantly after the regime change. As a result, new opportunities opened in our neighbourhood relations, which are influenced by the location of state parts separated after Trianon and the Carpathians as an environmental determinant factor. In this situation, there are two ways for Hungarian foreign policy: one is the compulsory responsibility towards the torn state parts, and the other is strengthening the natural and historically proven relations. These include the Southern Pannonian basin and the direction designated by the Alps and the opportunities provided by the EU accession as well.