

## **Political geographical issues of Hungary's accession to the European Union**

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### **Introduction**

The changes in the political geographical position of a country are influenced by global, continental, neighbourhood and internal processes. In different historical situations different factors may have the dominant role. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, continental and global processes became essential for the definition of the political geographical position of almost all countries of the world.

The geopolitical position of Hungary was re-evaluated several times during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the state borders of the country changed within broad frameworks. Not only size of Hungary changed several times in the last century. So did its status in the surrounding environment and its regional and continental power positions. Following World War II, Hungary as a small state gradually integrated into the political geographical structures of the divided world, within that it fitted into the divided Europe. In 1956, a significant part of the Hungarian society questioned this kind of integration, together with the inner political structure of the country, but finally the international circumstances proved to be stronger and the raw military force restored the 'order' relying on the real geopolitical situation.

From 1985, the legitimacy of the belonging to the 'Peace Camp' was continuously questioned from within, and it was followed by Hungary's secession from the former allied system and regaining its sovereignty by 1991. (The allied system first underwent fundamental changes, and eventually disintegrated.) The radical change in the external conditions and the concomitant favourable internal constellation led to the fundamental turn.

After 1989 Hungary became part of the 'Grey Zone', which emerged between the stable West and the 'East' comprising clusters of the ex-socialist countries and the successor states of the Soviet Union, hit by succeeding crises.

In the 1990s, a sort of natural competition unfurled among the post-socialist countries for the integration into the NATO and the European Union. Membership appeared as a guarantee of external security and also the high level recognition of the inner democratisation process for those wishing to join.

As a result of a rearrangement process lasting for almost a decade and a half, Hungary broke away from this 'Grey Zone' on its free decision and became NATO member in 1999, then joined the European Union in May 2004.

With gaining the membership, Hungary achieved a new position from several aspects. The European economic, social and political processes reached a new phase – partly as a consequence

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of the globalisation process –, and the actors now face new challenges and junctions. From the aspect of the development of political space, the content of the process is analysed in many ways and the possible scenarios are evaluated in different ways, too. One thing becomes ever more evident: the disintegration of the divided, bipolar and cold war dominated international world order did not result in the end of history. In fact it has brought about the ‘force of a new beginning’.

The ‘ultimate objective’ of the unification and integration process of the European Union has not yet been clearly specified in any document (the draft of the constitution was still the object of political debates in the spring of 2004). This means that the construction of the European Union will necessarily be full of continuous discussions, correction measures, amendments and permanent compromises, since there is not one single final concept, one optimum structure acceptable for all member states and other stakeholders, there is no planned ‘ultimate fulfilment’.

The maximum spatial size to be reached has not been specified, either. This means that the European Union is being ‘drifted’ in space continuously. For several years, the debates were going on the small-, medium- and large circles of enlargement; behind the enlargement efforts with different designations there were always countries with their interests, situation and intentions. In December 2002 in Copenhagen, a decision was made on the large-group enlargement. On May 1 2004, ten countries joined the European Union (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), and an anticipated date of accession was defined for Bulgaria and Romania (in 2007). (For Turkey, the date of the start of the accession negotiations was not defined. Also, the negotiations with the applicant Balkan states will start later.) This will involve more heterogeneous territories in the European Union than any enlargement ever before: in addition to the economic disparities, the differences in identity, culture, life experience will be much more striking.

The European Union already bears several features of economic, social, political, spatial, cultural etc. heterogeneity and mosaic-like character. The basic issue for the integration is what kind of a common value system, objectives and uniform competition and market regulations should be adopted (given such a heterogeneity and mosaic-like character) in order to secure the equality of chances, to sustain the development and to support the losers (individuals, groups of people, territorial units etc.).

The European processes, and within that the structure emerging after the eastern enlargement of the European Union, make a set of extremely complicated problems. Historical, geographical, economic, social, political, power, military, security, legal, constitutional, organisational, environmental etc. issues appear in almost all spheres of operation.

Among the ten accession countries, Hungary is not an especially complicated case from any aspect. In addition to the economic issues, the democratic way of treatment of ethnic minorities will be an important issue for Hungary in the areas outside the EU, too. Based on its present level of development and system of relations, Hungary has a chance for a successful integration into the spatially extended political and economic community. This integration, however, will not take a short time but it is probably going to last for long years.

## **Experience and consequences of the previous enlargements of the Community (European Union)**

The enlargements in the time of the divided world (1973 – Denmark, Ireland and Great Britain; 1981 – Greece; 1986 – Portugal and Spain) made the operation of the organisation more complicated in all respects, especially as regards the search for compromises. In each phase of enlargement the continuously expanding organisation

acquired new characteristic features, in some cases even new challenges that required a continuous adaptation and modification of the community.

The territorial enlargements strongly increased the internal disparities of economic development level. In order to manage and mitigate them, regional policy was created and then strongly developed after 1973.

The conflict between the Community's requirements and the national interests (fishing debates) played a dominant role in Greenland's decision (after a referendum in 1982) to secede from the European Economic Community (EEC). This secession has the moral that the primacy of the national interests – in particular cases – can be dominant. (The referenda on the EU membership – in Switzerland, Norway and Cyprus – have not always brought the expected result, so the forthcoming referenda announced in connection with the approval of the new constitution promise to pose further surprises in this respect.)

By the enlargement involving the Mediterranean, the EEC integrated the core areas of the European historical civilisation, at the same time making necessary an opening towards the whole of the Mediterranean region. With the integration of the three Mediterranean countries, new tasks appeared in relation with the reforms of the internal structure of the Community.

The issues of the broadening and deepening of the integration have always been interconnected. In the summer of 1983, a declaration was made on the European Union, and the discussion about the preparation for the EU started. The discussion focused partly on the political-institutional framework, and partly on the issue whether a new super power, a new super state was being born with the creation of the European Union or it was 'merely' going to be a special, broad co-operation of the national states. The debates deepened the already existing split between the representatives of a 'centralist' platform and the adherents of 'federalist' efforts in connection with the future of the EU.

The adoption and enactment of the Single European Act (in 1987) already served the operation and the deepening of the enlarged EEC. The Act amended the Treaty of Rome in several points, but it did not basically rearrange that, it mostly used extensions in favour of the Community, at the expense of the national states.

Within a short while after the collapse of the socialist world system, the European Communities – on the way of the formerly defined development and transformation – carried out fundamental changes in the Treaty of Rome, by the approval of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The institutional system was modified significantly, and the decision on the introduction of a single currency was a significant measure with a long-term effect. We have to see, however, that the name 'European Union' covered rather an anticipated than an actually working function and structure.

In 1992–93, the 'final locations' of the institutions of the European Union were settled. At the decision on the location of the seats, the previous interests were asserted; the large capital cities were hardly given any European institutions. The 'scattering' of the institutions and centres clearly expressed a political interest: the deci-

sion makers wanted to avoid the disproportionate concentration of the institutions and centres and to exclude any direct intervention overweight of the large nations.

After the 1995 enlargement (with Austria, Finland and Sweden) the European Union became more versatile both in physical geographical and socio-economic sense. This time, the EU received countries with a high level of economic development. The management of the problems of territories with a low density of population (in Finland and Sweden) nevertheless meant a basically new challenge for the organisation. The accession of these countries brought new environmental protection and environmental ethical requirements, and also the demand for transparency, and efforts aimed at the elimination of any forms of corruption.

In 1995, the Schengen Agreement on the control of the borders came into force. This was a further measure of the nation states towards the deepening of the community; also, another part of the national sovereignty was transferred to the competency of the EU.

The European Union covers the smaller portion of the territory but the overwhelming part of the population of the European continent, no matter how the territorial dimensions of Europe are defined. In the economic sense, now the EU is one of the leading actors in the world economy.

In 2000 the 3.24 million km<sup>2</sup> total area of the 15 member states of the EU covered approximately 30 per cent of Europe (this ratio might be only slightly different depending on which definition of the continent we accept) and not more than 2.38 per cent of the surface of the planet Earth. The Union integrates the western, in physical geographical sense more varied part of Europe with an oceanic climate. Stemming from its size, the EU already involves zonal and azonal elements of the physical geographical features of Europe in their diversity. The varied physical geographical endowments, features and the differences in the availability of resources across the individual regions might be favourable in many respects for the EU in the long run. Nevertheless, these variations have also brought about problems concerning the direct management of the economic processes and the introduction of environmental regulations within the macro-space.

In 2000, the total population of the European Union was approximately 375 million people (only 6.4 per cent of the Earth's population); still it formed a large internal market with a considerable solvent demand. (The population number of the EU was well above that of the USA or Japan, but far below China and India).

The European Union is one of the dominant actors and growth poles of the world economy. According to the 2003 statistical yearbook of the EUROSTAT, the 2001 GDP of the European Union (at current prices) amounted to 7,128.2 billion ECU, exceeding those of the USA and Japan (6,848.2 and 3,712.2 billion ECU, respectively). The share of the European Union in the world trade slightly decreased in the 1990s, but it still makes up some 38 per cent of the global export of commodities.

In the political sense, the EU as a whole and as a circle of its member states is a significant factor in the world affairs. For historical reasons, the EU member states

are over-represented in most of the international organisations (e.g. two of the permanent members of the Security Council of the UNO are Great Britain and France).

In a military approach, the EU is a construction of a limited character (that is why neutral states can be found among its members), although two of its member states are nuclear powers on their own. The action space of the EU is mostly connected to the NATO, although it makes more and more conscious efforts for the setting up of an independent military force of rapid reaction.

The present territory of the European Union is a classic 'perforated' formation from political geographical aspect, not only because of Switzerland but also on the basis of 'historical remnants' such as the Isle of Man. The official 'country brochure' of the latter proudly declares that this is a crown land; it belongs neither to Great Britain, nor to the European Union. It has a government, laws, traditions, culture, language, prints postage stamps, and issues currency of its own.

### **The issue of the eastern enlargement**

The rapid collapse of the Yalta system in 1989–1991 not only took by surprise the ex-socialist countries, it was unexpected for the unprepared Western Europe, too. At the time of the collapse, several new issues emerged and efforts were made: the unification of the two German states, the almost immediate 'acceptance' of the former GDR by the EEC became inevitable both from political and socio-economic aspects. Some of the more developed socialist countries (Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland) immediately declared their intention to join the EU, and the processes within the zone occupied by the successor states of the Soviet Union had to be managed, too.

The EU reacted relatively quickly to the transition processes in Hungary and Poland. In 1989, the Phare programme was launched to support the two countries, which did not only have an economic but also a political content.

In April 1990, the heads of states and the prime ministers of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary negotiated on the expansion of the co-operation among the new democracies in transition. This was actually when the construction process of the 'Visegrád Group' started. The basic idea was that the more advanced, western countries of the Warsaw Pact, should reconcile their joint actions, with the potential leadership of Poland.

In February 1991, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary signed an agreement on co-operation. This was an attempt to fill out a political and power vacuum, but Poland was too weak in every respect to become the recognised leading factor in the region.

The first democratically elected parliaments and governments of the Visegrád countries hoped that their EU membership could be reached by 1995. (At that time the NATO membership seemed to be a much more distant perspective.)

In the early 1990s, the EU was engaged in issues of internal transformation, partly with the 'digestion' of the GDR and partly with the approaching accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden. Officially the EU did not promise the Visegrád countries a short-time accession, but individual political ambitions appeared that supported the rapid enlargement.

The violent Yugoslav crises threatened that the EU would slow down the enlargement process, because it had to face events inconceivable before. Eventually the trauma did not curb, it rather accelerated the process of enlargement.

The Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 was a further step towards the deepening of the community regulation and co-operation. The most important achievements were growing co-operation in internal and judicial affairs, the joint planning of foreign and security policy and the increase of decision making competencies of the European Parliament.

The budget of the EU approved in 1999 for the 2000–2006 period calculated with the accession of six new member states in 2002. For the support of the new members, a sum total of 58 billion • was planned until the end of the budgetary period. The appearance of the financial planning also indicated that the start of the accession process was 'meant seriously' in certain circles. (Later the delay turned out to have been due to some financial reasons, among other things.)

The approval of 'Agenda 2000' (A stronger and enlarged Europe) created the political framework for the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries. The subsequent summits mainly discussed the institutional reforms and dealt with the analysis of the issues of the accession.

The Treaty of Nice in December 2000 was given a historic content not only because of the preparation for the turn of the millennium but also because of the issues of the forthcoming reforms of the European Union. In Nice, several perspective EU scenarios were drafted. The task to link deepening to enlargement and the acceptance of the outcome of the long-term processes made the leaders of each member state realise the historical challenge and the possible redistribution of duties and competences in the long run. In its internal reforms, the EU had to be prepared for remaining functional and effective with a potential membership of 27–30 states. The eastern enlargement will not only increase the number of the member states, the size of population and areal extension of the EU; the Union will necessarily integrate new problems as well. During the accession negotiations and the preparation period, an obvious goal of the EU was the effort for the 'minimisation of problems' in the future.

The Treaty of Nice after all is a multi-actor compromise in which there is no absolute target or principle; on the other hand, each 'category of state' achieved the minimum of their objectives.

The biggest problem with the Treaty of Nice was that it strengthened the inter-governmental and not the integrational character of the EU. That is why there was such a 'bitter fight' for the determination of the voting weights in the Council of the European Union, since the political and decision making weight of the Council was

left untouched; all significant decisions concerning the basic structure remain to be made within these frameworks in the future, too.

The Treaty of Nice in many respects brought back, re-defined and institutionalised the principle of balanced powers within the frameworks of the European Union, excluding the hegemony of any power over Europe (this balance was made back in 1648, at the Peace Treaty of Westphalen). During the debates on the proportions of votes and the establishment of the multi-round voting process evidently this balance was the dominant factor influencing the attitude of the individual states and state groups to the future structure of voting and influence.

The internal proportions of qualified voting changed, too. Before Nice, qualified majority meant 62 votes of the total of 87 votes (for the qualified minority, 26 votes were needed); after Nice, these figures became 96 and 39, respectively, from a total of 134 votes. In the case of the EU with 27 member states the total number of votes will be 342; then a qualified majority will need 255 votes, whilst for a qualified minority 88 votes will suffice.

The construction created by the Treaty of Nice has been assessed in many ways: some emphasised the multi-polar character, some put a stress on the regional state community character of the further integration process, while others saw the content of the treaty as the reinforcement of the inter-governmental character. The selection of one element or another of the complicated, multi-factor compromise will necessarily lead to different interpretations.

The introduction of the single currency in 2002 not only topped the deepening of the economic integration process, but it had also affected national sovereignty to a certain degree that several countries (above all Great Britain and Sweden) were too cautious to accept the economic and even more the political risk of this measure.

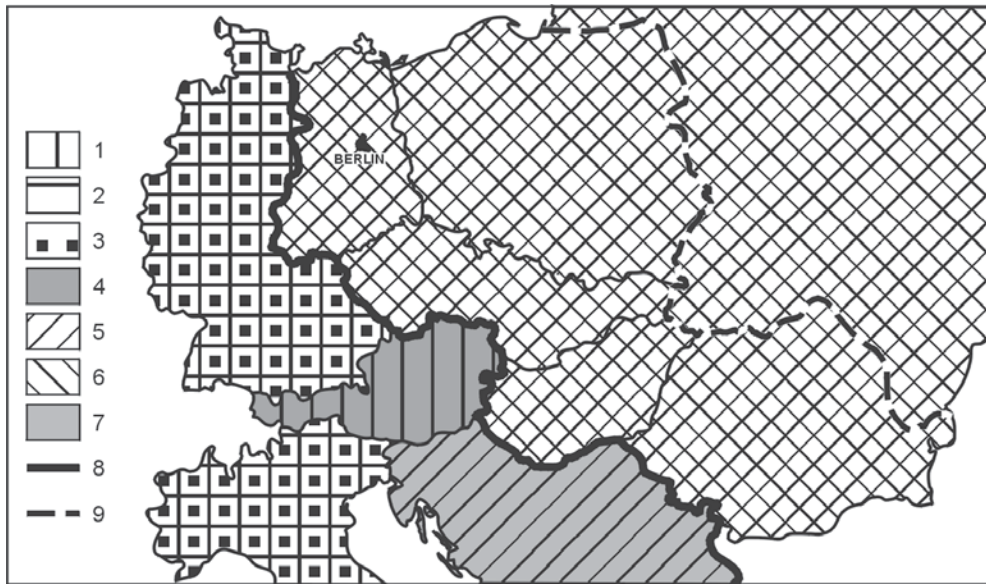
The majority of the accession countries are lagging behind the EU member states, primarily in the per capita economic performance. This is not only an economic but also a political issue; the question is what the EU is able and willing to do in order to make the economic performance and the incomes more balanced across the different countries.

The large-group enlargement may bring about fundamental changes both as regards spatial and demographic relations. The real problem is that these countries do not have real market economy traditions and skills, so they bring in a set of new problems with themselves.

## **Hungary in the 'Grey Zone' – the country's way to the NATO and the EU**

### *Processes in the 'Grey Zone' period*

After the bipolar world collapsed, the structures of the former world order have been modified, the European structures went through a fundamental rearrangement and the former socialist allied system ceased to exist (*Figure 1*). The emerging 'grey



*Fig. 1.* Political geographical situation of Hungary in the divided Europe. – 1 = capitalist countries; 2 = NATO members; 3 = EEC members; 4 = neutral countries; 5 = socialist countries; 6 = WT members; 7 = non-allied country; 8 = 'Iron Curtain'; 9 = 'Socialist Iron Curtain'

zone' offered a new space of action, at the same time it meant a kind of freedom, new responsibilities and challenges, also reservations for Hungary. To a large extent, the question for Hungary was 'out of the Warsaw Pact and the COMECON – but where?'

In the recognition of the importance of the European Economic Community, Hungary was ahead of the other socialist states – apart from the GDR, a country in a special situation because of the internal German trade. Hungary negotiated – at professional level – as early as in 1982 about the improvement of the conditions of trade with the EEC. (After 1985, the negotiations initiated by Hungary actually involved a range of other issues.) The enlarging EEC had a steadily increasing share within the Hungarian trade, and Hungary had a vested interest in the development of the bilateral relations.

In August 1988, diplomatic relations were established between Hungary and the European Community. The raising of the relations to this level allowed the expansion of the economic and trade relations towards the EC. In September, the two parties signed an agreement on the development of the relations.

In 1989, the 'non-rouble account' trade reached a majority in the Hungarian import (61.6 per cent), while that of the 'rouble account' trade fell back considerably, to 38.4 per cent. The breakdown of the Hungarian export by countries was slightly different (COMECON: 41.8 per cent; EEC 24.8 per cent; EFTA: 10.7 per cent; other: 22.7 per cent). The spatial pattern of the Hungarian export was centred on the neighbour countries (primarily due to the Soviet Union oriented trade) and naturally focused on Europe.



The neighbourhood relations of Hungary showed a very special picture in the last years of the socialist regime, if looking at them from the viewpoint of ‘statistical permeability of the borders’. Taking a look at the average length of border per road or rail border crossing stations at the end of the socialist era – especially after 1988 – we can see that at that time the Hungarian border to Austria was the most permeable and the Soviet border the most closed. After the introduction of the world passport in 1988, masses of Hungarians travelled to Austria to do shopping. Hungary, however, could not step out of the security expectations of the ‘socialist camp’, so e.g. the ‘iron curtain’ having erected along the border could only be eliminated at the very end of the state socialist period. The two governments agreed on the elimination of the border lock in February 1989, and the technical barriers were broken down within weeks.

The internal transformation processes partly preceded the external changes, but also followed them in several cases. From 1986, on constitutional grounds, the establishment of different alternative societies and civil organisations started. They saw as an important task the reconsideration of the geopolitical situation of Hungary. Some of the organisations still accepted the political defence umbrella offered by the Patriotic Popular Front (e.g. the Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre Friends Society), but in the draft of their programme proclamations radically new demands were formulated as regarded the international positions of Hungary:

- Back to Europe (the Hungarian nation as a sovereign state should be able to freely join the political, ethnic and economic community of the European peoples and nations and the European culture);

- Central European integration (the nations of this macro-region should create an economic and political alliance on their own will, without any foreign intervention, on the basis of mutual benefits, in order to allow the solution of the ethnic minority issues in a democratic spirit);

- A single Hungarian nation (all Hungarians – 16 million of them – are part of the single Hungarian nation. The Hungarian government is responsible for the representation of the minorities at the international fora, too);

- A sovereign Hungary (Hungary, based on its current national interests, should reconsider the system of its international relations created at the time of the Stalinist system).

The social organisations gradually expanded and movements that were not called but actually operated as parties (Hungarian Democratic Forum), as did alliances (Alliance of Young Democrats, Alliance of Free Democrats). These political formations also dealt with the prospects of foreign political orientation of Hungary and disclaimed its former obligations.

A basic issue of the party programmes and proclamations published in 1989 was the reconsideration of the allied system of Hungary and the assessment of the possibilities and constraints. Each significant political force had to confront the issue of the Warsaw Pact and the COMECON. In a realistic political approach, the minimum goal of most parties was the reform of these organisations, the maximum and

optimum of the objectives was the 'approved' secession of Hungary. In most of the political declarations, the support of the neutrality of Hungary appeared. Several parties expressed the need for the simultaneous elimination of the NATO and the Warsaw Pact and for the creation of a single European security system.

In June 1989, the National Round Table Negotiations began on the current situation and the future of Hungary. The stake was the peaceful transformation based on compromises. During the negotiations, the focal points of the debates were the internal political relations, but discussions on the foreign political orientation of Hungary were going on, too.

The Hungarian government clearly broke away from the former political practice of the socialist states with 'letting go' the citizens of the GDR staying in the country in September 1989. The 'removal of the iron curtain' for a mass of refugees had an international effect as it undermined the internal stability of the GDR.

At the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, it was dissolved without a legal successor, and the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) was founded. The disintegration of the former state party resulted in a brand new situation for everybody. The HSP – burdened with the historical past of its leadership – was challenged by the political forces of the opposition.

The democratic transformation going on in the neighbouring socialist states basically questioned the former economic, political and military structures, the unity of the 'socialist camp'.

As a new element of the action space of foreign policy, the inter-state co-operation between Yugoslavia, Italy, Austria and Hungary had deepened. Leaders of the neutral Austria, the non-committed Yugoslavia, the NATO member Italy and Hungary as a member of the Warsaw Pact had high level consultations in November 1989 on the closer economic and political co-operation of the countries in the region. In addition to this initiative, it is worth noting that Hungary submitted its application for membership in the Council of Europe.

In March 1990, the Hungarian and the Soviet government agreed on the complete withdrawal of the Soviet troops that stationed in Hungary. The withdrawal of the troops started almost immediately after the signing of the agreement. The start of the withdrawal of the troops had a message for internal policy too, i.e. it showed that the HSP was able to restore the national sovereignty and the representation of the independent Hungary at international level.

At the election campaign of 1990, foreign policy orientation was a fundamental issue, as was the problem of Hungary's independence. If we thoroughly look at the views of the different parties about foreign policy and alliance policy, we can see a great deal of agreement among the parties among the following issues:

- The sovereignty of Hungary should be restored; and
- Hungary should return to the European commonwealth.

In the final decade of the history of state socialism, the economic and political crisis (i.e. the general crisis of this social system) was interrelated and became

mutually reinforcing processes. The former internal societal consensus and legitimacy gradually disappeared and the transformations of the world politics strengthened the quest for the new orientation.

At the multi-party parliamentary elections in the spring of 1990, the Hungarian Democratic Forum won (gaining 156 mandates of the total of 376), but did not have an absolute majority. The new Parliament, right after its establishment – and before the entering of the new government into force – put on the agenda the revision of the relations of Hungary to the Warsaw Pact and the necessity of the settling of these relations. The Parliament rejected the possibility of unilateral secession and asked the newly formed government to start negotiations on the secession.

The foreign political part of the government programme was realistic inasmuch as the new government declared that it respected the former international contracts of Hungary, at the same time it set new goals according to the new political situation, giving priority to the efforts aiming at the integration to Europe. The government expected that Hungary would be able to join the EU in 1995.

The co-operation within the Alpine–Danubian region (Pentagonale) gained a new impetus after the Hungarian elections. This ‘inter-block’ formation played a significant role in the maintenance of the stability of the region and expressed a direct Western political support of the democratic transition.

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

In September 1990, the Hungarian government gave its consent on the secession of the GDR from the Warsaw Pact. As a consequence of the creation of the German unity, this secession was logical from every aspect, and also reinforced the basis of Hungary’s legal perceptions on the possibility of seceding from the Treaty. In October 1990 the Hungarian government declared its will to secede from the military organisation of the Warsaw Pact until the end of 1991. (The need for the complete secession from the organisation was not declared yet.)

In January 1991, Hungary participated with a health care contingent in the action called ‘Desert Storm’, aimed at the elimination of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. The action was implemented under the aegis of the UNO but actually using the military force of the USA. Hungary demonstrated its new international space of action and also asserted its commitment to the western values.

The new government paid a greater attention than ever before to the improvement of the situation of the Hungarian ethnic minorities living outside the borders of Hungary. József Antal prime minister’s statement, i.e. that he wished to be ‘in spirit the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians’ meant that the working out of the new national policy had started, and foreign policy became its integral part. The

neighbourhood policy became the issue of the protection of the affairs of the Hungarian ethnic minorities to a large extent, especially in Romania.

The relations of Hungary to the EEC and the NATO gradually strengthened. It was not a 'hypocritical' politics but the search for the possibilities in the extremely complicated international situation and domestic political constellation. The USA and Western Europe themselves were not prepared for such a character and speed of the transition in Eastern Europe. The approach to Europe was indicated by the fact that Hungary became a full-right member of the Council of Europe.

In the neighbourhood policy, the Hungarian–Czechoslovakian relations were still burdened by the issue of the hydroelectric power plant in Bős (Gabcíkovo), and the disagreements were deepened by the declaration of Czechoslovakia on the continuation of the construction in its own territory, which ended up in the diversion of the Danube. (The case was taken to the International Court of the Hague, but the decision of the court in itself had not solved the tensions between the two countries, coming from the different approaches and objectives.)

On 25 February 1991, at the extraordinary Budapest session of the Political Consulting Body of the Warsaw Pact, the former military contracts were abrogated, and the dissolution of the military organisation of the Warsaw Pact was declared as of 31 March 1991. On 19 June 1991, the last Soviet soldier left the territory of Hungary.

On 28 June 1991, Hungary gave its consent to the elimination of the COMECON, which rearranged the economic relations of the country not only with the former member states but also with every other region. A few days later an agreement was made on the elimination of the Warsaw Pact as a whole, not only its military organisation. Being outside any block and economic integration, Hungary became a fully independent country, without the presence of foreign military troops by 1 July 1991.

The turmoil in the Yugoslav area becoming ever more violent and gradually turning into a civil war from August 1991 had burdened the relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia. The debates became especially tense in connection with the shipment of arms to Croatia and then by the armed violations of the border by Yugoslavs.

The coup attempted in the Soviet Union in August 1991 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in December of the same year resulted in a brand new situation for Hungary. The emergence of the independent Ukraine, the new Russia and of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) created new state structures, power relations and systems of values along the north-eastern borders of Hungary and in its wider eastern surroundings.

Parallel to the transformation of the neighbourhood relations, the association treaty between Hungary and the EEC was declared and eventually signed in November 1991. Hungary established an associate relationship to the EEC that did not mechanically lead to the membership itself but could be interpreted as the first step of that process. First, the agreements on trade relations came into force. The associate membership allowed the rapid expansion of the relations.

The emphasis of the neighbourhood policy was demonstrated by the fact that Hungary was among the first countries to acknowledge the independence of Croatia and Slovenia on 15 January 1992. Hungary took up the diplomatic relations with both countries. Stressing neutrality in the Yugoslav crisis (especially anxious for the security of Hungarian ethnic minority living on the territory of Voivodina /Vajdaság/), Hungary rather sympathised with the efforts of Croatia and Slovenia in their struggle to maintain independence, and supported them as much as it was possible.

The Hungarian–Serb relations became tense not only because of these measures of Hungary but also by Hungary’s joining the sanctions initiated by the international community. During the control of the sanctions, new relations emerged between Hungary and the Western European international organisations. Hungary suffered a considerable financial loss but gained a lot politically from complying with the measures. The real winners, nevertheless, were the Hungarian and Yugoslav smugglers living in the border zone.

The Hungarian government wished to settle its relationships by treaties to its neighbours, the successor states of the Soviet Union and the most important partners. The first document of this type was the Hungarian–German treaty signed in February 1992. This was followed by the Hungarian–Lithuanian, the Hungarian–Croatian and then the much criticised Hungarian–Ukrainian treaty. (This latter led to the internal crisis of the government coalition and the government was only able to have it approved with the assistance of votes from the opposition.)

After the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in January 1993, a new state emerged along the northern border of Hungary, also creating a new situation. The considerable weight of the Hungarian ethnic minority in the population of the new Slovakia did not solve but in many respects exacerbated the relations between the two countries.

By 1993 the neighbourhood relations of Hungary thus had transformed fundamentally. Hungary’s positions definitely strengthened against the new successor states (Slovakia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia). The major part of the Hungarian society and political elite showed a great deal of self-control during the transformation processes going on in these countries, and this self-control was also typical of the majority of the Hungarians living in the neighbour countries. Hungary and the Hungarian ethnic populations became a stabilising factor in the period of an extremely rapid and partly violent transformation.

The free trade association created among the neighbouring states (CEFTA) was both the appearance of the new possibilities and forms of co-operation and the open appearance and awkward management of interest conflicts (especially as the export of the Hungarian agricultural products was regarded, mostly in the Hungarian–Polish relationship). Despite the problems, the CEFTA had a positive role in the relationship among the ex-socialist countries, as it provided a chance for the experience and management of some expected consequences of the EU integration.

On its session in Copenhagen in June 1993 the Council of Europe formally declared that the Central European associate members could join the European Union.

On 1 April 1994, Hungary officially submitted its application for the accession, which enjoyed an almost full political and social support.

The new socialist–liberal parliamentary majority after the elections of 1994 mostly followed the foreign policy orientation of the former government, maybe in the neighbourhood relations appeared a new tone, even if not a new goal. The Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Slovakian treaties signed by the new government both served the settling of the bilateral relations and Hungary’s efforts to become a member of the NATO and the European Union. The new socialist–liberal coalition continued and even accelerated the preparation of the accession both to the NATO and the European Union.

### *Hungary in the NATO*

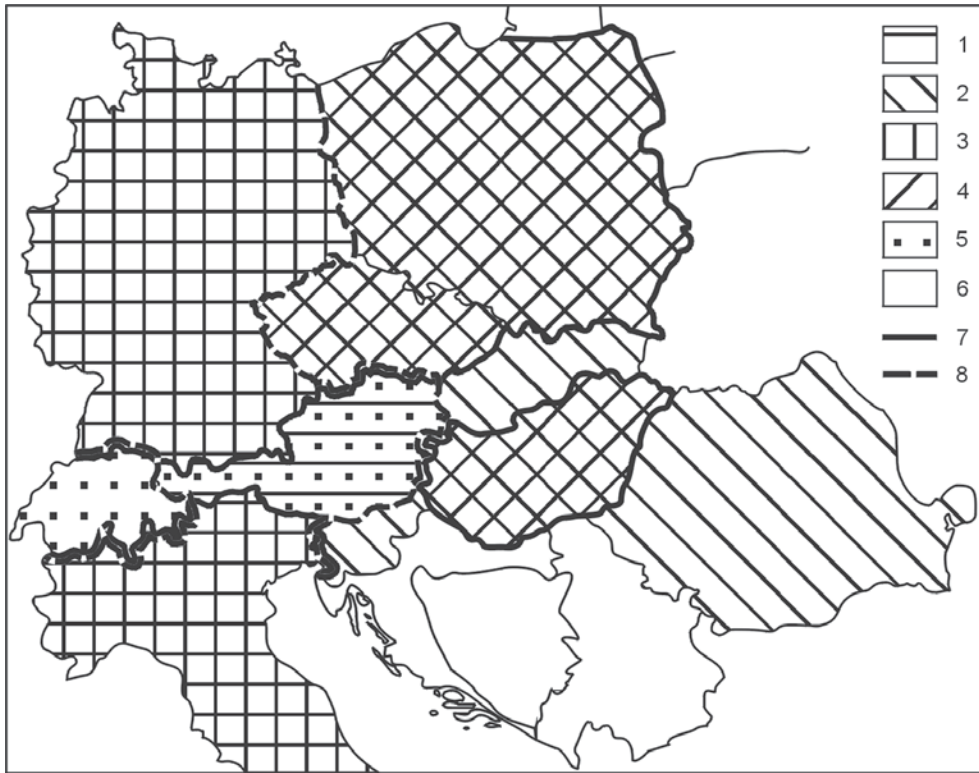
The summer of 1997 brought a turning point in the integration process of Hungary to the NATO. The decision of the NATO in July 1997 on the invitation of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary was basically the demonstration of the internal compromise of the member states but to some extent also the recognition of the success in democratic transition of the three countries.

Hungary’s NATO membership became a reality in the spring of 1999, following a successful referendum of support in Hungary and after the ratification by the member states. Hungary thus became a NATO member sooner than a member of the European Union, because of the existing political and military constellation and complicated economic value system. (At the beginning of the transformation process an inverse schedule seemed more credible for the public opinion.)

Hungary had a very special situation within the spatial structure of the NATO (*Figure 2*); it became an ‘inland island’, having no continental border with any of the actual member states.

This island position does not mean any problem if Slovenia’s positive attitude towards the NATO remains unchanged, which seems to be probable. Also, Slovakia’s similar effort became demonstrated again after the Slovakian elections in 1998. (The inner political debates in Austria over the eternal neutrality and the advantages and disadvantages of the NATO membership are probably going to continue for years. After the Austrian Liberty Party (ÖFP) coming into power, the membership is not only an issue of internal decisions any more.)

The air war of the NATO against Serbia in the spring of 1999 brought the new member, Hungary in a delicate situation. Hungary became an indirect (considering its NATO membership, even direct) part of a military action against a neighbour country (actually air strikes against targets of strategic importance in Serbia started without a declaration of war and without the authorisation of the UNO). Air manoeuvres were carried out against a neighbouring country from the territory of Hungary and using the air space of Hungary.



*Fig. 2.* Hungary in the territorial structure of NATO, 1999. – 1 = EU members; 2 = associated members of EU; 3 = NATO members; 4 = new NATO members; 5 = neutral states; 6 = other countries; 7 = boundary of NATO after joining of Hungary; 8 = boundary of EU

Hungary was ordered to the southern headquarters of the NATO, which increased the importance of Slovenia. This relation will probably have effects in other respects, too. Hungary, a NATO member is located in the vicinity of the Bosnian crisis area with a prolonged conflict, and the military base of Taszár will remain an important logistical centre in the years to come.

The NATO membership does not affect formally the sovereignty of Hungary (not each military action is automatic because of the allied commitments of Hungary), but in practice each relation and security political issue is seen in a new light within the allied system.

The most important interest of Hungary within the alliance was – in addition to its own security – the NATO membership of Romania and Slovakia, besides Slovenia, in the second round. At the following enlargement (in the spring of 2004) these countries became members of the alliance. One of the consequences of this step is that the major part of the Hungarian ethnic minorities living outside the borders of Hungary are now part of the same allied system with members sharing the same democratic political values.

### *Hungary's accession to the European Union*

In July 1997, the European Commission made a decision on the 5+1 formula, which meant that the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus could start the concrete accession negotiations. These countries after this were dubbed 'potential first circle countries'.

The EU summit in Luxembourg in December 1997 approved of the circle of the countries invited for the accession negotiation (the Luxembourg six), with Hungary as part of this formation. At the same time, the problem emerged that the accession negotiations and the enlargement itself would become of secondary importance compared to the implementation of the internal reform. This initial situation had far-reaching consequences, and not only for Hungary.

The accession negotiations finally started in March 1998 and then gained a new momentum in October of the same year. Each common issue of Hungary and the European Union and almost every aspect of the economy were discussed chapter by chapter. The accession negotiations of Hungary not only raised bilateral issues but also affected the development of the situation of the other associate members.

The first country report issued in December 1998 actually enumerated the results achieved and the still existing deficiencies. The EU Commission saw it possible to conclude the accession negotiations with the most prepared countries by the end of 2001.

During the accession negotiations with the European Union, first the 'working hypothesis of a 2002 accession' was declared, which was in fact gradually postponed. In December 1999, the European Union significantly amended and expanded its concepts of the accession, and similar negotiations with the circle of the formerly considered second round countries started, too. (These were the 'Helsinki six': Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Malta). The issue of the actual enlargement seemed to be postponed, as a consequence of the different involvements, interests and growing conflicts of interest among the EU member states concerning the enlargement.

In February 2000, the Hungarian government officially set 1 January 2003 as the 'target date' of the accession, and accordingly wished to conclude the accession negotiations by the end of 2001.

On the Nice session of the Council of Europe in December 2000, enlargement gained a new momentum, but the possibility of further prolongation appeared, too. The Council saw it possible for the accession countries to take part in the European parliamentary elections to be held in June 2004. The associate countries could join the preparation of the European institutional reforms and the process of the elaboration of the EU constitution.

Following the terror actions against the large cities of the USA on 11 September 2001, the international political processes gained basically new content and approach, in which security policy and the efforts to combat terrorism were given a priority.



In December 2001, after the Laeken session of the Council of Europe, a new approach to enlargement with a new formation of accession countries (the 'Laeken Ten') was born. The representatives of the accession countries joined the activity of the Convent created for the working out of the constitution of the European Union.

The accession negotiations accelerated after October 2002 (the Brussels 'enlargement' session of the Council of Europe), and Hungary could close the negotiations on 13 December. The accession process was finally concluded by the Copenhagen session of the Council of Europe. Hungary signed the accession treaty in April 2003, in Athens.

In the referendum of 12 April 2003 held on the issue of the accession to the European Union, only 38 per cent of those eligible for voting showed up (the low participation rate is still interpreted differently by the various political parties and analysts), but 83.7 per cent of the votes approved of the accession. (The high rate of 'yes' votes demonstrated a great deal of commitment in the circle of the politically active citizens.)

Geopolitical situation of Hungary has changed due to its NATO membership and EU accession (*Figure 3*). Hungary has turned into a country of 'Euro-Atlantic World'.

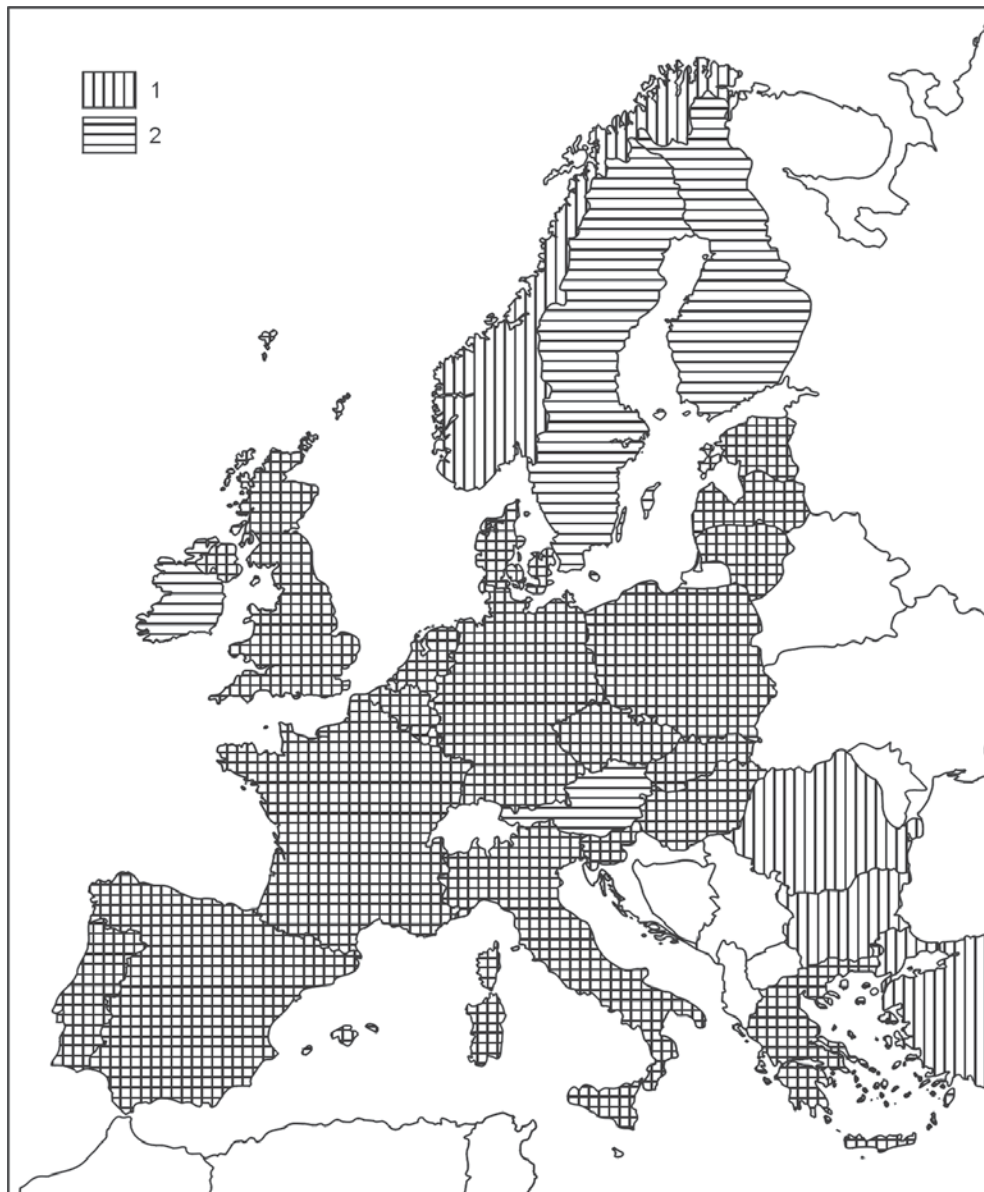
### **How to go on, 'large EU', with what compromises?**

In the European Union, there had already been several 'scenario slogans' and several such slogans survived until date. The full consideration and the establishment of the constitutional order of Europe of the 'states', 'nations', 'peoples', 'citizens' or 'regions' would necessarily result in a different Europe. The various slogans would necessarily be matched by different state organisational models: a new European model for the federal state, a commonwealth of states, a federation of states would have to be found, together with the adequate institutional and procedure patterns etc.

The draft of the constitution worked out by the Convent is trying to clearly separate the competencies of the Union and the nation state level. In the draft, the EU is constitutionally more than the confederation of the nation states, but it is still far from being an all-inclusive 'Union'.

It is a dominant feature of Europe now that 'compared to the whole Union', practically everything and everyone is a minority at the level of the whole, i.e. the Union; at the same time, they are a territorial majority in another spatial context. One of the most important characteristics of Europe is that it has to tackle the 'total minority character', because it is just Europe that is basically nothing more than a bulk of minorities of different character, size and spatial proportion.

Although a period was closed in Nice, as always in the history of the EU, the same closing act opened up a new period of operation and debates. One of the essential issues of the continuous internal transformation is on what single 'slogan'



*Fig. 3. Geopolitical situation of Hungary, 2004. – 1 = NATO members; 2 = EU members*

the EU will be organised in the future. The often cited ‘peace, security, democracy and welfare’ has been a natural, achieved state for the Western part of the integration for decades (instead of a desired future position), whereas all four elements, especially welfare, was an actual attraction for the countries before the integration.

The eastern enlargement will raise new questions for the EU. The integration space with 27–30 members potentially, covering the overwhelming part of the continent and perhaps incorporating the territory of Asia Minor in the long run i.e. after the accession of Turkey, will change in many of its elements compared to the present situation. The spatial system of smaller and larger mosaics is going to turn even more heterogeneous. (According to a scenario of a broader-circle enlargement, the number of population in the EU may reach 500 million.)

The ten countries joining the European Union in May 2004 added some 30 per cent to the territory of the EU and some 20 per cent to its population (75 million people). At the same time, the GDP of the ten new member states totalled 850 billion USD, as opposed to the total of 9,570 billion USD GDP of the former EU 15. It is evident that economically less developed, less competitive and in some cases definitely poor countries joined the EU.

The most serious problem of the enlargement is of economic character, but the political issue is also important. A question has arisen: have these countries reached, irreversibly, such a stability and content of democracy that will meet in the long run the EU expectations<sup>2</sup>, or has the EU integrated permanent ‘democracy interpretation’ questions together with the enlargement?

The enlargement is a significant challenge and there is a necessity of adaptation in many respects for both the accession and the reception countries. It is evident for the new member states that they have joined an existing institutional system with established rules of game, their space of action and influence is rather restricted, still they should not consider themselves to be completely subordinated.

For the reception countries, the source of problem is that the new members are ‘different’ in historical, economic, social and political sense. The assessment of the costs of the enlargement and the subsequent catching up, and the evaluation of the subsequent benefits of the enlargement are issues of primary importance. The costs of the enlargement cannot be defined exactly, because the benefits and losses will be divided among the central EU level, the member states, the sectors, the regions, the settlements and even some households both in the circle of the new members and the old member states. It should be remembered that the costs of the subsequent integration of the former GDR were estimated completely differently in 1990 than they are seen and evaluated now.

The circle of the accession countries is also an issue of internal power within the EU, as there are pre-concepts, thought to be historically established, on the links and relation systems of each of the new member states, on ‘who they are related to’ and ‘with whom they will vote’. This approach suggests that new competitions started within the EU right at the moment of the accession.

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<sup>2</sup>This is a basic question after the sanctions against Austria following a previous election when a legitimate government was formed; nevertheless it was not welcomed by certain EU member states.

The issue of deepening was only partially solved in Nice. The maintenance of the functionality of the enlarged organisation was given a priority there and this attitude became dominant when the compromise was negotiated. The new phase of debates on the deepening (that proved to be more bitter than ever before) raised almost at the beginning of the discussions a hitherto incredible variety of the basic issues of the future development of the EU.

One of the basic issues is the finalisation and approval of the content of the EU constitution. The real dilemmas will be focused on and conflict each other around those models and efforts (European federal state, European commonwealth) that have always been present, even if in a hidden form, in the history of the EC and of the EU to date. (In fact, these models and efforts were in conflict with each other every now and then, maybe with less member states and besides different political trends).

A potential transformation into a federation (federal state) would necessarily and basically upgrade the function and weight of the European Parliament, and the importance of the European parliamentary elections. This transformation would be allowed by a constitutional turn, the frameworks of which are not visible yet. During a potential transformation into a federation, the two-chamber character of the European Parliament will be almost inevitable. A milestone in the management of the versatility in this case can be the division of labour and the functions of the chambers.

The heads of state have always played an important although different role in the European national state structures (both in the republics and the constitutional monarchies). Although many possibilities are given in the European Union for personnel solutions (direct or indirect election), but this can probably only take place at a higher level of the development of the European identity.

The problem of the central government is of vital importance during a federal transformation. The work of the European Commission has depended a lot so far on the ambitions, personality of its chairman and his intentions to assert interests. There has already been a chairman of the Commission who was almost a community prime minister, but it has already been chaired by a bureaucrat-type person, as well. The present chairman of the Commission has stated several times that he considers his primary task to execute decisions.

The distribution of the places in the Commission on the basis of the representation of the nation states is formally democratic, but it definitely strengthens the intergovernmental character of the EU. It is natural that the members of the Commission represent their national interest on the one hand and the interests of the EU on the other.

During the long-term reform and development of the European Union, the interrelation of the dominant elements of the present structure will probably have to be reconsidered, and even some clear re-definitions will have to be made in the case of a single written constitution.

In the political development of Europe, the thinking in federations has always been very strong after World War II. Federation was actually seen as one of the most important organisational and development frameworks for the prevention of war con-

flicts. In Robert Schuman's concept in 1945, the European federation was one of the most important objectives and tools of the control over the Germans. At the same time, this concept offered the thought and the potential of some kind of unity for the fragmented, occupied and controlled Germany of the time.

Today the Germans are the keenest advocates of the concept of a federal European Union and this is not accidental. During a long period of its history, Germany existed within federal structures, and following the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany, the federal structure was a framework of socialisation and governance for generations. The federal conditions contributed to the outstanding achievements of the German economy, too.

For countries with different history and state building traditions, the federal arrangement is less attractive. Their major reservation against it is that an alienated central government can be created this way, upon which they do not have real influence.

At present a critical issue and also a political challenge is how it is possible to create a federation that does not eliminate the dominant basic institutions of the historical-political development of the European Union in the modern times, i.e. the nation state. Another task is to create modern, competitive, democratic and effective institutions of a real central decision making and executive governance, whilst also giving as much respect as possible to the national institutions and integrating them into the federation. The European federation, if it is ever established, will probably differ from each working federal commonwealth of the nations. Probably a new concept of sovereignty, a new theory of power and a series of new political ideas will be necessary for the in-depth working out of a new type of 'post-modern federation'.

The European Union will probably preserve for a longer time its present, transitory character: in the economic sphere it has already created the single European space, besides a state federation system spotted with allied state elements in its political institutional system. Subsidiarity will exist in this structure and content in the future, too. Solidarity may be given a deeper content, which in the longer run may lead to the birth of a (more) common European identity.

It is a separate issue whether we are going to have a multi-grade or a single-circle Europe, European institutional system and European development. Today it seems that, depending on the will and the interests of the stakeholders, the foundations of a multi-grade and multi-circle Europe are being created.

For the accession countries it raises the concern that from outsiders they can become a sort of inner periphery of the EU, not only in the economic but also the political sense. The deepening will probably have different pace and ways in the core countries of the integration than in the economically less developed countries or countries with reservations for other reasons (Great Britain).

The EU is not able, both for economic and political reasons, to solve as if by magic all the problems either all over Europe or within its own enlarged territory. The responsibility of the nation states within the EU will not disappear in the short run; the redistributing role of the nation states will be of a different magnitude for a long

time than the EU budget. The net payers are unwilling to increase their contribution to the common budget, so there will not be much resource for catching up the increased number of lagging countries and territories. This also means that the example of Ireland will not be repeated, i.e. no country will be caught up from community resources.

The development of the EU so far has shown that those member states are really successful that have been able to find solution to problems of modernisation on their own, even if partly using EU resources. The most important content of the EU from many aspects is that it provides a spatial framework for economic co-operation and competition (e.g. agriculture is a strongly regulated, planned and restricted competitive sector). The integration has always been considered the successful operation of the economy as the primary objective of the current policies.

The concept and practice of the 'social Europe', 'subsidy-distributing Europe' emerged within the frameworks of the Communities right in the beginning (anyway, it was founded by states pursuing a welfare policy). Solidarity and support towards and creating possibilities for the losers (individuals, groups, regions and countries) should remain a cornerstone of the EU. Although this aspect did not and cannot become a primary goal, it is relevant as a consequence, a supplementary tool. To consider and understand this is especially important for the accession countries.

Hungary will integrate in the medium and long run into the enlarged EU partly because of its geographical position and partly on the basis of its structures created so far. Hungary is eligible for support of its development, but these resources will definitely be less than it was hoped previously. Hungary, together with the other new member states, has been assured that it would not become a net payer, so its financial position would not deteriorate after the accession in comparison with that in 2003.

Within the frameworks of the new integration, Hungary will be in a competitive situation of a new type, character and actors, but options to represent its own interests will also increase through its participation in the process of interest reconciliation. In case of gaining a sufficient number of supporters, Hungary can have its interests partly or totally accepted.

Hungary will probably have to prepare for a co-operation of 'variable geometry', it is not simply that Hungary will be 'squeezed' among the newly joining states, in some cases Hungary's interests can be significantly different from theirs.

The present system of 'eco-social market economy' in the European Union (which basically evolved following the ideal of the welfare states) will probably shift toward one of increased competitiveness in the longer run.

For a significant part of the Hungarian businesses, the competitive situation in the European 'core areas' will probably be too hard in the near future, so their economic interests will drive them to turn to the eastern and south-eastern markets, mediating and organising processes towards them. The larger Hungarian businesses, 'national' and multinational companies alike (OTP, MOL, MATÁV) have started a conscious regional expansion, and this strategy seems to have been successful for the majority of them so far.

## Summary

The bipolar world emerging after World War II, the divided Europe, the capitalist and the socialist systems, the controversy between the military blocks from 1975, after the approval of the Helsinki Final Statement fluctuated, but on the whole they had tended to weaken. The economic and political crisis of the socialist countries posed new dangers in the late 1980s, but the opposition of the two world systems basically came to an end after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

For Hungary, the belonging to the socialist allied system primarily meant the commitment to the leading power of the alliance, the Soviet Union, the bilateral relations to the other member states were of minor importance. The Warsaw Pact and the COMECON were actually single-polar organisations, despite the formal declaration of the equality of the member states. The basis of both organisations, but especially that of the military one, was the position of the Soviet Union stemming from its size and world power status. Hungary thus had more experience in 'colonial' type co-operations than in real integration.

The transition process beginning at the late 1980s was primarily a world power and world political process, and Hungary had very limited influence on it. From 1989/90, a new situation gradually emerged around and for Hungary. The elimination of the Warsaw Pact, the evacuation of the Soviet troops, the termination of the COMECON, the inner social, economic and political transformation and the elimination of the former political institutional system, the change of regime provided new opportunities for Hungary in shaping its internal affairs and international relations.

Not only the global political environment changed fundamentally but Hungary's relations within Europe and those in its neighbourhood also were transformed completely. By that time Hungary had already established relations with the organisations of West European integration. In the new situation both the political leadership and the public opinion of the country saw the accession to the European Union as a primary objective and value, and accordingly they started the conscious preparation for the accession process and the expected membership.

The critical changes in the neighbourhood environment of Hungary were basically the disintegration of the former socialist federations and the emergence of new independent neighbour states. They (Slovakia, the Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia) have a more limited weight in many respects than their predecessor states had, so the relative importance of Hungary increased within its neighbourhood. The state formation processes in the neighbourhood often became uncertain, especially the civil wars in the southern neighbourhood were serious challenges for Hungary; on the other hand, these violent events accelerated the approach of Hungary to the NATO.

The accession to the Euro-Atlantic military alliance (in 1999) changed the external security policy relations of Hungary fundamentally, the country became part of the European stability framework. On the other hand, the air war against Serbia also proved that the new allied system bears political and security risks, and in spite

of the adherence of a small country to a new allied system its capacity of interest assertion is limited.

Concerning the assessment and support of American military invasion against Iraq in 2003, the opinion of the NATO and EU members were divided. Supporting the military action and undertaking its role in peace keeping, the Hungarian government accepted the platform of the USA.

With the NATO and EU membership, Hungary evidently became part of organisations and processes of the Euro-Atlantic integration. The long-term interests of Hungary require that the country joins and works within an efficient European Union with a clear structure, objectives and arrangement.

As a result of the new integration process, in the spring of 2004 Hungary turned from the 'West of the East to the East of the West', and not only in a topographical sense.

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