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Hungarian Domestic Policy in Foreign Policy

Summary: The article focuses mainly on the national policy (i.e. the issue of the Hungarian minorities living abroad) since in this field the fundamental differences between the viewpoint of the right-wing and the left-wing political parties display very significantly, what also appears in the policy of the ruling governments. After providing a brief summary of the foreign policy of the Hungarian governments since the change of the political regime, the authors discuss some crucial issues and evaluate the Hungarian foreign policy of the last year of the new Gyurcsány government, outlining briefly the relation of Hungary and the Great Powers.

In the present study we attempt to examine the impacts of Hungarian domestic policy in Hungary's foreign policy. We have focused mainly on the national policy (i.e. the issue of the Hungarian minorities living abroad) since in this field the fundamental differences between the viewpoint of the right-wing and the left-wing political parties display very significantly, what also appears in the policy of the ruling governments. After providing a brief summary of the foreign policy of the Hungarian governments since the change of the political regime we discuss some more important issues and following that we will discuss Hungarian foreign policy of the last year, outlining briefly the relation of Hungary and the Great Powers.

Balázs Kiss and Csaba Zahorán work at.

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Foreign Policy of Hungarian Governments in the period of 1990 – 2006

The Antall and the Boross Governments (1990 – 1994)

The foreign policy of the first freely elected rightist Hungarian government was determined by three main objectives. The conservative government of three parties (MDF-Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt (*Christian Democratic People's Party*) KDNP-Független Kisgazdapárt (*Independent Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Civic Party*, FKGP) lead by the Hungarian Democratic Forum, MDF tried to make international politics equal in order to achieve the objectives of the Euro-Atlantic integration policy, the neighborhood policy and the Hungarian national policy. However sometimes the balance of the system of these three foreign policy priorities proved to be unstable, mainly in case of collision of the neighborhood policy and the Hungarian national policy. In a strong representation of national interests, which during the communist era had been damped, practically encoded were the conflicts with neighboring countries, mainly if we take into consideration the revival of nationalist emotions in the region. When the Antall government openly – however, sometimes without proper sensitivity and tact¹ – stood up for the representation of the Hungarian ethnic minorities living abroad, it came into conflict with the Slovak and Ukrainian efforts to build a nation-state, the serious heritage of Romanian nationalism and national communism as well as the rising increasing nationalist emotions in the gradually decomposing Yugoslavia.² Moreover the neighboring countries were surprised by this new conduct of Hungarian foreign policy, since for long decades they had experienced the contrary trend, i.e. the neglect of nation-related issues. The new approach of Hungarian foreign policy – which has been laid out also in the Constitution of Hungary³ – is demonstrated in the best way in the famous speech of Prime Minister József Antall, in which he stated that: "although by the constitution I am the prime minister of ten million Hungarian citizens, in my heart I would like to be the prime minister of 15 million Hungarian people"⁴.

¹ What political scientist Lengyel László explains is by the lack of experience of Antall and his Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky and also by ideological reasons. L. Lengyel *Illeszkedés vagy kiválás*. (Budapest: Osiris, 2006), p. 166. The lack of sensitivity was reported also by Rudolf Chmel, the last Ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Hungary. R. Chmel *Nagykövet voltam Magyarországon*. (Bratislava: Kalligram, 1997).

² Which, fortunately concerned the Hungarian minority living in Yugoslavia only to a small extent.

³ § (3) The Republic of Hungary feels responsible for the fate of the Hungarian minorities living abroad and shall promote the fostering of their relation with Hungary. <http://www.mkogy.hu/alkotmany/alkotm.htm>.

In daily political practice neighborhood policy has been overshadowed by the two other abovementioned objectives. However, in fact new political priorities arising after the change in the political regime had not been fully developed and the political parties failed to define them clearly. They agreed mainly in theoretical frameworks, however there was no consensus among the parties concerning the practical steps. This consensus in foreign policy, which had developed during the ruling of the Antall government, maintained more or less until 2001.⁵ The only exception to this agreement was the Hungarian-Slovak and Hungarian-Romanian fundamental treaties signed by the Horn- government which were not supported by the then existing opposition parties.

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One of the significant achievements of the coalition lead by the MDF was the institutionalization of the policy of the Hungarian minorities living abroad by the establishment of the *Office of Hungarian Minorities Abroad*, (HTMH) and, Duna Television addressing the Hungarian minorities. Among other important measures concerning this issue was the reformation of the *World Congress of Hungarians* (MVSZ) in 1992.

Czechoslovak- (and later Slovak-) Hungarian relations, besides the issue of the minorities, was also the disputed case of the river barrage of Bős (Gabčíkovo) – Nagymaros cast a shadow on Czechoslovak- (and later Slovak-) Hungarian relations, because the professional viewpoints were often overshadowed, since both countries – on different grounds – have treated the building of the barrage and the stopping of the works as a point of honor. For the Hungarian public the case also had a symbolic meaning, since obstructing the completion of the hydropower plant on the Danube River was considered a significant achievement of the democratic opposition in the 1980s.

The Horn Government (1994 – 1998)

Socialist Prime Minister Gyula Horn abandoned the national policy of the previous conservative government. An apparent signal of this new approach was when he referred to himself as prime minister of 10 million Hungarian

⁴ J. Antall *Modell és valóság. Politikai beszédek Magyarországon (1989-1993)*. (Budapest: Atheneum, 1994).

⁵ L. Lengyel, op. cit, p. 172.

citizens. During the rule of the socialist-liberal government the Hungarian national policy and the neighborhood policy was subordinated to Hungary's interest of joining NATO and the EU as soon as possible. The government constituting of the *Hungarian Socialist Party* (MSZP) and the *Alliance of Free Democrats* (SZDSZ), in order to ensure the international stability of the region, signed the abovementioned fundamental treaties with Slovakia (1995) and Romania (1996) – in despite of the protest of the then opposition parties: the *Alliance of Young Democrats* (Fidesz), the MDF and the FKGP. The dispute highlighted the basic dilemma by emphasizing good neighborhood relations and the reconciliation Hungary really would relieve phobias related with the Hungarian minorities abroad or, on the contrary, strengthen these phobias, as though legitimating the nationalist efforts of the neighboring countries.

In the mid 1990s László Kovács, the foreign affairs minister of the MSZP, pursued a foreign policy of conformism, meeting the criteria of the integration into Euro-Atlantic systems and stability.⁶ By implementing these principles he wished to regain not only the trust of the western countries and institutions and to prove that Hungary is not a weak point in the rather unstable region, but also to provide an image of sober and professional foreign policy to the Hungarian public disappointed by the symbolic policy-making of the previous government.⁷ He did not open 'redundant' fronts in foreign policy – moreover, by signing the fundamental treaties he stabilized the so far not very balanced Hungarian-Slovak and Hungarian –Romanian relations. But, he focused on the EU accession and strengthening of the economy. As a result of the so called 'Bokros-packages'⁸ both in the economy and foreign policy Hungary, after having overcome the crisis, became again one of the most reliable states of the region.

The ties between the foreign affairs and the internal policy have been proven also by the already mentioned case of the Bős (Gabčíkovo)-Nagymaros river barrage. After the failure of the Hungarian-Slovak negotiations, prime minister Gyula Horn Gyula suggested in early 1998 that Hungary after all would build the river barrage and hydropower plant at Nagymaros. During the election campaign in 1998 the parties of the former democratic opposition – even the SZDSZ, which was the coalition partner of the governing

⁶ Ibid, pp. 175 – 176.

⁷ M. A. Waterbury, "Ideology, Organization, Opposition: How Domestic Political Strategy Shapes Hungary's Ethnic Activism", *Regio* No. 9/2006. pp 75 – 76.

⁸ N. Bárdi *Tény és való. A budapesti kormányzatok és a határon túli magyarság kapcsolattörténete*. (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2004). P. 142. The Bokros-package was the name of the restrictive measures, which, however stabilized the economy, and were introduced by Lajos Bokros, Finance Minister of the Horn-cabinet.

MSZP –, opposed the plan of the socialists emphasizing the importance of environmental protection. This unpopular issue also contributed to the defeat of the socialist-liberal coalition in the elections.

The Orbán Government (1998 – 2002)

In 1998 the government made up of MSZP-SZDSZ was replaced again by a central-rightist coalition of Fidesz-FKGP-MDF. The cabinet led by prime minister Viktor Orbán (together with the then foreign affairs state secretary Zsolt Németh, who played an important role in formation of Hungarian national policy) on the turn of the millennium attempted to take advantage of Hungary's positive re-evaluation in the region. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Mečiar-era in Slovakia and Romania's discrepant development during the Iliescu governments (in 1990 – 1996) put Hungary into the position of an integration leader in the region, which was also supported by the economic performance of the country. Fidesz took advantage of the favorable situation and wanted to convert Hungary's relative advantage into some regional power position in the Carpathian Basin. In this effort the Hungarian minorities living abroad also played an important role, since at the same time when the Orbán cabinet took over the governing the priority objectives of Euro-Atlantic foreign policy seemed to come true⁹, the Orbán government could pay more attention to the Hungarians living in the Carpathian Basin and the Hungarian national policy. On the turn of the millennium the passing of the so-called status law (law on Hungarian minorities living abroad) became one of the leading issues of Hungarian foreign policy. The law, which guaranteed aid for Hungarian minorities living abroad, provided them with several votes on the territory of Hungary and was aimed to support maintaining their identity and staying in their native country, was passed by the Hungarian parliament by majority of 95%, except for SZDSZ, which did not vote for the law for reasons of principle.

The abovementioned efforts of the Orbán government, however, did not meet the sympathy of neither Slovakia, which had been traditionally suspicious of Hungary, nor Romania, although in a certain period (between 1998 and 2000) in all three countries there were central rightist coalitions in the governments. Symbolic Hungarian foreign policy ('the cross-boarder uniting of the Hungarian nation') was received with anxiety and indignation in both Slovakia and Romania, in which suspected Hungarian nationalism was behind these efforts. Since the status law applies to non-Hungarian citizens

⁹ On April 4, 1999 Hungary became a NATO member and in spring of 1998 the country started accession negotiations with the European Union.

it was necessary to reach an agreement with the governments of the most concerned countries. The Fidesz-lead Hungarian government succeeded to reach a compromise with Romania, however had not been left time to achieve an agreement with Slovakia. Foreign policy seeking a remedy to historical detriment to Hungary resulted in deterioration of the cooperation of the Visegrad countries when Viktor Orbán, in early 1998, supported the Bayern Christian-socialist initiative to annul the so called *Beneš Decrees*.

In 1999 the newly-made NATO member Hungary, had to face a challenge which involved NATO military operations against Serbia. Hungary – due to its geographical proximity and because of the Hungarian minorities living in Vojvodina – got into a difficult situation, because Hungary was at the same time expected to show its loyalty to the alliance. But, in the end there were no direct military operations initiated from the territory of Hungary. Some extremist Hungarian political groups, along with the radical, nationalist parliamentary *Hungarian Justice and Life Party* (MIÉP) found a good opportunity, in the military action against neighboring Serbia to revise its borders. In the Hungarian public again appeared the discourse of the revision of borders. However, the government strictly distanced itself from these statements and accused MIEP leader István Csurka of irresponsible politics. Meanwhile, the opposition MSZP criticized the government on the grounds of security risk to the country, and were against allowing NATO to use Hungarian air-space or allowing it only with serious restrictions.

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The Medgyessy and the First Gyurcsány Government (2002 – 2006)

Péter Medgyessy, candidate of the MSZP to the post of Prime Minister, in 2002, similarly to his predecessors, also declared his standpoint on Hungarian national policy. On the eve of the elections he called himself a prime minister of 10 million Hungarian citizens, who also feels responsible for 15 million Hungarians. The returning socialist-liberal coalition soon revised the status law, mainly criticized by Slovakia, and despite the strong protest of the opposition lead by the Fidesz, it omitted the definition of the united Hungarian nation from the preamble of the law.¹⁰ However, there had

¹⁰ 1. Paragraph of the Act No. LVII of 2003.

not been any introduced changes in the support of the Hungarian minorities living abroad, and the Medgyessy government kept on pursuing the aid-policy of the previous cabinet without a national rhetoric.

The socialist-liberal government, the leadership of which was taken over by Ferenc Gyurcsány in autumn of 2004, carried on with the 'fulfillment foreign policy' pursued by the previous socialist foreign policy management and tried to avoid conflicts with the neighboring countries. The opposition criticized the cabinet not only because of the lack of national commitment, but also lashed out at its slack foreign policy. The cautious standoff of Hungarian foreign policy during the *Orange Revolution* in Ukraine in 2004 was also a target of the opposition's criticism. Hungary – contrary to the close Poland – for a long time hesitated to back Yushchenko, what the Hungarian rightist political parties attributed to the traditional reflexes of the leftist parties (i.e.: friendly relations with the Russians) and the incompetence of the government.

Foreign policy, mainly Hungarian national policy pursued by the socialist-liberal governments since ruling since 2002, has been regularly criticized by rightist political parties. They accuse the government with repeated failure to enforce respect for national interests also in case of the joint Hungarian-Romanian government meetings¹¹, since these meetings had only a symbolic significance and brought only a few concrete results. Relations with the Slovak party, however, have not reached even this formal level, because between 2002 and 2007 there was no meeting held at the level of prime ministers. The opposition also claimed that it was a mistake to rush into an unconditioned ratification of Romania's EU accession, since it could have been used to solve several unsettled issues.¹²

The National Issue on the Right and Left Sides

The national issue, i.e. the commitment and representation of Hungarian national interests, including the support of the Hungarian minorities living abroad by different means, is one of the most important issues distinguishing the two big political groups of Hungary and their foreign policy. This issue has several times displayed the differences between the leftist and rightist

¹¹ In October 2005 in Bucarest and in November 2006 in Budapest. Besides the Hungarian-Romanian government meetings also meetings with the Austrian, the Croatian and the Slovene governments took place.

¹² From the recovery of the confiscated church possessions, through the autonomous Hungarian language state university to the issue of Transylvanian autonomy.

governments. As it will be shown in several examples, the support of the Hungarian minorities living abroad and the rhetoric of the national policy equally impacts Hungary's domestic and neighborhood policy. This is the opposite version of the so called 'Hungarian card' which is strongly present in the domestic policy scene of neighboring countries, mainly in that of Slovakia and Romania, (the issue of the Hungarian minorities has been often abused by nationalist and populist groups in both countries, mainly during election campaigns).

The Nation First of All

The difference in approach to the issue of the Hungarian minorities living abroad can be traced since the change of the political regime. After the indifferent approach of the Kádár regime since the second half of the 80s the artificially suppressed national consciousness has been aroused with elementary power. After the destroying of villages inhabited by Hungarian minorities in Transylvania¹³ the feeling of solidarity with the Hungarian minorities living abroad moved whole masses. It was a very significant moment also considering the fact that people in Hungary before practically hardly had been aware of the Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries. The MDF having national roots in its policy and the FKGP have realized the serious mobilizing potential and political tool in the national issue, since this could identify them different from the socialist MSZP and the liberal SZDSZ, which was the main rival of the MDF in the elections in 1990.

In the battles on the scene of domestic policy, this difference sometimes appeared in very heated debates and criticisms. For example in one of his addresses in the parliament Géza Jeszenszky, foreign minister of the Antall (and later the Boross) governments called the then governing parties the only trustee of the national efforts. In response to this the then parliamentary opposition parties (lead by the Fidesz, which then represented liberal policy) has left the floor and boycotted the addresses of the foreign minister. The leaders of the MDF parliament, in response to the criticism of the government

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¹³ Ceaușescu's plan of systematisation would have changed significantly the traditional area of the settlements of the Hungarian minority, speeding up the assimilation of the ethnic Hungarians.

policy accused SZDSZ of negligence of national interests.¹⁴ The accusation of being alien to the nation or even that of high treason has returned several times, extending to the whole socialist-liberal wing. The right-wing usually criticizes the excessive opportunism and the lack of the clean-cut representation of the Hungarian national interest in the foreign policy of socialist-liberal governments. Since around 2000 this criticism has become even sharper due to the rejection of the status law by the SZDSZ and mainly in connection with the unfortunate referendum on dual citizenship held on December 5, 2004.

On the other hand the left-wing and liberal politicians and intellectuals regularly put the label of nationalism on right wing parties, in which they are many times assisted by foreign countries concerned by the revival of Hungarian nationalism. The neighbors of Hungary being mistrustful of Hungarian foreign policy – mainly on account of the Hungarian minorities – who like to refer to the ‘great Hungarian’ nationalism, mainly on pretext of the symbolic policy-making of the Hungarian right-wing parties and the displays of the otherwise insignificant Hungarian extreme right-wing.

The rhetoric of the first rightist government, however, after all has not proved successful enough, which was also confirmed by the parliamentary elections in 1994. After the defeat in these elections Fidesz, which has reformed the Hungarian right-wing, took over the previously rejected national ideology, in which it found an appropriate platform to unify the right wing powers. Fidesz attempted to establish a public law relation between Hungary and the Hungarian minorities living abroad (law on Hungarian minorities), and due to the unsettled situation of Hungarian language education abroad decided to establish a Hungarian private university (*Sapientia University*) in Romania.

The Euro skepticism present within the Fidesz government also played a role in the domestic political fight. In the campaign for the referendum on the accession to the EU Fidesz, which has formerly supported the Euro-Atlantic integration, did not take a clean stand on the issue. The demand for a more powerful representation of national interests and emphasis on reservations has served as grounds for criticism of the policy of the socialist-liberal government after 2002.

¹⁴ M. A. Waterbury, *op cit.*, p. 74.

Fear of the Nation

The re-organized Hungarian left-wing, after 1990, has not been able to handle national issues. The majority of the left-wing elite, being socialized in the previous political regime and within the political framework of the predecessor party, the *Hungarian Socialist and Worker's Party* (MSZMP) does not consider national issues as priority. Their reluctance or negligence is mixed with some pragmatism which in foreign policy is displayed in low profile and avoids conflicts. For them the issue of Hungarian minorities is clearly subordinated to Hungary's good neighborhood relations (and its objective of European integration) as opposed to the clean-cut, and sometimes even combative, national ideology of the right-wing, this indifferentism sometimes appears as fear, and the Hungarian left-wing is characterized by an awkward way of handling this issue or its absolute avoidance.

Another typical example of the left-wing's indifference (or speaking benevolently: bad communication) was that scandalous celebration on December 1, 2002, when on the occasion of the Romanian national holiday, Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy touched his glass with Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastase visiting Budapest. The right-wing media, unanimously condemned the affair, declaring it as fair as high treason¹⁵, and only a few restrained voices pointed out that the celebration of the anniversary¹⁶ was rather a gesture on the part of Hungary.¹⁷

The Hungarian left-wing practically conveyed the initiative to deal with the subject of the national issue, and the right wing also took advantage of this opportunity, not only in its foreign policy which stands up more clearly for Hungarian minorities, but also in other fields, which has been illustrated well by a self-critical question of a leftist politician: that during its long governing period, why didn't the left-wing make its own film on the subject of Trianon,

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¹⁵ See e.g. Zs. Bayer, "Egy nemzetárulásról", *Magyar Nemzet* (December 3, 2002).

¹⁶ December 1, 1918 was the date when the Roman National Assembly in Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) declared Transylvania's joining Romania, and at the same time promised a generous minority policy to the non-Romanian nations living on the territory.

¹⁷ See e.g. Tamás Gáspár Miklós, "Mi történt a Kempinski szállóban?", *Népszabadság* (December 5, 2002).

which, due to the lack of this, has been treated by a strongly subjective and disputable work?¹⁸

Also other examples could be mentioned- the campaign against dual citizenship or the dissolution of the network of institutions for Hungarian minorities living abroad during the second Gyurcsány government. Meanwhile there is no real room for dispute since the answer to the criticism coming from the nationalist left-wing¹⁹ is a rather malignant response²⁰. Although the leftist governments, at the level of rhetoric, do not give up the Hungarian minorities living abroad and they also maintain the earlier established funds to support them, but according to a sarcastic statement of an expert: the socialist-liberal government care much more for one kilometer of highway than the whole Hungarian minority abroad.

The antinomic approach of the socialist-liberal wing to the national issue is well demonstrated also by the voting on the status law. While the MSZP did not dare to oppose the initiative of the Orbán government, its ally, the SZDSZ rejects the national issue on a basic principle. The liberals consider the issue outdated, anachronistic and unreasonable (this was in the justification of voting against the law) and they are also afraid of the revival of nationalism and anti-Semitism.

Despite existing differences, the socialists and liberals in the political fight against the right-wing – according to western European role models – usually attack together the right-wing parties' 'coquetting' with extremist groups (new 'nyilas' movement, dispute over the flag 'Árpádsávó lobogó' etc.).

Nationalism and anti-Semitism

At the intersection of domestic and foreign policies, there have been several issues causing serious conflicts between the right/wing parties and the MSZP and SZDSZ. During the Antall government there reappeared extremist Hungarian *nationalism* and *anti-Semitism*. Since the early 90s the Western countries were more afraid of the revival of nationalism than the restoration of the communist regime. There was strong pressure also on the side of these countries from the Hungarian government to distance itself from extremist movements²¹. The signing of the Ukrainian-Hungarian fundamental treaty pointed at the different standpoints in foreign policy within the ruling party,

¹⁸ Documentary series Trianon Living with Us by Gábor Koltay. However, since then the series entitled The Trianon Syndrome, has been finished which is professionally more ambitious.

¹⁹ P. Bodor, "A baloldal nemzeti balfogásai", *Népszabadság* (February 15, 2007).

²⁰ F. Fejtő, "Válasz Bodor Pál barátomnak", *Népszabadság* (February 20, 2007).

²¹ L. Lengyel, *op.cit.*, pp. 170 – 171.

which lead to the crisis of the MDF, some breakaways and the formation of the extremist MIEP lead by István Csurka. Csurka in the parliamentary debate criticized his fellow MPs because of their accepting the borders set out by the Trianon Treaty. This way the difference of views on the national and foreign policy lead to a breakaway in domestic policy. Prime Minister József Antall – with a view to the domestic political situation – has been putting off this break for a long time, but finally it became inevitable.²² After Csurka was ousted from the MDF (and in 1994 also from the parliament for four years), Hungary's international rating improved and was compared with the situation in the neighboring countries (the locality of the Yugoslavian crisis, Iliescu's Romania or Mečiar's Slovakia) seemed to be the island of tranquility and stability. This image was to some extent spoilt by the fact that in the elections held in 1998 the MIEP lead by István Csurka gaining more than 5 percent succeeded to get into the parliament and in some issues backed to the Orbán government. Nevertheless, it is true that the level of nationalism was far from the intensity of nationalism in Romania and Slovakia.

Similarly to Antall, Viktor Orbán handled the extremist manifestations cautiously, since he needed also the votes of the extreme right electors to win the following parliamentary elections. However this evoked the disapproval of the Western countries and played a significant role in that the relations with the United States got cooler. In despite of this fact, the basic formula has basically been maintained up to the present – the Fidesz, although itself is much more moderate than the extremist parties (MIÉP, Jobbik – *Movement for a Better Hungary* etc.), and also made important gestures (introduction of the Holocaust-memorial day in 2001), has not distinguished itself clearly from these parties, relying further on their votes and mobilizing potential.

The Issue of Hungarian Minorities Living Abroad

The draft of the abovementioned status law caused serious turmoil in domestic and foreign policy. Since the law was received with opposition

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 168 – 171.

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from Romania and Slovakia the homeland of the two most numerous Hungarian minority communities, the Orbán government was forced to begin negotiations with their neighbors in order to make the law enforceable. This was, however, misused by the MSZP, which -however voted for the law in the parliament- after the signing of the Orbán-Năstase agreement between Hungary and Romania on the extending possibilities of the employment of the non-Hungarian Romanian citizens has begun a campaign scaring the Hungarian public with the threat of 23 million Romanian guest workers.

The MSZP continued the same social demagoguery also later in autumn of 2004, when it built its campaign against the dual citizenship in referendum on the subsistence concerns of the people. Eventually both political wings bear responsibility for the fact that the issue of dual citizenship became lowered to a narrow-minded domestic policy affair. The right-wing took advantage of the referendum campaign to come upon Ferenc Gyurcsány, who had newly replaced Medgyessy, moreover on its 'own' half-court, i.e. forced the socialist-liberal wing to fight within the scope of the nation-related issues. Beyond the commitment to the Hungarian minorities abroad the right-wing had a certain 'backdoor intent' with the potential granting of the dual citizenship – as it turned out from the later telltale sentence by István Mikola (when the deputy prime minister expected that the granting of the double citizenship would ensure permanent presence at power for the right-wing²³). In the very tight competition for votes the left-wing instinctively rejected the initiative which was not very favorable. Although this fear can be understood from some – party policy – viewpoint, regardless of this the negative campaign of the MSZP and SZDSZ, and consequently the invalidity of the referendum had a very negative psychological impact on Hungarian minorities living abroad.

A unique example of the political consensus in Hungary was the case of the policy, when the government and the opposition parties took a firm common stand in the case of Malina Hedvigová. After the nationalist parties came to power in Slovakia following the parliamentary elections in the spring of 2006, a tension appeared in Hungarian-Slovak relations, which was deteriorated by the assault on a Hungarian minority student girl in Nitra, Slovakia, which so far has not been cleared up. Hungarian politicians, regardless of their belonging to any parties, asked the immediate investigation of their Slovak counterparts, not only at the bilateral level but also on that of international organizations.

²³ "Fidesz kongresszus: Orbán a kormányfőjelölt", *Népszabadság* (March 19, 2006).

Finally we would like to refer to a special external appearance of Hungarian domestic policy, namely its infiltration into the life of the communities of Hungarian minorities living abroad. It appeared most apparently in the domestic policy of the Hungarian minorities living in Romania, when the Fidesz more or less openly supported both financially and politically the political groups considered to be the inner and outer opposition of the *Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania* (RMDSZ). On the contrary, the socialist-liberal governments authorized RMDSZ for the distribution of financial aids of Hungary – by which it practically endorsed the political monopoly of the RMDSZ. Apart from this Hungarian domestic policy began to appear gradually also in the everyday life of Hungarian minorities living in Romania – parallel to the spread of the media in Hungarian language, the Hungarian minorities living in Romania became even more informed up-to-date on developments in the motherland, especially when it concerns them directly (a sin the case of the referendum on dual citizenship in 2004). It has to be mentioned, that the society of minority Hungarians living in Romania – due to its conditions – is traditionally more conservative, 'nationalist' and therefore rather sympathizes with the Hungarian right-wing parties. Therefore the policy of the socialist-liberal government is unpopular among the minority Hungarians living in Romania, and the politicians of the government – in order to avoid conflicts – mostly try to avoid visits to Transylvania²⁴, unlike the opposition politicians or the President.

The First Year of the Second Gyurcsány Government

The New Foreign Policy Strategy

In summer of 2006 Ferenc Gyurcsány in his second government assigned the post of the foreign minister to the former Minister of Equal Chances, Kinga Göncz – the daughter of former President Árpád Göncz. Since Ms. Göncz is considered to be a rather newcomer to foreign policy, the Ministry is being managed by the ministry apparatus. According to analysts eventually the shaping of the foreign policy has become the competence of the closest environment of the prime minister – to build his image Ferenc Gyurcsány needs also to create an image of a premier proficient in foreign policy.

In 2006 the government started its election term with a serious state budget deficit. It adopted the convergence program in the summer 2006, which projected rationalization and cut of the national expenditures. The cut-back

²⁴ With the exception of Katalin Szili, the Speaker of the Parliament, who visits Transylvania quite often.

of the government agencies affected also the Foreign Ministry. The number of managerial positions has been reduced and also the institution of consulates had to be revised. In certain regions (South-eastern Asia, South America) Hungary closed its consulates and the background institutions of the Foreign Ministry have been restructured as well. One measure of the reform was the dissolution of the *Office of Hungarian Minorities Abroad* (HTMH) the agenda of which has been taken over by the State Secretariat lead by György Gémesi

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at the Prime Minister's Office. Another fact testifying of the second Gyurcsány government's national policy is that as of January 1, 2007 the *László Teleki Institute* (to which belonged also the Institute for Central Europe built on the former Institute for Hungarian Studies) was dissolved, the agenda of which has been taken over partly by the Hungarian Foreign Affairs

Institute having closer connections with the Foreign Ministry. Besides the abovementioned measures the lowered priority of the policy related to the Hungarian minorities living abroad is also proved by the fact that the state secretary who plays an important role in making national policy decisions is also responsible for the agenda of the minorities living in *Hungary*.

The second Gyurcsány government feeling the impacts of the referendum on dual citizenship on the national policy and the anachronism of the former foreign policy of three objectives after the completion of Euro-Atlantic integration, has set a target to develop a new foreign policy. Ferenc Gyurcsány announced it in his address to the parliament in June 2006²⁵, and Foreign Minister Kinga Göncz emphasized the significance of developing a new strategy several times during the summer of 2006. More than one and a half decades has passed since the abovementioned system of three foreign policy priorities was determined. Since then, however the conditions have changed and Hungary's place and role in the system of foreign affairs relations has changed radically. According to the Foreign Minister it has become topical to review and discuss with domestic experts in foreign policy and foreign policy makers and actors about the position and possibilities of Hungary in the world under the conditions of the 21st century. This joint work is managed by the Consultative Board made up of renowned Hungarian experts, examining the tasks not only from the viewpoint of Hungary's overall foreign relations

²⁵ "A történelmi felelősségről", http://www.mkogy.hu/internet/plsql/ogy_naplo.naplo_fadat_aktus?p_ckl=38&p_uln=8&p_felsz=1&p_felszig=14&p_aktus=2.

and the activities of the government. In spring of 2007 prestigious researcher workshops developed analyses in the themes defined by the Board, which were designed to serve as bases for discussions. The web site of the Foreign Ministry as well as the web site of the economic-political weekly HVG from February has brought weekly summaries of the studies serving as basis for the new strategy²⁶, which reflect first of all professional opinions and not the views of the Foreign Ministry or the government. In the first half of 2007 the professional workshops (*Világgazdasági Kutató Intézet (Institute of World Economics of the Hungarian Economy of Sciences)*, *Közép-Európai Egyetem (Central-European University)*, *Etnikai-Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet (Research Institute of Ethnic and National Minorities)*, and the *Demokratikus Átalakulásért Intézet (International Centre for Democratic Transition)* on their web sites, presented development of the strategy. According to the plans as a result of cooperation with the experts of the Foreign Ministry in the second half of 2007 the new foreign policy strategy is expected to be accomplished.

The High Politics

One of the first significant foreign affairs events of the second Gyurcsány government was the visit of U.S. President George Bush to Budapest in June 2006, who was paying visit on the occasion of commemorating the Hungarian revolution in 1956. On September 18 – one day after the leak-out of information on his famous speech, Ószöd – Ferenc Gyurcsány visited Russian President Vladimir Putin, with whom he negotiated economic mainly energy-related issues. It was very unusual that in a rather tense and unstable situation in domestic politics the Prime Minister decided for the half-day visit abroad. The opposition criticized Gyurcsány for his leaving the country in a tense situation and that he had not explained his speech which evoked a scandal in the public.

From his predecessor Péter Medgyessy Ferenc Gyurcsány inherited good relations with both the United States and Russia. Although in the policy of the biggest opposition party the Fidesz, the transatlantic (US) line is always present, it has been overshadowed several times. The relations between the Fidesz and the United States were good until the 2000, but after this date these relations have gradually deteriorated, partly due to reasons pertaining

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²⁶ <http://hvg.hu/kulugy/archive/page1.aspx>.

to (Hungarian) domestic politics. The policy of the Orbán government were criticized several times by the U.S. administration, moreover it cast a shadow on mutual relations that the Hungarian Armed Forces decided to procure the Swedish *Gripen* aircrafts instead of the F16 fighters, further that – according to the criticism – Viktor Orbán did not separate himself enough from the extreme nationalists in the tense situation following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.²⁷ The U.S. ambassador during the election campaign in Hungary in 2002 accused the Orbán government of supporting anti-Semite manifestations. The deterioration of the U.S.- Hungarian relations was also indicated by the fact that Viktor Orbán did not succeed in meeting George Bush during his visit to Washington, what forced the Prime Minister to inconvenient explanations in the middle of the election campaign.

The socialist-liberal coalition which came to power, has settled the relations not only with the United States, but also towards Russia which had been neglected by the previous Prime Minister. Péter Medgyessy paid an official visit both to Washington and Moscow, and at the time of the U.S. military operations in Iraq he signed the letter of the European Prime Ministers supporting the policy of the United States. Ferenc Gyurcsány could take advantage of this fortunate heritage in the field of foreign policy during the parliamentary elections campaign in 2006. On his first official visit to Budapest, which was during the election campaign, Vladimir Putin returned to Hungary precious books which were taken away to the Soviet Union from Sárospatak during WW II.

The Ukrainian-Russian ‘energy-war’ imposed a big challenge also to Hungarian diplomacy. The issue of pipelines for the transport of oil and gas and the construction of the gas pipeline (*Nabucco*), which would by-pass Russia, became of central interest to the European Union. Russia’s efforts are focused on the construction of the gas pipeline leading under the Black Sea, across the Balkan countries, but passing through Russia (the so called *Blue Stream*) as a counterpart to the *Nabucco* project. According to the plans both pipelines would cross Hungary, however, only the operation of one would be profitable. The Hungarian Prime Minister preferred the Russian project to the common European gas pipeline. The Opposition strongly opposed this policy, pointing at the risk of increasing Hungary’s dependence on Russia in the field of energy supply. The conflict between Fidesz and Russia came to the forefront at a conference held in March 2007, when the Russian Ambassador to Hungary got into a public debate with Viktor Orbán, the leader of the Fidesz. At the same time the Hungarian written and electronic press started

²⁷ L. Lengyel, *op.cit.*, pp. 202 – 204.

to write about the balanced relations between the Fidesz and the United States.

The President Playing a Role in Foreign Policy

In 2005 the parliament, with the support of the right-wing elected László Sólyom, the candidate of the civil organization *Védegylet* and former president of the Constitutional Court, the president of Hungary, against the MSZP-candidate, Katalin Szili.²⁸ Sólyom was ready to represent the ‘environmentalist’ goals of the nominating *Védegylet* and actively participated in environmental actions. He visited the national parks in Hungary and according to his creed he joined the actions against the NATO-radar in the Mecsek-mountains, he is interested into the gold mining facility in Verespatak, in Romania, and recently has stood up against the pollution of the Raba River coming from Austria. However, President Sólyom does not restrain his activities only to environmental protection, but – simultaneously with the placing of national policy in the background – he has become interested also in the cases of the Hungarian minorities living abroad, indicating an outline of another pole in the foreign policy in the environment of the Sándor palace.²⁹ The President has organized a series of workshops on the current situation and outlooks of the Hungarian minorities, with participation of several acknowledged Hungarian minority intellectuals and local experts.³⁰

In contrast with the polite and conflict-avoiding manner of the joint Hungarian-Romanian government meetings, during his visit to Romania in February 2007 László Sólyom brought up several delicate questions. Besides the case of the autonomous Hungarian language higher education and the issue of cultural autonomy he stood up – even undertaking a debate with Romanian President Traian Băsescu – for the territorial autonomy. One month later László Sólyom paid an unofficial visit to Romania to celebrate the Hungarian national holiday on March 15 together with Hungarian minorities living in Romania. This visit to Romania had also relevance for Hungarian domestic politics, since it caused a public debate that the President, due to his visit abroad, was absent on the ceremony of running up the flag in Kossuth-square.

While Hungarian-Slovak relations became even tenser in the second half of 2006, in late 2006 László Sólyom met Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič,

²⁸ Whom, however, was not supported by the SZDSZ, the MSZP’s coalition partner.

²⁹ The President’s Office.

³⁰ http://www.foruminst.sk/index.php?p=&t=a&Data_Id=112&xp=&Mid=&Lev=&Ind=0&P=konf,hu.

with whom they held joint presidential forums at the universities in both countries.

The visits of President Sólyom to Romania and Slovakia highlight not only the importance of the dialogue between Hungary and its neighbors and promote open discussion, but they also have a serious value of gestures – since they can help to remedy grievances caused by the referendum on dual citizenship.³¹

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³¹ R. Szónyi, “Egykor közös hazánk egésze”, *Heti Válasz* (March 22, 2007).