

Legitimisation Struggles in Hungarian Politics The Contours of Competing Foreign Policies in Prime Ministers' Speeches

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Abstract: Identity and foreign policy are posited as mutually determining one another in Constructivist theories of International Relations. The present paper focuses on the analysis of Hungarian foreign policy emanating from the identities of the political right and the left. The purpose is to collect the arguments legitimizing the foreign policies pursued by the two sides and see to what extent they add up to a coherent foreign policy, which the country will follow. Despite the rather tense relationship between the two dominant parties, the analysis arrives to the surprising coherence of foreign policy. The paper uses the discourse analysis method to focus on the Prime Ministers' speeches, of the two sides, as the main spokesmen of the dominant parties' foreign policy lines.

Keywords: constructivism, identity, Hungarian foreign policy, regional policy, relationship to the EU, relationship to NATO, Fidesz (Association of Young Democrats), MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party)

INTRODUCTION

The undertaking of this paper began during the 2006 campaign for the parliamentary elections. It grew out of an “empirical” interest to collect the arguments, which appeared in the prime ministers' speeches,¹ in order to see whether they made up a “coherent” foreign policy plan, for the country to follow. Hungarian foreign policy seems to have a difficult time communicating abroad, as it is the site of fierce competition between the political right and left.

Two theoretical approaches to International Relations (IR), which value the role of language, are Constructivism and Discourse Analysis (DA).² The relationship between identity and foreign policy however, is often taken for granted in both approaches.³ Both approaches draw attention to the interpretative nature, which underlies all language use, beyond mere description. From this perspective a valid analysis is neither the comparison with “asocial” concepts,⁴ nor the comparison with an independently existing reality.⁵ That different facts count as relevant in competing narratives,⁶ is the underlying Constructivist recognition. What is relevant for a Constructivist analysis is the illumination of context, so that competing interpretations of

events may unfold and meaning may be recovered within this context. This can be done by recording the language usage of the parties involved and taking into account the influence that their speech had on their audiences. Thus, this should explain the focus of this paper.

The influence that speech has over its audience expresses the persuasive intentions underlying language usage. It can express one's attempts at legitimisation, or it can demand the audience's support for a specific policy from party-members, the political elite, or the electorate. The support/critique of the party, the support/critique of the opposition and ultimately the support/sanction of voters during elections can measure the success of such acts of speech; hence, the time of the analysis was set during the 2006 local elections.

Interpreting speeches as an act of legitimisation implies that "consistency" is less important than the arguments presented for changes in behaviour, as demonstrated by Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986). Therefore, changes in policy need to be explained. Whether this implies change in comparison with the policies of the previous government or simply the inability to fulfil obligations (*vis-à-vis* regional or global actors such as Europe or the US); such explanations are often met with opposition because the audience is not convinced by the arguments presented for change. "Consistency", therefore, may be better expressed as an overlap or an agreement between both sides regarding certain lines of foreign policy. In the case of individual players, consistency can mean either the absence of contradictions between different foreign policy goals/values or the non-existence of a discrepancy between foreign policy lines communicated to different audiences.

The context of the present paper is regarding the debate over the priorities of the Hungarian foreign policy since the regime change, i.e., the moment which establishes the reference point for the identity of major players, as well the dividing line in foreign policy compared to the Communist regime. The contest between the two prime ministers can even be seen as symbolic if we delineate the two radically different situations the regime change found them in and their different answers to it. It can also be seen as symbolic because of the time frame in which it takes place: Two men in their forties starting their political competition at the end of the Cold War. Ferenc Gyurcsány, who first became prime minister in 2004, had been affiliated with politics before the regime change, within the confines of the Communist Youth Organisation (KISZ). The regime change pushed him to found the Democratic Youth Organisation (DEMISZ) in April 1989 and to lobby unsuccessfully for the participation of this organisation on the third side of the National Roundtable Talks (Romsics, 2003: 140). This third side consisted of what we would like to call, civil society organisations in a democratic society. They were the satellite organisations of the former Communist regime. Most of these organisations (except some trade unions) disappeared from the political scene after the first free elections. This applies to DEMISZ as well, which was discouraged from participating in the roundtable talks by the opposition. This decision broke the political career of Ferenc Gyurcsány for more than a decade, until he returned to politics as an adviser to Prime Minister, Péter Medgyessy during the 2002 election

campaign. From 2004 he succeeded Medgyessy as Prime Minister. Gyurcsány remembers this forced break in his political career as: “a blow which had him on the ground for 6 months”. During these interim years he was invited to work for a business. Here he proved to be a successful businessman, becoming a millionaire sometimes with dubious transactions; transactions which he described recently as “acceptable in an emerging democracy” (HVG interview, 30. 03. 2006).

By contrast, the regime change found Viktor Orbán, the present head of the most important opposition party, FIDESZ, and Prime Minister from 1998 until 2002, on a scholarship in Oxford. After 8 months (1989–1990) Orbán interrupted his scholarship and decided to run for candidacy in the first free elections.⁷ The participation of FIDESZ and of the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions as independent organisations⁸ was extricated from the Party as one of the first successes and signs of unity for the Opposition Round Table (EKA).⁹ The position of FIDESZ during this time was described as radically anticommunist. In one of his first speeches at Imre Nagy’s¹⁰ funeral, one of the few occasions where the Hungarian opposition has the opportunity to “test” its power,¹¹ Orbán expressed himself with astonishing frankness and called for the total withdrawal of the Russian army and the uncompromising condemnation of the Communist leaders. Romsics, remarked that Orbán’s speech stood out from the other five because it compelled his audience to take an unambiguous stance with respect to the communist period:

“We stand unable to comprehend the fact that those who humiliated the revolution and its prime minister in chorus not so long ago, have today suddenly realized that they are the continuers of Imre Nagy’s reform politics. Similarly, we do not understand how the party and state leaders who ordered that we be taught from books that distorted the revolution, today scramble for touching these coffins, as if they were ‘talismans bringing good luck.’ ... We are not satisfied with the empty promises of communist politicians, which mean nothing to them. What we need to achieve is that the party in power, even if it wanted to, could not use force against us. Only then can we avoid coffins and delayed funerals, comparable to the one we are witnessing today.” (Romsics, 2003: 155–156)¹²

This speech foreshadowed the struggles both sides would face in order to appropriate the heritage of the Revolution as an important source of legitimisation and identity. It also shows that the left-right divide in Hungary is historically loaded, due to the former Communist dictatorship¹³ and the complicated nature of the regime change. According to Fidesz, the regime change called for the integration of such conservative values, as the family or national identity, alongside values that were often associated with the left, such as equal opportunity (20. 04. 1995; 23. 05. 2004). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the former Communist parties did not want a regime change but were forced to accept it by external and internal circumstances. The reforms initiated by Gorbachev, and the changes these reforms brought about, culminated into the so called “round-table talks”. That the sharing of power took place; and that Hungary had unconstrained

and free elections as early as 1990 (Stark and Bruszt, 1992 [1991]) was, next to Gorbachev's non-intervention policy, the success of the opposition (Sajó, in Elster 1996: 69–98).

An additional influence on Hungarian party politics was the transformation of Western European political parties. The European tendency towards the redefinition of parties, not as ideological but as centrist people's parties, is happening partly in response to a competitive demand but also in response to the changes in the organisation of labour and economy. As a consequence, Hungary finds herself today, like many other European parties, trying to define and cope with the changes that are taking place around her. Such changes can be interpreted as the beginning of a new period, when it is no longer traditional "ideologies, but visions about the future that compete" (Fidesz, 08. 06. 1996). This makes Hungarian answers potentially interesting from a European point of view.

If we assume that "the present", starting with the end of the Cold War, raises many particular questions about the future, we can structure our argument to focus on the answers to such problems by the two major parties: i.e. the Socialists and Fidesz. And so, I turn to the analysis of foreign policy with a focus on: 1) identity, 2) foreign policy emanating from identity, 3) tensions within Europe, 4) visions for the future of Europe, 5) the constitutive role of Hungary in Europe, and finally, 6) tensions among trans-Atlantic relations. This paper confirms the theoretical assumption about the link between identity and foreign policy. The foreign policy line pursued by the two sides is deducible from identity. These add up to a surprisingly coherent foreign policy that the country follows, despite fierce competition between both sides. Similarly, the paper confirms that the priorities of foreign policy, such as the insistence of an American presence in Europe despite the internal tensions this entails, are incomprehensible without presenting the security concerns that Central and Eastern European states (CEE) faced during the post-Cold War years.¹⁴ The sections address each problem presenting the ideas of the right and the left respectively. A concluding chapter focuses on the problem of creating a coherent foreign policy, which emanates from the two sides.

1. IDENTITY

1. 1 FIDESZ – Orbán-freedom

"Western", in the sense of "European", "free" and "democratic" has been central to the identity-building of the Fidesz party since the regime change. However, following the end of the Cold War, the tying of Hungarian identity to freedom and democracy was problematic. In a speech delivered before the upcoming European Parliamentary elections, Orbán addressed this challenge by focusing his attention on Europe's many problems with freedom over the 20th century, thus casting some doubt on the automatic association of the West and Europe with freedom. The steps of his argument are as follows: 1) historically the West did not hold the position of freedom for Hungarians, 2) the place of freedom was not necessarily in Europe either, 3) during the greater part of the 20th century Europe was not free because it was ruled by

one dictatorship or another, 4) between the two World Wars the dictatorships came from the Western part of Europe, 5) freedom is neither synonymous with Europe nor is it an automatic factor, 6) In the Yalta Agreement there was no talk of a free Europe, only a liberated Europe, 7) The Western part of Europe was free only because (unlike Eastern Europe) it was liberated by a free country, 8) a liberated Europe can only become truly free when it is fully unified, which can be seen as the “true end” of the Cold War (05. 03. 2004) see also (06. 12. 2003, 12. 12. 2003).

As in the past the threat to Europe’s freedom does not necessarily come from new or future member states. In his response to questions concerned with the potential threat of a move to the extreme right in Hungary, Orbán answers:

“The dilemma is as old as democracy. How can democracy guard itself from non-democratic forces? It is not in Brussels that the solution to this question lies, but in the constitution of member states. When it comes to the advance of populism today, this is the problem of Western- and not of Central Europe. ... Here freedom is what is attractive” (17. 06. 2000).

Similar arguments that call for qualifications of the meaning of Europe appear in earlier speeches as well. Belonging to Europe is a question of identity for Hungarians. It is a loss that we remember and mourn, like: “our grandfather’s watch, lost at the time of the occupation, or the grocery store, lost at nationalisation, or the family land forced into the cooperative,” but less in terms of a cost and benefit calculation. However, “the commitment that we have a place at the table of Europe where decisions that have an effect on Europe, in the broadest sense, are made – well this feeling is strong” (19. 05. 2000).

When it comes to the definition of Europe as a geographical and cultural space, it is even more “difficult for a Hungarian to accept the idea that now, we have to join Europe” given that Hungary is “in the very centre of Europe” and that in “our cultural aspirations, we have always thought of ourselves as a Western country”. Our European membership is not a question of trade and economy since in these respects: “Hungary is already part of the European Union”. Many arguments which surface at the top of such critiques state that: “the obstacle to Hungary’s EU membership is not Hungary’s un-preparedness”, but rather the indecision of the European Union itself, the absence of “a clear, determinate strategy, that would include both substantive elements and a time horizon” (06. 04. 2000).

The underlying position is that “we are Europeans and we can become a member of the European Union, because we are Hungarians”: i.e. “[w]e are and can remain Europeans by remaining ourselves”. In other words, there is no contradiction between “our EU membership and the passing on of our national values and traditions” (30. 11. 2000). Equally, this implies a rejection of the idea of old and new Europe (12. 12. 2003) and an interpretation of our EU membership as the reunification of Europe, for: “...Hungary never left the community of Western European people; it has always been the agreements by great powers that have torn us out from this community” (26. 03. 2002).

Other speeches attempted to support the identification of “Hungarian” and “European” identities with arguments derived from the Hungarian society and the Hungarian people who see their interests in peace and stability. These were described as, two additional elements of the Hungarian identity. When given the freedom to choose, Hungarian society unhesitatingly chose a democratic form of rule in 1990, and undertook the huge sacrifices related to the creation of a market economy without organising strikes or protests against the painful steps towards transition. Accordingly, Hungarian governments could work out their full terms, thereby contributing to the political stability of the region. Externally, this stabilising role was realised by Hungary’s NATO and EU membership and paradoxically, by the presence of Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries:

“We see with satisfaction that the legitimate organisations of Hungarian minorities in their own countries – are reliable coalition partners to the political forces committed to democracy, the market economy and the Euro-Atlantic integration – whether they are in the government or in the opposition” (20. 02. 1999) and also (27. 07. 2002).

...

“...since 1990 (i.e. the moment of freedom) Hungarians across the borders, living within the area of whichever succession state, have not only not used violence to reach their goals but have not even mentioned the possibility of using force. It has become clear that there is such an ability or skill, that we call constitutional skill. It manifests itself in such a way that when an opportunity arrives, members of the Hungarian minorities do not “grasp arms” but rather they come together and formulate party manifestos, draft constitutions, find out new procedures, and new forms of internal electoral rules and so on” (19. 05. 2000) and also (31. 05. 2001).

An explanation to this could be found in the third component of the Hungarian identity, which has historical, cultural and psychological roots in Central Europe. The Central European component of the Hungarian identity is strengthened by the presence of the Hungarian minorities in the surrounding countries.

Consistent with the above mentioned elements of identity, Fidesz rejected the possibility of mid-term elections because of the Socialist government’s low expectations for his party’s performance during the 2004 European Parliamentary elections as well as “the leaking scandal”, which followed shortly after the elections in 2006 (see below). Each time Orbán appealed to the country’s need for stability:

“In Hungary it is a question of honour for the actual governing forces to be able to govern through the four years. It is interesting that this is not the case everywhere. It turned out to be so in Hungary. Since 1990 everyone – perhaps even the voters, but the media surely – thought about stability as the most important factor. Thus all forces, who undertook the responsibility of government, had equally convinced themselves, as they had convinced public opinion, that they were able to provide predictability and stability for the country, and that they would be able to govern for four years. Therefore the idea of a governing party today to

want to hold mid-term elections, I think can be no more than silly guesswork or gossip” (28. 03. 2003).

Following “the leaking scandal”, Orbán suggested that an interim government be set up. It would be made up of experts chosen by the Socialists and contain a limited mandate and office term, in order to lead the country out of the present economic/moral crisis. This suggestion was expected to help avoid the costs and delays associated with organising new elections while solving the problem of legitimacy in the new government.

1.2 MSZP – Gyurcsány – progress

The Socialist Party’s servicing of a foreign totalitarian power, acknowledged in 1990, posed an identity crisis for the left. It didn’t affect the left in terms of national identity but rather in terms of the party’s identity and its continuity and broke with the previous regime. In principle it was not inconceivable that the Hungarian left be reorganized by a party other than the Socialists, a party without a Communist past¹⁵ (e.g. the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP), that held a long tradition that was forced into exile following the Communist takeover in 1948–1949). MSZDP was a member of the Socialist International without interruption until 1990, and it held veto power on the Socialist Party’s membership. That a strong alternative party to the Socialists did not emerge is a testimony to the power of the party and its ability to prevent such reorientation of the left-leaning electorate.¹⁶

In 2004, following the European parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Medgyessy was removed and replaced by Ferenc Gyurcsány as the new head of government. Gyurcsány parachuted into the party as an outsider due to the help of Medgyessy. He was an independent consultant – and later Sports Minister to Medgyessy. His wife also had a close relationship to the party.¹⁷ Gyurcsány followed the identity crisis of the party closely and contributed to its resolution both ideologically and personally through his appointment to office. In an article dated from 1999 he states that the non-existence of a political program is merely the symptom; but the solution lies in the reorganisation of the party, which in turn requires overcoming the identity crisis of the left. His answer to the latter problem was not to cut its ties with the Communist past, as otherwise suggested publicly, but as Orbán foresaw some years earlier, the appropriation of 1956 and 1989.

“There is only one thing that is worthless to do: it is to write a program. The organisation, the communication, and the leadership of the party have to be transformed and only these changes can create the basis for reformulation and representation of a new political message. This does not mean that the organisation would be more important than the political program, but it does mean that in the present situation, without changing the functioning of MSZP [the Hungarian Socialist Party]; even the most advanced program would sound empty.

...

An important part of the membership and leadership of MSZP suffers from an identity crisis. Uncertainty is caused by at least five factors: 1) a lurking shame, only partly overcome by the unlawful actions committed a

long time ago in the name of the Hungarian left 2) the early electoral victory of 1994, which has impeded the inner transformation of the party 3) until recently the half-hearted support of the social and economic policy of the 1994–1998 government 4) the fear of having lost the confidence of the society as a result of dubious business transactions by some of the party elite and 5) the sincere but publicly unacknowledged fear that modern answers are not being offered and the interest in returning to power is the only thing which holds the party together.

...

It is easier to be a member of a party that has no past. Whether we avow it or not, we are all heirs. Most of us did not ask for it but simply received it. It would be good if at least the socialists were able to believe: The one-and-a-half-century-old heritage of the left offers ample possibilities, in terms of models, ideals and integrity that can be proudly represented by the political heirs. Only referring to the most recent examples: The endeavours by the Reform Communists of the 1950s towards freedom culminating in the 1956 revolution; the breath of fresh air brought by the new economic mechanism of 1968; the renewed social and political opening of the 1980s; our role in the preparation of the political, legal and economic conditions of the regime change. Should we be ashamed of all of this? Not only would we, but the whole country as well, would be poorer without them. Many politicians and intellectuals belonging to MSZP want to testify to its democratic commitment and “market party” convictions, and as a consequence behave as if they forgot the traditional content of the left, the ideals of freedom, equality and solidarity” (28. 05. 1999).

The second strategy was to link the Hungarian left with the progressive “tradition” in Europe, and label its opposition “un-progressive”.¹⁸ In a conference entitled, “Progressive thoughts about Europe” jointly organized by Tony Blair, Gyurcsány refers to the left as: “We, the European progressive” or “the progressive governments.”

“History and progress stood on the side of Europe in its victory over the Nazi tyranny, it stood on our side in the defeat of Communism, and it stands on our side today as we create a prescient program for the Union.” (15. 10. 2004)

Linking the Hungarian left with the European left and the New Left in particular meant that the identity crisis of the MSZP was thereby dissolved into the general uncertainty of the political left worldwide, due to globalization (28. 05. 1999; 23. 09. 2002; 20. 01. 2004) and the transformation of traditional class-structure. The suggested remedy – the need for the synthesis of the traditional programs of the left and the right (05. 02. 2003; 20. 01. 2004) – allowed Gyurcsány to appropriate the more successful elements of the opposition into his own program. After 40 years of Communism, the initiation of the words “bourgeois” and “civilian” (we have an identical term for the two words) has to be credited to Fidesz. Fidesz chose a strategy to markedly differentiate his party from the left and provide a real alternative during the 1998 electoral campaign. This was a rather risky enterprise in a society that had heard of nothing else than the vices

committed by the “bourgeois traitor”. The use of these words from the Socialist Party can be read as an attempt by the Hungarian left to reconcile its identity with the bourgeois basis of democracy, which was deemed “underdeveloped” within the country. “A strong civilian” attitude, i.e. “wealthy citizens in the financial, moral and intellectual sense” would be necessary. “This is the foundation of autonomy and the guarantee that he [voters]” will not “be bought or intimidated”, essentially, the view that “bourgeois society” in Hungary “is necessary because democracy is underdeveloped”:

“The left-liberal [reference to the coalition of MSZP and SZDSZ] side fears unjustifiably to be disadvantaged if it is not like the political right. It should not want to be like that! ...

...

One of Fidesz’s biggest lies is that he proclaims Hungary to be bourgeois when it explicitly builds on the attitudes of subjects: The only one amongst us who does bourgeois politics is ourselves” (29. 07. 2005).

For the same reasons, the Socialists see in “bourgeois modernization that big national issue which can bind the party forces of the democratic centre together” and transcend party lines. However, since what makes people into a nation is also solidarity towards those who cannot follow, the interpretation of solidarity is where liberals, conservatives and social democrats differ (19. 09. 2005).

The third element of Gyurcsány’s strategy consisted of de-linking the Socialist Party from the past; this included the Communist past and the regime change:

“We would like to do a new kind of politics, which is not occupied with the problems of regime change; it is not from there that it derives its own identity. I would like MSZP to be the representative of a broad, left-wing political tradition, ... which makes proud patriotism its centre [of politics], is able to embrace such conservative ideals as respect for the strengthening of family, acceptance of the positive social role of faith, and that bravely addresses questions that its predecessors did not, such as the question of lustration, that we have addressed.”

In response to having recently been called a “Communist politician turned down at the age of 28”, by a minister of his own government, he answered:

“The country is not interested in that. All Hungarian politicians including the leader of the opposition were held hostage to all the conflicts of regime change and of the political world they have created. Today I do not remind people of the past. Rather what comes to people’s minds is that he is too daring, very civilian, and sometimes, perhaps that he even talks nonsense” (16. 02. 2005).

Tying the left to the progressive tradition of Europe has had many consequences for the definition of the identity of the country. While Orbán regarded it as important to emphasise that “we are Europeans because we are Hungarians”, the main point of emphasis by the left is the shared European culture and identity. National identities depend on European identities. While this is more often the view of the Socialists and the Liberals within the European Parliament, it undoubtedly delineates much of the expected

progress for the future development of the European Union as it describes the present situation. (See the speech: “We have to urge the enlargement of Europe”.¹⁹

2. FOREIGN POLICY

2.1 FIDESZ – Orbán

Fidesz derives the three pillars of the Hungarian foreign policy from the three components of the Hungarian identity. “Hungarian diplomacy has to focus primarily on a Western orientation: First of all, on NATO and then the European Union”. But as a Central European country we should be “working towards a Central European construction” (31. 07. 2000). Finally our accession to NATO and the European Union raises many questions about how the benefits of membership can be turned into benefits for the Hungarian minorities who will not become members with us (20. 02. 1999; 07. 06. 2000). In order to answer these questions, the Orbán government set up a permanent consultative body, MÁÉRT (Hungarian Standing Conference) in March, 1999. MÁÉRT cooperated with some of the leading Hungarian politicians from surrounding countries, in order to find common solutions to pressing matters in which the government’s decisions would have an effect on minorities (07. 06. 2000).

Both the status law,²⁰ influenced by the policies of countries having members living outside the EU, (e.g. England, Portugal, Spain and Italy (31. 07. 2000) and later the idea of dual citizenship emerged as a result of these joint consultations.

MÁÉRT was not created to influence the politics of the neighbouring countries. Regarding the difficulties faced by Hungarian minority communities to act in unity, Orbán declines to answer whether the government can help create this unity. The dual challenge for Hungarian minorities “to maintain their diversity and, at the same time, be able to create and exert a common political will” (26. 07. 2000) is not dissimilar from the position of the political right in Hungary, where effective political influence requires the organised cooperation instead of the competition among political parties²¹. The question comes up equally with regard to the best form of minority protection. In this connection the government does not go beyond noting that: “In Western Europe the minority question has been settled by the existence of some kind of autonomy” (19. 10. 2000).

Furthermore, the awareness that: prospects for the improvement of the quality of life exceed the activity of political parties in Hungary, leads to the recognition that the quality of life for Hungarians living in Romania also depends on civil society. For this reason what is important is not that parties form governments but that:

“we build our small Hungarian civic world, which is strong enough irrespective of the actual constitution of the government; ...through the creation and the strengthening of the institutions of a civic Hungary, a world as we would like it to be, in which we would feel well and could call our own, one that no government can disregard in the future”.
(27.07.2002)²²

The translation of the rhetoric above into a political action, leads to the launching of the “civil circles movement”. This, with the participation of sympathizers, is expected to meet the Hungarian Socialist Party’s capacity by the time of the 2006 elections and counterbalance its dominance over the media and cultural life in Hungary. (18. 10. 2002) It is also a form of direct democracy. (See section below on the future of Europe.)

The real long term solution for Hungary regarding the minority question is to bring the surrounding countries into the EU and NATO, a solution which is of joint interest for Hungary and its neighbouring states, as well as a guarantee for peace and stability within the region. It could equally prevent the emergence of a new iron curtain (20. 02. 1999). When Fidesz was in government, this led to more active regional politics than during the time of Socialist politicians. The intent being to:

“... [Seal] the three pillars of the Hungarian foreign policy: Euro-Atlantic integration, the nurturing of the Good Neighbour Policy and the national policy for the support of Hungarian minorities abroad” into one coherent foreign policy, in such a way that: the three “are not mutually exclusive but mutually supportive goals” (20.02.1999). See also (06. 04. 2000, 19. 10. 2000.)

Orbán rejects the accusations by the Socialists that Hungary would have the ambitions of a middle power:

“I am speaking of a partnership and not of power. Middle-power thoughts were views from fifty years ago. They have been swept away by the wind. Not only because Hungary cannot successfully aspire to such a role, but because such roles no longer exist” (31. 07. 2000).

With the passing of time and the realization of our NATO membership, it is possible to extend the “Central European region” and to sincerely identify with the Balkans (i.e., Romania, 24. 07. 2004 as well Serbia, (3. 11. 2004), something, which was not advisable to do at the time of the regime change or the Balkan War. The different national strategies of Hungary and Romania can be seen in the expenditure figures, e.g., Romania has a higher military expenditure. This was another reason for Hungary’s support of Romania’s membership into the EU. Being in the same alliance, “allows us to continue to spend the larger part of our resources for the development of trade and our economy and limit our military expenditures to the ones required by our NATO obligations” (27. 07. 2002). Since an EU accession means an accession in the legal sense: “to catch up with the developed European countries within three decades” and achieve “the parallel rise of society on a mass scale” is the long-term goal of the 1998–2000 government (18. 10. 2002; 19. 05. 2000). This is facilitated by the emergence of “a new zone of economic growth in Europe, stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea”, i.e., the area of a largely interpreted Central European region (19. 05. 2000).

“The re-unification, without the modification of borders, of the Hungarian nation” coincides with “the current fashion in Europe, [and] the main direction of European development” towards “greater unity lifting frontiers” (30. 11. 2000). Thus, Hungarians living beyond the borders can help ease the economy’s demand for labour, in a country where birth and mortality rates are some of the worst in Europe.

“Therefore it is in the last but still acceptable moment that we are creating the status law, which is the first step among others towards the creation of this “freedom of movement” or “communicating vessel” so that the labour force, within the Hungarian cultural region of the Carpathian Basin, can function according to the interests of the Hungarian economy and the individual interests of the persons involved” (31. 05. 2001).

Where there was tension regarding the fore mentioned three goals, the Orbán government was willing to incur some conflicts with the European Union, as was a similar case with both Croatia and Austria. Orbán repeated his position that: “the way to the pacification of the South Slavic region and the creation of a stable peace is by inviting the suitable countries to participate in international life”. He discouraged criticism from the European Union by making an appeal under the special status of neighbours and asking that Hungary be allowed to act according to her own neighbourhood policy (14. 11. 1999).

In connection with Austria similar arguments emerged. Hungary was the first to invite Austria after the EU had isolated her, i.e. following the 2000 election’s results. The justifications for its actions were not unlike those it used for Croatia. The driving principle for government policy being that newly formed governments should first be given confidence and should be “judged” only on the basis of their political deeds (02. 06. 2000). Furthermore, one sees a neighbouring country about to rediscover her Central-European identity (19. 04. 2000) also (02. 06. 2000). The Austrian case also led to the criticism that, the EU’s position was not the result of a constitutionally grounded procedure because it should have based its judgment on either the principle of subsidiarity (i.e. and say that the EU accepts the opinion of the Austrian constitutional court on the democratic nature of the government) or on a supranational procedure (17. 06. 2000).

In other words, the prospect of EU membership and an independent foreign policy are not a contradiction in terms:

“EU politics can never be the only important direction for Hungary. Our joining of the European Union does not mean that we will move geographically away from the Carpathian Basin. Since many of the neighbouring countries will not join the European Union with us, it is necessary that we continue to have a strong regional policy. One step into this direction was an invitation for the cooperation of the Visegrad four” (23. 07. 2001).

2.2 MSZP–Gyurcsány

The Socialist government chose a more ambitious foreign policy that “dealt less with the past and more with the present and future, less with ideology and more with practical questions, i.e. it [intended to]follows a realpolitik”. This statement expresses a critique of, and break with, the Orbán government’s foreign policy line. Hungary’s “EU membership should not mean that it is locked into the European Union since the potential for growth within the European Union in these years is far below growth rates in other regions”. The answer, however, is not to tie the country’s economic growth to the more dynamic growth of a widely interpreted Central European region,

encompassing the Balkans, but “to look for developing dynamic markets” like: Russia, South-East Asia and the US. (“The American visit was a breakthrough”.) The consolidation of relations in these four directions, i.e. the US, the European Union, Russia, and China was considered to be the success of the Medgyessy-Gyurcsány government (02. 03. 2006).

The most important difference is in regional policy. The key words for regional policy are *stability* and *responsibility*, which are not interpreted “as givens” and parts of the national identity but as goals to strive for. In his definition of the relationship between Hungary and her neighbours, Gyurcsány speaks less about the country’s Central European identity, rooted in shared experiences, and more about the unacknowledged difficulties of Hungary’s neighbours, who also struggle towards building a state.

“We Hungarians ... sometimes believe that in the previous centuries our challenge was the greatest challenge a nation has had to face. And then if we open the chronicles we can see that in this region ...almost all peoples and states had to face the same challenge. Poles, Czechs, Lithuanians, Estonians, Hungarians, Serbians, and Romanians have all fought through the last centuries in order to preserve, strengthen, and create their own statehood.”

Over the course of the 20th century, Hungary gave two unfortunate answers to this “dual challenge” to create stability and act responsibly towards the Hungarian nation as a whole. In the interwar period, stability was given up in exchange for responsibility and politics aimed at the revision of the borders. Following the Second World War, the responsibility for Hungarians living beyond the borders was given up for stability. (“Hungary wants to live in peace and security with her neighbours”).

The most important means of stability is economic prosperity, which can be achieved within Europe through the analogous concerns for the open market and solidarity. For the same reason EU membership can be the best solution for minority protection:

“[I]t is prosperity that facilitates the living together of cultures; it is through prosperity that the shadow of incomprehension between different nations fade out” (“We have to urge the enlargement of Europe”) (21. 01. 2005).

While both governments see a resolution to the problem of Hungarian minorities in the enlargement of the EU, the Gyurcsány government wants “minority protection to be embedded in a common European identity and grounded on an enlightened, civic and liberal human rights foundation”, one that links the protection of individual rights to “the protection of cultural, religious and other types of identities” (20. 01. 2004). According to this position, the protection of individual rights presupposes some form of protection of collective rights. (“At the distribution of Awards for Minorities”.)

“We should protect the rights of every one, so to the question: who am I, one can answer freely. ... [If] this is an inalienable right of man. then this is not merely the right of one man, but the right of a community of men who answer identically to the same question. In other words these rights are not merely individual rights, but collective rights as well.”

Consistent with this approach, Gyurcsány speaks of multiple identities, which he describes as complementary rather than competitive (“At the distribution of Awards for Minorities”). If it is true that multiple identities are not competitive, but complementary, then autonomy or any other institutional development for the protection of collective identities, should be regarded as a source of stability rather than instability (21. 01. 2005; 16. 02. 2005).

At the same time, the government lays great emphasis on the prosperity of Hungarians in their homeland, a position that does not necessarily follow the human rights/progressive left approach. Furthermore, it does not follow the government’s interpretation of the broader European goals towards competitiveness and solidarity or the free movement of labour within the European Union (Talk delivered in the debate of the new government’s program) (09. 01. 2005).

To accomplish these goals, a rather complicated five-point program was suggested by the government (09. 01. 2005). This implied the abolition of institutions created by the Orbán governments, including MÁÉRT and the status law. In his explanation Gyurcsány accused Fidesz of stepping symbolically, by making “a law that caused only problems, one that the neighbouring countries refused to apply” (21. 01. 2005). In contradiction to this he argues that the minority policy:

“[Is a policy] that the [Fidesz] government in power until 2002 has officially announced to the Venice Commission, and it has enjoyed a consensus until 2002 to 2003 ... The referendum organized for the automatic extension of dual citizenship has unfairly broken the agreements already existing in the Parliament majority, with respect to this question.” (“The government is committed to weighing the advantages and disadvantages”²³)

The government’s policy, vis-à-vis Hungarian minorities, might be hostage to the previously voiced threat, which states: The extension of Hungarian citizenship would automatically mean the migration of 23 million Romanians into the country.²⁴ The recently leaked scandal also brought attention to an earlier acknowledgment by Ferenc Gyurcsány that, the government’s argument against both the status law and the referendum was built on his construction of the threat, which was obviously false (József Debreczeni, 2006: 208–209).²⁵ While this certainly helped the left win the 2002 elections (Debreczeni, 2006: 210), it also signalled the end of a period when foreign policy was spared from domestic power struggles between both sides.

3. INTRA – EUROPEAN TENSIONS

3.1 FIDESZ – Orbán

It is not surprising that with the EU enlargement new member states have an influence on EU politics and engage in the self-definition of Europe. It is precisely the reason why some countries urged for an early accession. The questions to be answered are: Do the new member states define themselves as *Euroskeptics* regarding the common European foreign and security policy and if so, why? Here, the speeches point to two possible suggestions: First,

the disappointment at the end of the Cold War that Hungary would “soon” belong to the Western security system and second, the experience of the war in Yugoslavia.

To better understand the security concerns of the country it is worth mentioning the two dates of Hungary’s NATO and EU accession. Hungary joined NATO in March 1999 and the EU on May 1, 2004. This meant that during its most vulnerable period as a weak and nascent democracy, the “power vacuum” reigned in the region and the security of the country was in doubt. For over a decade, former Socialist countries belonged neither to the Warsaw Pact nor to the Western Alliance. The last units of the Soviet army left the country on March 10, 1990. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved almost a year later on the 25th of February in 1991. In 1991 on August 19th and 21st, Soviet tanks appeared in Moscow to attempt a coup d’état against Gorbachev. The Soviet Union was dissolved on the 6th and 7th of December in 1991 and Gorbachev announced his resignation on the 25th of December that same year. Given the well-known difficulties of succession within Communist countries, Gorbachev’s resignation was far from reassuring regarding the future.

Other external events took place during this “long” decade. Czechoslovakia dissolved peacefully in 1993, whereas the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia overshadowed the whole decade. The fate of Hungarian minorities living in both dissolving federations was uncertain. Within these circumstances, Hungary’s accession into the Euro-Atlantic security community was of the utmost importance. In an interview given to the Polish weekly, *Wprost*, on the occasion of Hungary’s accession into NATO, Orbán voiced his disappointment:

“... [L]et us speak straightforwardly, the reintegration of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary into the Euro-Atlantic alliance where, by the way, we have always belonged, is not the merit of Europe. ...In 1990 the Soviet Empire collapsed, the iron curtain was demolished – and in the following nine years, Europe was unable to guarantee acceptable and equal rights to Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary” (12. 08. 1999).

According to Orbán, Hungarians were protected from the Milosevic regime because Hungary was a NATO member. Regarding the: “Hungarian minorities of Voivodina (we are here speaking of a group of more than 300 000 people) they are not simply a Hungarian minority but a NATO minority” (14. 11. 1999). NATO’s intervention “in the protection of a minority group” was interpreted as symbolic (12. 04. 1999). The inefficiency of Western states in the management of the Balkan War only reinforced the experience of the Cold War (that NATO and America’s presence in Europe is a precondition for European security).

This does not mean that the Orbán government did not recognize the potential benefits for security through EU membership. On the contrary, his disappointment stemmed from the view that not only EU membership, but also “the integration process itself was an important tool for the consolidation of problematic areas” (27. 05. 2000). This and the continuous postponement of Europe to establish a clear timetable for accession made him sceptical. In May 2000, Orbán noted with regret that: “[w]e are close to

joining the European Union, although I have to note with sorrow, that since 1990 we are still five years from accession" (19.05.2000). Similarly: (17. 06. 2000): "By the mid-1990's, a smaller group could have been prepared for accession. They could have made enlargement a priority. This was not the way it happened and we are continuously paying the price" (and also 11. 02. 2002).

The status law and the negotiations of enlargement were additional sources of tension. Departing from the view that: "Brussels is not Moscow and that the EU is not identical with the COMECON" and: "[thus] it is not possible to relate uncritically to the EU"; Orbán blamed the EU "for being ungenerous and tight-fisted in the course of negotiations over the conditions of the accession", as well as for the disregard of any procedure in the formulation of the claim by the EU Commission that the status law contradicts the EU law (25. 01. 2003). According to Orbán, the last 50 years did not prepare Hungary for these debates and as a consequence:

"[I]t is not only the government that sometimes shows the reactions of subjects, but from time to time the public opinion of the whole country. This manifests itself in the continuous fear over what they will say in Brussels, or if we [will] have debates with our neighbours or allied partners" (25. 01. 2003).

Orbán interprets the tensions in connection with Hungary's accession and the status law as emanating from the double standards, which the EU applies to the detriment of the new members. This he states: "go[es] against the principles of equal competition, common sense and impartiality" (06. 02. 2003; 23. 07. 2005). Despite these tensions, Orbán compares the significance of Hungary's entry into the European Union with the regime change (28. 03. 2003; 12. 12. 2003), and describes his position as sober and expressing a healthy amount of Euro-scepticism. It is this healthy scepticism: "which has separated the citizens of Western nations for decades from our world; a world, which expected the final solution from a perfect social system and unconditional loyalty to the party" (06. 02. 2003).

Our entry into the European Union was equally our first accomplishment of an important foreign policy goal and of the "old dream":

"... that Hungarians from both sides of the borders could choose representatives in the same parliament. ... [Furthermore] With our membership into the European Union, [the] Hungarian language has not simply become a protected language of Europe, but one of the official languages of Europe" (05. 03. 2004); for this reason, Orbán concludes "Hungarian national interests and the future of Europe are closely linked" (23. 07. 2005).

Orbán's criticism of the government's policy towards the EU, in connection with the Iraqi war, was not that the government followed an independent foreign policy line but rather that it did not contact the European states or the people responsible for European foreign policy (both internally and externally), before it decided to support the unilateral action of the US. Disagreements, which emerge from the wake of an exchange of views and the necessary collection of information, are different from disagreements, which emerge from hasty decisions (10. 02. 2003). This

reflects, equally, a break in common foreign policy lines between government and opposition.

3.2 MSZP – Gyurcsány

The Medgyessy-Gyurcsány government sought to weaken the unilateral action of those Central European states aspiring for EU membership, by appealing to the common interests of the US and the European Union. The government understood that membership into both the EU and NATO were closely tied and the end of the Cold War did not change this relationship. Conflicts between Europe and the US should be avoided:

“We need a Europe that is committed to the maintenance of the transatlantic alliance. Since our experiences are fresh and not easily forgettable, the relationship of the new Central and Eastern European member states with the alliance is particularly strong, and made stronger by their new EU membership. From the bottom of its heart [the] whole [of] Europe recognizes the importance of this: it is vital for all of us that Europe be not the enemy, nor the servant, but the partner of the U.S” (15. 10. 2004).

This is a different strategy than the one insisted on by the Orbán government. Hungary has special interests and susceptibilities, which can be translated more freely into an independent foreign policy, when Hungary becomes a full member of the European Union. It is, therefore, not so much the outcome of the decision (i.e. the disagreement) but its specific content²⁶ and the procedure leading to it that is the object of critique.

Similarly to the right, the left rejects the distinction between old and new Europe:

“We have to reject the idea of internal and external circles of Europe! The essence of enlargement is unity, not the creation of a new division in the place of an old one that has finally been overcome. [T]ogether [we], old and new member states, are all founding members: The founding members of new Europe, our future can only be a [unified] Europe, a Europe where each is an equal partner of the other” (15. 10. 2004).

Another tension is the criteria for convergence into the Euro-zone, and thus, the unfulfilled promises of the government to meet this criterion. This can be seen as the tension which exists between the dual goals of economic prosperity and solidarity:

“[T]he euro is an important tool for the improvement of economic stability, and the decrease of risks associated with the country. [However] if the intention of a quick introduction of the euro, i.e. the development of the country, comes into conflict with the desire to create a more equitable society – then we should weigh the advantages and disadvantages wisely.” (“The government is committed to the weighing of advantages and disadvantages”.)

The formulation of this problem depicts the Hungarian government as the protector of its citizens’ interests. It is however, questionable, whether the interests of the country are not served better by an early accession into the Euro-zone. This argument proved to be equally successful in diminishing the responsibility of the government for the country’s deteriorating economic

performance. The performance was manipulated for both the EU and Hungarian voters and was an additional source of conflict between Hungary and the EU. The 2006 parliamentary elections, which were held in May, reinstated Gyurcsány as Prime Minister. Political crisis emerged when parts of his speech, delivered at a party meeting a few days after the parliamentary victory, were leaked in September (two weeks preceding the local elections). In it, Gyurcsány acknowledges the responsibility of the coalition government for the catastrophic shape of the economy which, in sharp contrast to the program publicly acknowledged in the electoral campaign, calls for immediate restrictive measures. The speech also asks for the unconditional support of these measures by the party. Despite efforts by the government and media to extend blame to all governments (for lying since the regime change and presenting the speech and its dirty wording as a passionate and brave attempt to break with political lies) the coalition suffered a defeat at the local elections on October 1, 2006.

4. THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

4.1 FIDESZ – Orbán

Along with the immediate security benefits that membership within an organization comparable to the European Union promised; it also promised smaller states in the region a long-term prospect for participation in the shaping of Europe's future. How do these two sides imagine Europe's future? What role in the realization of this future, can Hungary potentially play? Fidesz has a vision for Europe's future as "a Europe of nations", and "a Europe of regional autonomies", which would require new forms of democracy.

4.1.1 A Europe of nations

This vision of European integration:

"... [G]oes together with the strengthening" rather than the weakening "of the national specificities of member states", which encompasses also the Hungarian communities beyond the borders of Hungary (20. 02. 1999, 30. 11. 2000). "[T]he threat of cultural homogenization" is another reason why "it is important, where possible, to protect both national cultures, and national consciousness" (19. 10. 2000).

This "national orientation does not intend to deny the fact – in the name of some false internationalism, that [t]en million Hungarians live in Hungary and three and a half million in neighbouring countries". Orbán is aware that this is a vulnerable position in the present political language (19. 10. 2000). However, while there is debate and disagreement amongst member states regarding the future of Europe, the position of the government is not incompatible with EU membership but representative of the view "that belongs to the core of Europe" (23. 07. 2001). The status law is the embodiment of the government's vision into a policy:

"De Gaulle thought or the French thought under De Gaulle, that the European Union has to be a union of the states belonging to Europe. And the Germans during the time of Chancellor Kohl imagined that the European Union should be a Europe of regions; and now, we Hungarians

have invited a debate over the idea that the future of Europe should be a Europe of communities, including national communities. This is what the status law is all about" (28. 07. 2001).

4.1.2 A Europe of regional autonomies

Regional policy in Europe means a policy of regional autonomies. It is a "fashion" in current European thinking which favours Hungarian communities divided by borders (26. 02. 2000).

[Regionalism] "is not merely an administrative category of rationalisation." [It is much more than] "a change in the course of which state administration ... is becoming rationalised on the basis of a more clever division of labour." For, regionalism means equally the "creat[ion] [of] elected bodies, small or regional parliaments, [and] bodies provided with resources and spheres of authority". In a country with minorities it requires far more "creativity" on the part of states. ..."While autonomy or the problem of regionalism is merely a question of government in Hungary, ... in Romania it is a more sensitive issue with an additional ethnic element" (27. 07. 2002).

For the majority in Romania, who fear that "giving autonomy can lead to the disintegration of the Romanian state", Orbán answers that, they misunderstand EU membership and the modern world. For: "Membership within the European Union means that the period of indivisible unity of the state, territory and citizen is over." It is, therefore, not Hungarian autonomy but EU membership which feeds the sense of disintegration or more exactly transformation, awaiting all states that join the European Union, where the former significance of political borders fade and cultural and linguistic borders become visible. "For this reason," Orbán concludes, "I do not believe that the Romanian majority would have the right to be hostile with respect to Hungarian autonomy. There is no justifiable reason for seeing in a potential Hungarian autonomy the weakening of its own state" (24. 07. 2004) also (23. 07. 2005).

This does not mean, however, that states would grow weaker within the EU. Their roles might diminish, but within more limited roles they remain indispensable players. Orbán rejects the view that states would represent "an obstacle to economic development" on grounds that "state property is always worse than private property." As he says:

"capitalism ... is no longer about the big fish eating the small fish," but "the fast fish eating the slow fish" and "[t]his rapidity ... does not depend on size, population or territory" but on competitiveness. In other words: "states and governments have become important factors of economic competition within the European Union" (24. 07. 2004).

4.1.3 New forms of democracy

Finally, European development invites new forms of democracy. The search for new forms of participation in Hungary is motivated by the 40-year advantage of the political left, "in terms of organization or social relations" (25. 01. 2003):

“If one does not have media support, moreover for different reasons its opponent uses the media more successfully for its political purposes, there is only one tool that remains – to reach as many people as possible personally” (11. 11. 2002).

This led to the launching of the “civic circles movement” following the unexpected defeat at the 2002 elections. According to Orbán,

“...the [Central right] parties were not suitable... for the reception of such great expectations or the huge support which manifested amidst the two rounds parliamentary elections in 2002 and has continued ever since. In other words, real political life, ... [i.e.] this strengthening, has not happened within the parties but outside of them” (25. 01. 2003).

The influences of these experiments, which will unfold over the next 20 to 30 years, require the transformation of Fidesz into a mass people’s party. Equally, they imply a strong criticism of Hungarian political life (27. 03. 2006). The underlying view being that, parliament is “the exclusive ground of power” but not of politics, which “happens in all places where people live. ... Politics is a world of competition, in order to compete everyone has to be where the other is” (25. 01. 2003). Like European democracy, Hungarian democracy suffers from a shortage of legitimacy so much so, that voters cannot influence politics between elections; and elites shirk their responsibilities for pursuing policies in breach of their programs and thus without a mandate from the electorate. In Orbán’s evaluation, the future depends on whether democracy: “will be the program of the demos (the people) or it will remain an elite project” (23. 07. 2005).

4.2 MSZP – Gyurcsány

The Gyurcsány government identified the challenges which face Europe’s future with that of the challenges which face the New Left, i.e. the need for reconciliation between market and state or competition and solidarity and justice. This vision remains unclear as to exactly what the nature of transformation amongst the state and nation is. Integration is deemed desirable for efficiency and competitiveness, but Europe should remain a community based on “the unity of nations and not the United States of Europe” (15. 10. 2004). This requires more integration and efficiency in both the economic and bureaucratic spheres, and “the strengthening of European nations to maintain their cultures, languages and national identities” (At the “Our Europe-our constitution” conference).

The government envisions a competitive Europe and a Europe with a social dimension. A competitive Europe is the higher goal, for it can solve social problems by creating material benefits (tangible opportunities). Economic prosperity is expected to trickle down to the population through the creation of new jobs.

4.2.1 A competitive Europe

The arguments for increased competition come from the pressures of globalization, the welfare of EU citizens and the pressure to create new jobs.

“We need a Europe that is ready for economic reform in order to meet the challenge of globalization.

...

We have to be able to compete on the global market. We have to use our regulation capacity in order to ensure free and equal competition. We have to work for the fundamental reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), since in its present state it serves, inadequately, the interests of our tax-payers, farmers, and the environment as well as our partners in the developing world.

...

We have to do more to improve the inner market of the EU – in particular in the area of services. The creation of a really unified market can bring a growth as high as 1.8 percent of the EU GDP and as well as several million workplaces.

...

Enlargement embodies a huge potential: in terms not only of an enormous market, including 450 million Europeans, but equally in terms of providing a new impulse for the realization of Europe’s ambitious social and economic reform goals” (15. 10. 2004).

Competition is painful in the short term, especially for new member states. Nevertheless competition is rewarding for member states and the European community because “many of the problems among European nations are related to Europe increasingly losing its élan in the economic competition with Asia ... and the United States. ...The biggest challenge for Europe”, however, “is not the US or South-East Asia, but herself” – whether she has “the courage and the ability to start reforms and to create beyond a socially sensitive Europe, a Europe of development, competition, and openness.” (“We have to urge the enlargement of Europe”.)

4.2.2 A Europe with a social dimension

“Europe also needs a social dimension. It is not, however, unimportant, what this social dimension looks like. To the extent that common thinking on the social plane paralyzes European economies, this can result in unemployment.” For this reason today “[t]he social dimension cannot merely mean the protection of those with employment, but has to imply training and re-training, the acquisition of skills as well as education ... throughout the life of the citizens” (15. 10. 2004).

As new states undertake the burden of competition, old members express solidarity in their support of EU’s cohesion programs. However, the future of Europe cannot be based merely on Europe’s past achievements and solutions. It also requires more than bold thinking about Europe. Europe “is not a geographical community”, since its future borders will differ from what we can imagine today.” As Gyurcsány remarks, “I know of no politician who thinks that Russia will become a member of the European Union.” Europe is not a “civilisation category” because Romania’s accession extends her borders beyond the birthplace of Western Christianity. For Europe to “be more than the object of a conference in the wonderful upper

house of parliament” it must first become a reality, equal in both the personal and private life of its citizens:

“...Europe will mean the opportunity of a new life for many, when the prosperity and the freedom of everyday will turn into tangible opportunities.” (At the “Our Europe-our constitution” conference.)

5. THE CONSTITUTIVE POWER OF SMALL STATES IN AGENDA SETTING

5.1. FIDESZ – Orbán

5.1.1. Minority protection

This constitutive power has become evident in Fidesz’s attempt to bring the minority issue to the attention of European politics as expressed, e.g. in connection with the justification of our participation in the Balkan War (8. 07. 1999). It appeared equally when Orbán, as Prime Minister, called for human rights protection to be extended to minorities as well. This occurred during the occasion of the internet debate initiated by the Swedish Prime Minister, Göran Persson, regarding “what Europe to build in the 21st century?” In his answer Orbán calls for the elaboration of the Charta of Fundamental Rights accepted at Nice: “An important constitutive element must be the restoration of respect to minority rights” (05. 06. 2001).

The need to play a constitutive role follows from the incredulousness of the Fidesz government’s foreign policy abroad:

“...we have created the status law and in connection with this we have had to follow debates from time to time with our neighbours; we have had to protect Hungarian views and interests not only vis-à-vis our neighbours, but also with the West. Sometimes, we met with complete incomprehension on the part of the Western world and we had to explain from scratch that: ...there is a Hungarian question, whether one likes it or not, because Hungary will become a member of the EU with the largest minorities outside her borders, this needs to be dealt with” (25. 01. 2003).

...

“...the European Union shows an attitude rather reserved with respect to the rights of minorities. Well ladies and gentlemen ... in my opinion this is what is going to have to change soon. Perhaps the states of the European Union were not aware when they accepted us that this will change, but if from nowhere else than from the Cyprian question they should know that this is changing. And if they take a look towards the direction of Poland or the Ukraine ..., ...at the minorities living there, or we remind them of the case of the Hungarian minorities, then it is immediately visible that from now on we also belong to the European Union. Starting now, the Union can longer hold off placing the dilemmas related to the future of minorities first among the most important questions, or at least making it into a question of democracy” (19. 05. 2004).

One can interpret the delegation of the first Roma representative into the European Parliament as part of the same policy towards the protection of minorities, which in turn, is meant to delegate the Roma question to a level where it is given European attention.

5.1.2 An Eastern dimension in Europe

Finally the constitutive role of small states requires the creation of an Eastern dimension to the European Union that would ensure “special legal forms, institutions and rules”. The function of these institutions is to solve:

“[T]he most important questions related to the fate of Hungarian communities: whether these communities living outside Hungary would be able to sustain, multiply, and strengthen themselves” is a question that will “not be answered automatically by a common EU membership” (28. 07. 2001).

5.2 MSZP–SZDSZ: Gyurcsány

5.2.1 Enlarging Europe

Like the opposition, the Gyurcsány government recognises that EU membership offers the opportunity to shape the European Union. Compared to the Orbán government however, it is more cautious in its regional policy, where it limits its policy to the application of EU norms. Thus while “[t]he government is sympathetic to the endeavours of Hungarians beyond borders towards autonomy” it emphasizes that [t]hese “endeavours have to fit into the European normative system as well” (06. 01. 2005).

For its enlargement policy, on the other hand, the government may be willing to go further than its opposition (as the allusions to the Union’s unknown borders in the future, suggested in the previous section, where even the membership of Russia is not excluded).

5.2.2 New forms of citizenship

In the long term, the reorientation of national to European politics might mean the emergence of new forms of citizenship. This may also include the gradual de-politisation and corresponding professionalisation of minority protection, so that it will be seen as a problem which is no longer represented as a political and emotional question but a legal and rational one. If this describes “the progressive way” in Europe, its’ self-appointed representative in Hungary will be the progressive left:

“What happens, if as a result of all of this [the free movement of persons] a common European citizenship emerges as a broad framework of the national citizenship, and we could practice our rights and obligations in the places where we live over a certain period of time? In other words, the right to vote would belong not to those with Hungarian citizenship, but to those who have been living in Hungary for at least ten years, i.e. to the persons who pay taxes, are registered here, and want to join the community.

...

Thus it is a common European identity; and the related permanent residence that becomes the basis of rights and obligations, and national citizenship would become the form of expression of one or several national identities” (At the “Dialogue about a nation without borders” conference).

Gyurcsány also notes the incomprehension of our national policy in Western Europe, which he argues stems from the different approaches of the major political parties:

“The Hungarian right can be accused of being oversensitive about national questions and inclined to nationalism in its solutions. The left, on the other hand, might not show enough sensitivity to national questions and might be too rational in its solutions.

...

We should find a balance here. We have to find common points in [our] national policy. Our decisions are difficult to understand outside the country. Anyone from Western Europe who looks at our politics, most likely will not understand. It appears old and poor because we spent forty years unable to talk over these questions properly and this has resulted in two kinds of negative effects: oversensitivity on the right and slow reaction time on the left.”

To create a solution he attempts to depoliticise the problem: “I suggested” (to the representatives of Hungarian communities outside the country) “let’s abandon politics, they should send their experts here, and let’s abandon publicity as well, because this will only lead to empty chattering” (16. 02. 2005).

6. THE FUTURE OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS: TENSIONS IN THE ALLIANCE

6.1 FIDESZ – Orbán

The above paragraphs forecast the position of Fidesz with respect to transatlantic relations. To the prospect of a Common Foreign and Security Policy, Orbán answers, that while: “Hungary supports that Europe has such a capacity, this cannot lead to the weakening of NATO; and cannot mean for the moment that the United States, as a consequence of the European steps taken, would relegate its European obligations to a secondary place.” This position is: “dictated mainly by a geopolitical consideration”. Similarly the government prefers “not to participate in any international action that would unnecessarily double already existing NATO capabilities and would thereby decrease the capacity of the world’s most integrated and efficient military and security organization.” The Yugoslavian crisis is the recurrent point of reference (23. 07. 2001, 30. 11. 2000).

The answer to the question: “why is it that the most resolute and enthusiastic members of the [Transatlantic] Alliance are the new Central European states?” can be found in “the geopolitical dilemma of Central Europe”, a dilemma as old as Europe.

“Since that time, Central Europe suffered because it was in the zone of influence from outside geopolitical forces. During the Cold War this dilemma manifested itself in the East-West confrontation, but it existed equally between the two world wars in the form of the German-Entente confrontation. Central Europeans have fought through the last century to overcome this dilemma.”

Two possible solutions to this dilemma are EU integration and “the building of strong transatlantic relations” which will, according to the speaker, “mutually support each other”.

Furthermore, NATO cannot be replaced by the “new anti-terrorist alliance” since the latter is “intended to ... find solutions for a specific

problem. It is not a comprehensive, general form of cooperation based on common values and political practices comparable to the Trans-Atlantic Alliance.” As Orbán remarks, “perhaps the only positive development of September 11th is that the new international situation has strengthened the relations between Russia and the Western world” (11. 02. 2002).

This does not mean that there would no longer be tensions with the US. One of the tensions has already been stated relating to the composition of military expenditure agreed upon for our NATO membership. Such actions by the government entailed spending this money to make military services more attractive and then to begin the technical modernisation of the army a year later. Both decisions were a source of tension. This policy was intended to “re-establish the self-esteem of the soldiers” and the army after 50 years of occupation. Next to a significant pay raise, it implied the creation of a “career path for military officials”, which expressed the government’s intention to go beyond the economic aspects of defence and to emphasise its “mental, spiritual, and human aspects” as well (11. 11. 2002).

The tension related to our participation in the Iraqi war finds Orbán in opposition. As the vice president of the European People’s Party (which he was elected to in October 2002) he formulated his first criticism. The joint statement called for “a wide coalition”, and argued that “the resolution of the Security Council was necessary for the commencement of military action” (18. 10. 2002). It stated that, only “a broad coalition” could prevent “losing sight of the right direction.” For the “participation in such an action is morally easier and more acceptable, than the support of a unilateral American move” (11. 11. 2002). See also (10. 02. 2003).

Our experience in 1956 offers additional guidance towards the position that “without the decision and the authorisation of the international community, military action against any independent state is unacceptable to us” (6. 02. 2003).

At the Brussels summit of the European People’s Party, Orbán argued that only public opinion could stop “the unilateral offensive operation, launched by the United States”. The outcome of this action is uncertain since:

“[W]e have here a war that has disregarded all written and unwritten rules; a war that has broken NATO’s customary system, thus creating the emergence of a completely new system. We do not know what new world order the present situation will lead to and where Europe’s place will be in this new world order. ... and since the United States is acting unilaterally, we do not know where this action will end, we do not know about America’s plans, we do not know how long this war will last, nor do we know the aim of this war, but this is not the problem of the European Council, it is the problem of Hungary” (21. 03. 2003).

That this might be a sign that a new world order is emerging will come later, as well as the concept that participation in this pre-emptive war, without a firm moral base or broad authorization, may cause a serious dilemma for the Christian Democratic parties, diminishing the quality of the alliance. (12. 12. 2003) However, the disagreement over participation in the Iraqi war does not mean a change in the division of labour between the transatlantic relationship of the US and Europe:

“[W]e need freedom and security not a new European global superpower. Europe can fulfil its fate ... if it keeps the friendship of the United States and thereby strengthens European security and freedom.” Europe, on the other hand, can also help protect the United States by discouraging it to “yield to its bad instincts, because a state that is stronger, moreover much stronger than others can become defenceless against its own excesses” (02. 05. 2004).

6.2 MSZP–SZDSZ: Gyurcsány

In transatlantic relations, the ultimate position of the left is similar to that of the right. The left, however, is less critical of the circumvention of normal procedure within NATO. The new government uncritically takes over the rhetoric of the US administration on the war on terror:

“The existing global order, whose institutions were created after the Second World War is being challenged. These institutions: the UN and the Security Council, etc. – are obviously in need of significant reform. A new challenge is global terrorism, but I do not see this as a conflict between civilizations in the ‘Huntingtonian’ sense. ... Conflict happens not between cultures, but between terrorists and democrats.

...

[The only reason that can give a moral justification to war] is self-protection. ... We believe – I think, correctly – that the Iraqi intervention was started as a just and rightful war for self-protection.

...A collective NATO decision is not a condition of the existence of the alliance” (29. 07. 2005).

A potential source of tension is our unfulfilled NATO obligations especially, regarding the amount of money which should have been spent on modernising the Hungarian military, approximately 1.8 percent of the GDP.

CONCLUSION: CONSISTENCY IN FOREIGN POLICY

The present paper concerned itself less with “what should constitute as priorities for the Hungarian foreign policy”, (according to foreign policy analysts) and more with – what actors or, in this case, prime ministers considered important. In this respect, we have to note that only a minority of the speeches deal with foreign, as opposed to domestic politics. Nevertheless, some clear priorities follow: Both sides derive the most important priorities of their foreign policy from identity. Conflict between the two sides is partly a result of their competition for the democratic/anti-democratic cleavage. Where Fidesz accuses its opponent of violating democratic norms, including that of representing respect for citizens, MSZP downplays the democratic/anti-democratic divide and makes it into a progressive-nationalist/populist question. However, we can speak of a coherent approach regarding the most important priority of foreign policy. Moreover, this consensus applies to previous governments since the regime change.²⁷ The question is how this “coherence”, or overlap, emerges from the different priorities of both sides. To begin with, these priorities are not easily separable from domestic political goals.

The “modern” (in sense of “progressive”) answers given to the dilemma of foreign policy, by the left-liberal coalition, are ready-made answers appropriated from the New Left in Europe. They focus on questions of terrorism, solidarity, and open market economy. The answers given to these questions derive from the major players in the international scene, in order of importance. We could say that the left-liberal coalition sees priorities running from the global to the regional (European) and, lastly, to the local (Central-European and Hungarian) scenes, a policy which could also be described as, “bandwagoning”.

By contrast, the priorities of the political right run from local through regional to global, in order of importance. The logic underlying these priorities is the freedom of action by the government representing Hungary. In a sense, this results in more original answers to foreign policy, which attempt to match answers to the specific dilemmas of the country. It also results in a more active foreign policy on the regional level, in Central-Europe and Europe (MÁÉRT, status law, minority protection, a Europe of national autonomies), but one that has less access to the global level. The same logic, however, is detectable on the local-domestic scene, where Fidesz (whether on government or in opposition) is continuously experimenting with social and political movements that may be informative from a European perspective. These are movements which their opponent may attempt to imitate but are unable to follow (e.g. civic circles, new/direct forms of democracy). These movements build on Fidesz’s social advantage (an absence of fear) since the regime change as compared to MSZP society and of mass movements in general.

In other words, the competing logics (running from global to local vs. from local to global) do not stop at the border. They are not limited to foreign policy, but extend to domestic political priorities as well. Thus, while prosperity is a shared goal, partly feasible with our European membership, the exact path leading to it is seen differently. According to Fidesz, the road to prosperity leads through the creation of a thriving Central-European region, with the participation of the capital exports of flourishing Hungarian firms (the direction is again from local to global). The higher growth rates of the region, compared to the European average, offers a window of opportunity for this development; which is equally able to raise these societies on a mass scale to the European average. This requires an active economic policy by the government to act appropriately within a limited amount of time – by supporting and strengthening small and medium-sized firms expected to ensure workplaces for the majority of the population. Government intervention in the economy would imply ensuring loan availability, the lowering of the tax and administrative burdens of firms, and creating competition by balancing the taxes between foreign and Hungarian firms. The equalisation of opportunity requires, further, that education and health care remain in state control. By contrast, the Gyurcsány government anticipates: the import of technological innovations; efficiency stemming from an open market and competition among global multinational companies; the privatization of education and healthcare; and a non-intervening state. In other words, the active part is played mainly by private

and global actors and less by the state. These different inclinations are built on two competing visions of society. While both envision a large middle class, according to Fidesz, this middle class should be preferably self-employed and the owner of their own company or firm.

Surprisingly, however, where the policies of both sides come together is on the insistence of an American presence in Europe. This is a topic, which formulates a limit to European integration, especially, in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy. This result may seem surprising in light of different underlying logics and priorities, as well as the rather tense relationship between the two dominant parties. For the MSZP–SZDSZ coalition, which identifies the potential prosperity of Hungary with the prosperity of the major players, we could say that this policy results from identity (see section 1.2). In the case of Fidesz, however, it comes from an historical recognition and lessons learned over the 20th century. However, consensus breaks in local regional policy; where the Socialist government has a limited freedom of movement, determined partly by the opposition (as well as the definition of Hungarian identity by the opposition). This definition includes the Hungarian communities in neighbouring states.

The MSZP–SZDSZ coalition sees the conditions for the emergence of Central and Eastern Europe as automatically following the accession of countries with Hungarian minorities to the European Union. Likewise, it is believed that the question of minority protection will be solved primarily by EU membership, as it will be on the basis of European norms and require no additional institutional solutions beyond membership. Accordingly, the Medgyessy–Gyurcsány government abolished the status law and most of the institutions created by Fidesz. In the same way, it campaigned against dual citizenship and argued its threat to jobs, as a result of the free movement of labour, particularly from Romania.²⁸ While these arguments proved successful in gaining the domestic vote during the 2002 campaign, the alienation resulting from this approach amongst Hungarian communities led to the reorientation of policy towards a greater focus, than original intended by the government (at least on a rhetorical level), regarding the minority question.

However, the left-liberal coalition was unable to find a solution for the Hungarian communities in neighbouring states, namely how the rights and benefits of EU membership could be extended to these communities' prior to their accession.²⁹ This led to a tense relationship with Hungarian communities and demonstrates that there are limitations to the extent by which one's identity is malleable as a result of obstacles met within society. Likewise, it led to a hardening of positions, because the alienated Hungarian communities raised fears that by extending dual citizenship to members of the Hungarian communities abroad, the right to vote might also be permitted; thus, the vote may be tipped towards Fidesz and have potentially negative consequences for the Socialists.

The existence of competitive narratives means that not all questions are easily comparable. "Solidarity" for example, appeared in the vocabulary of the political right during the 2006 electoral campaign. Tied explicitly and consciously to the Polish solidarity movement, the main emphasis was

regarding the power of society, vis-à-vis – the state. Society was considered able to protect local and existing social services (health care or education) from closing down or privatisation, a policy not typical of the political right. This implied equally the critique that the rhetoric of “solidarity” from the left may be nothing more than rhetoric.

Indeed, following the 2006 elections, solidarity, i.e. the “social” part of a social market economy has been put into brackets due to: Austerity measures and the acknowledgement of Ferenc Gyurcsány to having consciously lied to voters in order to win the 2006 parliamentary elections.³⁰ Fidesz accused the government of breaching the most basic democratic norm by misleading the electorate with the intent of preventing the sanctioning of its low performance. This policy also involved the concealment of data concerning the condition of the Hungarian economy from the European Union and endangered Hungary’s foreign policy goals (in particular Hungary’s accession to the Euro-zone) and the fulfilment of her obligations for the sake of maximizing votes. The EU postponed the sanctioning of the Gyurcsány government because of its delayed disclosure of data under the principle of non-intervention in domestic elections. In other words, the government gained freedom of manoeuvre, playing on the principle of “the primacy of domestic over foreign policy”, a principle the government correctly understood to be widely accepted in Europe.

Upon the exposure of his speech, Gyurcsány attempted to obscure his responsibility by linking it to the responsibility of previous governments arguing that they also lied and pretended that the economy could afford the rise in salaries, which took place since the Orbán government. This narrative is shared by MDF who accused both parties of irresponsible promises during the parliamentary campaign. According to Gyurcsány what is relevant is not the fact of lying but the fact of acknowledging it. Likewise, Fidesz was accused of intensifying the crisis because he had no real program that would represent a true alternative to restrictions. Fidesz, on the other hand, called for the need to re-establish the credibility of the government through relieving the prime minister of his duties. Trusting him would be similar to placing trust on “a goat not to eat the cabbage”; this is in reference of the money that disappeared in the previous term.

In conclusion we can say that a party with a progressive identity finds justification for policy change more easily because it believes itself to represent the only viable way for the society. Thus the leaking scandal can even be considered a stunt, playing to the advantage of the government. While it certainly led to losses at the local elections, it successfully communicated to the population that there is no alternative to restrictions. The Gyurcsány government seems to have survived the legitimacy crisis and gained an additional four-year term in government, which also means additional time for the persuasion of the EU and the electorate. With this, we can confirm that the only thing of relevance was winning the parliamentary majority.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Where not stated otherwise, the speeches are available on internet on the following homepages: www.orbanviktor.hu and www.miniszterelnok.hu/gss/alpha?do=2&pg=3&st=1. The latter is the archive of the 2004–2006 ministerial term of Ferenc Gyurcsány. The translations are my own. The speeches of the second term, starting from 2006 April, are available on www.miniszterelnok.hu/mss/alpha. The parliamentary elections were held on the 9th of April.
- ² For the relationship between the divergent (meta)-theoretical approaches in IR see Waever, 1997a and Wiener, 2003. Wiener notes that the epistemological divide has been underestimated by most Constructivist analyses, which, however, eased communication, (up to a limit), between divergent meta-theoretical trends. The present paper seeks to keep the epistemological consequences of Constructivism in mind.
- ³ Insightful analyses establishing the identity-foreign policy link follow from both. A far from complete list would include such divergent thinkers as Campbell, 1992; Fierke, 1996; Williams and Neumann, 2000; Zehfuss, 2002 where authors attempt to formulate their own methodology drawing on theoretical work by different philosophers.
- ⁴ The Copenhagen School's security analyses were among the first approaches "acting on this insight" and presenting both theoretical elaboration and its application: Waever (1997b), Buzan, Waever and Wilde (1998), Werner and Wilde (2001). Contributions on the (meta)theoretical level(s) in IR comprise Kratochwil (1989:), Onuf (1989) and focusing mainly on the methodological implications compared to positivist conceptual analysis Guzzini (2005).
- ⁵ This position is held by what I would call mainstream constructivism, its most prominent representative being Wendt (1999, 2003). My theoretical critique of his "thin Constructivism" appeared in Guzzini and Leander (2001: 380–402 and 2006: 160–181).
- ⁶ In this case both by positivism and Constructivism (meta-theoretical level) and government and opposition (practical political level).
- ⁷ Fidesz (the Association of Young Democrats) was founded in March 1988 at the Bibó István College by 37 young people. Originally participation was limited to those below 35 of age. This condition for participation was cancelled in 1993. The formation of parties at that time is not yet legal, which explains why they tend not to refer to themselves as parties. As late as in January 10–11, 1989, the parliamentary debate still postpones the acceptance of the law that would legalize parties for another six month. Underlying is the preference of the "order party group" for a slow, two-step transition that would share power on the basis of "supposed power relations" in 1990 to last until 1994 or 1995, the intended time for the first free elections (Romsics, 2003: 126–127).
- ⁸ In fact, what the party seeks to achieve is to force both Fidesz and the Liga Trade Union to participate as a member of a larger body that would represent all the youth organisations and all the trade unions respectively, which would dissolve their position into comparable organisations under the supervision of the party (Romsics, 2003: 135).
- ⁹ EKA was formed on the 22nd of March 1989 by nine organisations. They included political parties like the MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum), the SZDSZ (Alliance of Free Democrats), the FKGP (Independent Small Holders Party), the MSZDP (Hungarian Social Democratic Party) Magyar Néppárt (Hungarian People's Party), and Fidesz, and other organisations like BZSEBT (Friendship Society of Bajcsy Zsilinszky Endre), Liga (Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions) and the Független Jogász Forum (Independent Lawyers Forum). KDNP (Christian Democratic People's Party) joined later. Among the seven of the parties, four MDF, SZDSZ, Fidesz and KDNP survived until the last elections in 2006, while the League survived as a trade union (Romsics, 2003: 135). The talks at the National Round Table (NEKA) started on the 13th of June, 1989 and lasted until the 18th of September 1989 (Bihari, 2005).
- ¹⁰ Imre Nagy (1895–1958), Prime Minister (1953–1955, 1956) after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's accession into power. In 1955 he is forced to resign, but the short-lived government following the 1956 Revolution reinstates him. When the Soviet tanks enter the country, he escapes to the Yugoslavian Embassy, from which he is ambushed, taken to Romania by the Soviets and handed to the Hungarian authorities. He is secretly tried, executed and buried namelessly, together with the four other convicted in 1958 at an outlying, unkempt plot numbered 301 of the public cemetery in Rákoskeresztúr. The bodies of Imre Nagy, State Minister Géza Losonczy, Minister of Defense Pál Maléter, journalist Miklós Gimes, and Imre Nagy's personal secretary József Szilágyi, found face down and wired together are exhumed and reburied on the 16th of June 1989. A sixth coffin stands in memory of the 300 other executed. János Kádár is aware of the reburial. He dies on the 6th of July, 1989 (Romsics, 2003: 150–152).

- ¹¹ Compared to the Polish Solidarity Movement, Hungarian opposition had relatively few contact with society. The funeral was one of these occasions. Others were the anniversaries of former revolutions fought for the independence of the country, such as the 15th of March, a formal national holiday commemorating the 1848 Revolution and the 23rd of October, the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution, which was first recognized as a national holiday only in 1989.
- ¹² In a recent interview: “Some wanted to use the occasion for a false national reconciliation, saying the moment of embracement has come, let us forget about the past. We wanted on the other hand to signal that we should not be thankful for letting us bury our dead after more than three decades” (25. 03. 2006).
- ¹³ All emerging parties were “to the right” of the Communist party.
- ¹⁴ The original paper was written for a conference organized by the Danish Institute for International Studies NORFACE Project “The Transatlantic Relationship and the Struggle for Europe” (Copenhagen, June 2–3, 2006) in the theme: The West under Strain: Europe’s Small States in a Changing Environment”. The trigger was the ensuing tension in transatlantic relations following the support by states aspiring for EU membership of US’ unilateral action against Iraq.
- ¹⁵ The name of “the party” was Hungarian Workers’ Party (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja – MDP) until 1956, and Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkás Párt – MSZMP) following the 1956 Revolution. The Party Congress organized in October 1989 declared legal continuity with MSZMP as a compromise between the reformists and the conservatives and reorganized itself under the name of Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt – MSZP). Within the next six months about 30 000 members joined the new organisation, compared to the previous 725 000 membership of MSZMP. Hardliners reorganized themselves under the name of Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt – MKP) a minor party since the first free elections (Romsics, 2003: 180–183).
- ¹⁶ By the end of 1989 internal tensions between social democrats led to scandals and the split of the party into four before the first elections. Other parties, including the MDF forming government in 1990 and its coalition partner the Smallholders will follow the same fate later.
- ¹⁷ She is member of the Communist Apró family and was head of Medgyessy’s election campaign. Gyurcsány is invited first as a consultant, but soon overtakes the direction of the campaign both informally and practically (Debreceni, 2006: 191–212). We can therefore say that the Orbán–Gyurcsány contest restarted with the 2002 elections, won closely by the Socialists.
- ¹⁸ The discrediting of the Hungarian right through its undifferentiated identification with nationalism and fascism shows remarkable continuity with the similar Communist rhetoric. Opposition to the regime was often labeled unprogressive by being reactionary. Consistent with this rhetoric until 1989 the revolution was referred to as a counter-revolution, initiated by reactionary if not outright fascist forces.
- ¹⁹ The quotes in brackets refer in this case to the title of the speech delivered by Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány. Some of his speeches are identified by title and not by date.
- ²⁰ An English version of the law adopted by Parliament on 19 June 2001 by 92% of the votes is posted on sfkornyek.szabadsagharcos.org/jog/lxiimagyar.html#LXIIinEnglish. For an evaluation of the law and Fidesz’ minority policy, see Kántor et al (2004).
- ²¹ E.g. from among the parties participating at the roundtable talks it required the coalition of MDF, FKGP, KDNP and, from 1994, Fidesz. Despite the overwhelming victory of the Socialists and an agreement with Fidesz to the contrary, SZDSZ aligned with the Socialists to form a government in 1994. This and the shattering defeat of MDF, the major party on the right in 1990–1994, pushed Fidesz to reorganize the opposition.
- ²² In a later interview: “At that time [i.e. following the 2002 defeat in elections] we have said ... that what matters from the work of a government are only the things that become part of our lives” (06. 02. 2003).
- ²³ The organization of the referendum in December 2004 on the extension of double citizenship to Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries was an answer to the abolition of the status law. It was proposed by a civil society organisation. Both Fidesz and the Hungarian political elites abroad supported the initiative.
- ²⁴ On grounds that the Romanian government accepted the status law about the preferential treatment of Hungarians of Romanian citizenship for educational, cultural and other services only on condition that the law extends the free movement of labor to all Romanian citizens.
- ²⁵ Quoted in the daily Magyar Nemzet on September 23, one week after the leaking scandal.
- ²⁶ See section 6.1 below on transatlantic relations.

- ²⁷ Compare József Antall, the first Prime Minister (1990–1993) in 1991: “We would oppose any strategic thinking or ideas related to foreign policy that would conflict with the European presence of the United States. We believe that two world wars and the Cold War have proved the inseparability of the transatlantic region, whether one stood on this or the other side.” (quoted by Orbán, on 21. 03. 1999). Antall died in 1993 in cancer. His term was finished by his interior minister, Péter Boross. His party, MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) lost the second elections dramatically, was one of the coalition parties of the Orbán government, and gradually sank to its present 5% level.
- ²⁸ Although the yes votes were in a slight majority, the contradictory messages from the major players resulted in low participation and the referendum declared invalid.
- ²⁹ The new government equally signaled the potential limitation of the freedom of labor following the accession of Romania.
- ³⁰ Only a few lines leaked from the original speech to the Hungarian television. The whole text has been put on Ferenc Gyurcsány’s public blog available from the homepage of the Foundation for the Modern Left, (www.amoba.hu) on the same day. A longer English translation of excerpts is available at news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5359546.stm.

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