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HUNGARY'S GLOBAL OPENING TO AN INTERPOLAR WORLD¹

ABSTRACT This study wishes to contribute to the relatively limited circle of academic publications on Hungary's foreign policy – in particular, in the second decade of the twenty-first century. First, it looks at major foreign policy priorities since the change of the political system in 1989 and their maintenance in the country's external affairs policy agenda, together with the omnipresent desire to get re-positioned “rightly”, “back” into the international community. The intention of the authors is to investigate the validity and possible execution of a “global opening” in an increasingly “interpolar globality”, and therefore, to provide a detailed analysis of the Hungarian “turn towards to East”. The new foreign policy document of the country contains a re-positioning of Hungarian presence in five priority regions of the world, among which emphasis has obviously been laid on Central Europe and the Visegrád Group. The paper offers a critical analysis of both the potentials and challenges of the global opening.

Keywords: Hungary, foreign policy, global opening, Eastern turn

¹ István Tarrósy wishes to thank first the US Fulbright Program granting him a Visiting Research Fellowship for 2012-2013, second, the Hungarian Eötvös State Postdoctoral Fellowship at the end of 2013 and the Campus Hungary Long-Term Faculty Exchange Scholarship at the beginning of 2014 at the Center for African Studies, University of Florida. The research of Zoltán Vörös was supported by the European Union and the State of Hungary, co-financed by the European Social Fund in the framework of TÁMOP 4.2.4. A/2-11-1-2012-0001 “National Excellence Program”.

INTRODUCTION

After the change of the political system which took place towards the end of the 1980s, it was obvious for countries of the former Soviet Bloc that major (re)orientation in their foreign policies will be directed towards the European Union, with the aspiration to gain membership as soon as possible, but preferably in the early 2000s. In the case of Hungary, three pillars of the foreign affairs strategy signaled a firm alignment with the community of values she had always wanted to share – not only the official political rhetoric, but also what the society at large thought were centered on the move “back to Europe”. The three pillars covered European accession (as top number-one priority for the country), joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), therefore, strengthening the trans-Atlantic alliance, and neighborhood policy with a heavy focus on Hungarian communities across the Carpathian basin (and beyond). Developing relations with Moscow and the “East” was put aside at a fast pace, which may be explained as part of the strategy of keeping distance from “Soviet ties”, and demonstrating that the country was ready to rejoin the European community. However, “cordial relations” with the Russian Federation and the other states that came into being after the dissolution of the Soviet Union were established and also *immediate and strong support was given to Yeltsin in the days of the August 1991 coup*.²

In the course of the first fifteen years of the democratic republic, until Hungary gained membership in the European Union in 2004, the country was heavily engaged in building links with Western European countries, the United States of America and the leading international institutions of the gradually globalizing world. In the meantime, all Hungarian governments had a fundamental task – also as the constitution of that time obliged them to do – to *take responsibility for the Hungarians living in the diaspora in the neighboring states*, and to contribute to the creation of a *united, secure and stable Europe* by helping the Western Balkans integrate *as fully and quickly as possible into the Euro-Atlantic community*.³

A determined step toward the implementation of a “global opening” to the rapidly changing world came with the government taking office in 2010. A new position of “Deputy State Secretary for Global Affairs” was established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underscoring the strong intention to bring about changes in foreign policy, and thus to reposition Hungary on the world map. Although the “global opening” concept *gained momentum only after the [second] Orbán-government came to power*, already under the Gyurcsány-government the Hungarian External Relations Strategy of 2008 *realised that Hungary needs to intensify its global presence, and the country needs to address issues of global importance with an increasing visibility*.⁴

² G. Jeszzenszky, ‘Hungary’s Foreign Policy Dilemmas after Regaining Sovereignty’, *Society and Economy*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2007), p. 47, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1556/SocEc.29.2007.1.2>>.

³ T. Magyarics, ‘Hungary and Southeast Europe – Preface’, *International Relations Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2010), p. 1.

⁴ A. Rác, ‘An Unintended Consequence: Is the Hungarian Commitment to the EU’s Enlargement and

A strategic document got the green light after the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union was handed over to the forthcoming Troika-member Poland for the second half of 2011. In one of the most important foreign policy strategies since the political regime change, the Hungarian state clearly argued for a policy of "opening" to the increasingly global and transnational world. Our paper will offer an overview of this strategic decision and provide details in particular about Hungary's redefined stance on the "East", including China, Russia and Central Asia, as well as the Middle East, but also on sub-Saharan Africa. In light of both a progressively evolving global "actorness" of the EU on the supranational level and reaffirmed cooperation with the Visegrád countries, pursuing a stronger representation of regional interests, Hungarian foreign policy will be critically analyzed.

The study seeks first to look at major foreign policy priorities since the establishment of the first democratically elected government after the collapse of the Soviet-satellite system and their maintenance on the country's external affairs policy agenda, together with the omnipresent desire to get positioned "rightly" in the international community. Second, the validity and potential execution of a "global opening" in an increasingly "interpolar globality" will be investigated, which will then be followed by the detailed analysis of the Hungarian "turn towards to East", which – in its "global" framework – also contains a re-positioning of Hungarian presence in sub-Saharan Africa. Third, some major considerations will be summarized with regard to Hungary's Central European policy, in particular, as the country declared the year 2013 as its "Central European Year" because of the rotating presidencies of the Visegrád Group and the Central European Initiative (CEI) it holds. Finally, a set of concluding thoughts will encapsulate the paper's most important points.

HUNGARY'S FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES SINCE 1989

There has been a consistency in prioritizing Hungarian foreign policy since the change of the political system as for all the governments of the country until 2010, when the Euro-Atlantic integration and good neighbourhood policy in the Carpathian Basin provided the key elements for long-term strategic thinking. Right after the first free elections in the spring of 1990, the main objective of József Antall's government – backed by all the six parties in parliament – was *the re-orientation of* [the country's] *foreign policy*.⁵ Signing the first bilateral agreement with the new Russia in December 1991, gaining membership in the Council of Europe a month earlier, and launching the Visegrád cooperation together with Poland and Czechoslovakia on 15 February 1991⁶ – Antall's own initiative – were all significant steps on the new (democratic) road of statehood. The encouragement and strengthening of peaceful cooperation

Neighbourhood Policy Weakening? Hungarian Engagement in Eastern Europe', *Draft Paper* (2012), p. 6, at <<http://www.uaces.org/documents/papers/1201/racz.pdf>>, 9 July 2013.

⁵ G. Jeszenszky, 'Hungary's Foreign Policy Dilemmas...', p. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

with the neighboring countries seemed evident for Hungary in any geopolitical sense. The country needed to face the increasing number of states in its vicinity, as well as the fragmentation of the region with all the political, diplomatic and security-related consequences of the escalating crisis in the Balkans.⁷ As Dunay clearly points out, *regional cooperation in Central Europe had no roots that could serve as a point of reference. East-Central Europe seemed doomed to fall back to fragmentation and eventual national rivalries*,⁸ which basically cried out for a change: to foster a new era of regional ties in a newly defined, enlarging Europe, into which most of the countries of the former Soviet bloc felt to “return”.⁹

Tamás Magyarics rightly claims that *the external framework of Hungarian foreign relations changed drastically on May 1, 2004 when the country [...] joined the EU*.¹⁰ Accession to the desired international institutions – the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – succeeded, paving the way to the process of “Europeanization”, which, according to Rácz, *has [since] significantly changed domestic political landscapes and also the norms and institutions of policy-making, including foreign policy*.¹¹

From a number of angles for some years, in the context of its new international socialization, which basically meant a kind of *acclimatization to the new policy-making setting*,¹² Hungary was also expected to meet, among other things, the challenges to *existing identities and interests of national officials, their conceptions of statehood, and relationships between national and supranational*.¹³ Working along the lines of the European community of values never meant for the country to loosen its position on the assertion of Hungarian identity and interests, just the opposite: to *effectively advance national interests in all aspects that go beyond Hungary's borders, executing a value-based foreign policy*¹⁴ as a Member State of the European Union. The main aim

⁷ L. J. Kiss, ‘Magyarország szomszédsági kapcsolatainak jövője’, *Grotius* (2007), p. 3, at <http://www.grotius.hu/doc/pub/FJFDTM/kiss_j_laszlo_magyarorszag_szomszedsagi_kapcsolatok.pdf>, 4 August 2013.

⁸ P. Dunay, ‘Subregional Cooperation in East-Central Europe: the Visegrád Group and the Central European Free Trade Agreement’, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2003), p. 46.

⁹ A number of scholarly articles dealt with how former Soviet satellite countries communicated their aspirations for EU and NATO memberships. See, for example, K. Henderson (ed.), *Back to Europe. Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union*, London 1999.

¹⁰ T. Magyarics, ‘From Semi-periphery to Semi-periphery: Hungary's Foreign Relations under the Socialist-free Democrat Governments (2002-2010)’ in M. Majer [et al.] (eds.), *Panorama of Global Security Environment*, Bratislava 2010, p. 67.

¹¹ A. Rácz, ‘A Limited Priority: Hungary and the Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2011), p. 143.

¹² S. S. Denca, ‘Europeanization of Foreign Policy: Empirical Findings from Hungary, Romania and Slovakia’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2009), p. 402.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

¹⁴ ‘Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2011, p. 3, at <http://www.kormany.hu/download/e/cb/60000/foreign_policy_20111219.pdf>, 20 July 2013.

of the policy of the Orbán-government since 2010 has been declared to “be friendly in all directions”, with the Visegrád group as the “core”.¹⁵ In addition, Central European – including Hungarian – *transition experience can be a key contribution* to the development of the EU’s *democracy promotion policies*.¹⁶ As for priorities, according to many scholars and experts of international relations, the so-called “Eastern opening doctrine” has become Hungary’s fourth major diplomatic objective in addition to the remaining three of the policy of the nation, regional policy in Central Europe and active involvement in Euro-Atlantic integration. “Global opening”, also accommodating the concept of the East, *is meant in a geographical sense, such as new links with the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and Latin America*, but also including that *Hungary must find areas beyond traditional foreign policy and security policy where it can strengthen its role*; [for example, areas covering] *climate policy, sustainable development and water policy*.¹⁷

In order to enable the reader to understand the scope and main considerations of such policy, the next section will elaborate upon the dominant streams in the international arena, which it is supposed to take into account, along with the most relevant set of aspirations, sufficiently realistic for the country.

THE IDEA OF “GLOBAL OPENING” IN AN AGE OF INTERPOLAR RELATIONS

When a country like Hungary – a middle-sized European state – makes attempts to become more open to the global world, she recognizes that it is the only valid and plausible behavior in the long run, keeping in mind that she wants to keep fostering its national interests first and foremost. This attitude is easy to validate as interpolarity expects that countries behave in such a way; in fact, the changing “post-American” international context, the fading away of the “unipolar moment” and the evolution of the multipolar set of relations have an impact on Europe and the foreign and neighborhood policy of Hungary.¹⁸ Although multipolarity and the debate whose interpretations have stirred in scholarly communities – also offering the ground for Grevi’s theory – *does not necessarily presuppose the existence of three or more states of basically equal power*

¹⁵ ‘How the World Looks from Hungary: Hungary’s Foreign Policy’, *The Economist*, 13 August 2010, at <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/08/hungarys_foreign_policy>, 9 July 2013.

¹⁶ B. Szent-Iványi, ‘The EU’s Support for Democratic Governance in the Eastern Neighbourhood: The Role of Transition Experience from the New Member States’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 66, No. 7 (2014), p. 1108.

¹⁷ Quoting Szabolcs Takács in ‘Hungary in Good Position to Strengthen Ties with Asia, Says Foreign Ministry Secretary’, Hungarian News Agency (MTI), 18 July 2012, at <<http://www.politics.hu/20120718/hungary-in-good-position-to-strengthen-ties-with-asia-says-foreign-ministry-secretary/>>, 9 July 2013.

¹⁸ See L. J. Kiss, ‘Magyarország...’, p. 18.

capabilities, according to Smith (2012). *It does, however, suggest a widespread acceptance and inculcation of the belief that there is essential equivalence amongst several states.*¹⁹ William Wohlforth (2007) warns us to remain cautious enough with *today's multipolar mania*,²⁰ so that we can profoundly relate the position of the emerging actors to that of the US and foresee the potential redistribution of power in the international system in an increasingly multipolar environment. One of the most decisive arguments of Fareed Zakaria about a "post-American world" draws our attention to the "rise of the rest", meaning the growing influence of emerging powers coming from the Global South. We can agree with him that this rise is *at heart an economic phenomenon, but it has consequences for nearly every other sphere of life*. His "post-American world" is not an *anti-American world*, but *one defined and directed from many places and by many people*.²¹ A world increasingly possessing more centers of gravity, one that is better referred to as "interpolar", as the context embraces the concept of a transnational setting with more "poles" or powers interwoven in deepening interdependence, in an interest-driven, problem-oriented and pragmatic way.²²

In 1999, Huntington introduced the notion of a "uni-multipolar" hybrid system, *with one superpower and several major powers [...] that are preeminent in areas of the world without being able [yet] to extend their interests and capabilities as globally as the United States.*²³ This can be taken as fair observation with the reservation that by 2013 even more changes have occurred in the system into the direction of rather more than less multipolarity.²⁴

Although in recent years international media have been engaged with the "rise of the dragon" from the Far East, Zakaria is again right when he claims that *it is not [only] China that is rising. Emerging powers on every continent have achieved political stability and economic growth and are becoming active on the global stage.*²⁵ In our case, looking at such a Central European country and its redefined foreign policy about the global world, we can unanimously pose the questions: What are Hungary's relations with these entities? How can Hungary get engaged with processes generated by these emerging forces? How can Hungary envisage its place and role in an interpolar order?

There is no doubt that every country of the "Global North" – and as long as Hungary is a member of the European Union it is considered to belong to the more developed

¹⁹ M. A. Smith, *Power in the Changing Global Order. The US, Russia and China*, Cambridge 2012, p. 54.

²⁰ W. Wohlforth, 'Unipolar Stability. The Rules of Power Analysis', *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2007), p. 46.

²¹ F. Zakaria, *The Post-American World. Release 2.0*, New York 2012, p. 4.

²² See: G. Grevi, 'The Interpolar World: A New Scenario', *ISS Occasional Papers*, No. 79 (2009), at <<http://www.iss.europa.eu>>, 18 March 2013.

²³ S. P. Huntington, 'The Lonely Superpower', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (1999), p. 35.

²⁴ See more of this issue: I. Tarrósy, "Chimerican" Interests, Africa Policies and Changing US-China Relations', *Security Policy Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2013).

²⁵ F. Zakaria, *The Post-American World...*, p. xii.

part of the world – it needs to have an idea how to position the emerging powers in their foreign policy priorities, or, to look at it from the opposite direction, how to position themselves with regard to the dynamics generated by these actors.

Foreign Minister János Martonyi believes that in the global, multipolar world Hungary tries to enhance its weight in international politics – and the country could do this during its rotating presidency when, for example, *it was the embassy of Hungary in Tripoli which served as the diplomatic mission of the EU since the Union itself had no representation there*²⁶ – pursuing Hungary's economic interests just like the Americans, German, French, Italians, Poles and others do²⁷ in terms of their own. From this perspective, the new policy is sufficiently pragmatic to attempt to position Hungary in the global arena, and more importantly, to push the country's crisis-ridden economy and society back on the right track of development. Parallel with the policy of global opening, however, *another new element has appeared in the foreign policy discourse of Hungary, and in particular in Prime Minister Orbán's discourse, namely the "Eastern opening" (keleti nyitás)*.²⁸ This – in our opinion – is easy to get accommodated into the overarching approach emphasizing "global opening" for the first sight, but obviously, with the help of proper terminology, coherent arguments and the leading political figures (prime minister and ministers) confirming each other's thoughts from time to time. As Rácz (2011) underlines, *in Hungarian foreign policy thinking, the general term "East" (Kelet in Hungarian) lacks a widely agreed upon meaning*, and as long as *"there is not a single interpretation of the "Eastern"*,²⁹ it presents a challenge to talk about the same things in the same direction. In the next section, we provide a detailed analysis of the "Eastern doctrine".

TURN TOWARDS THE EAST

Hungary's turn towards the East is not quite a coherent policy, but rather a collection of steps and gestures towards Eastern states which possess the capacity to invest in the country or to finance its debt. The ultimate interest in them has been growing, but becomes really intensive when criticism comes from European or Western financial institutions. On the following pages we are going to look into this "Eastern turn", and present projects and events which have already had or will have substantial and lasting effects for Hungary's development.

The system change in 1989-1990 and the end of the Cold War were followed by an immediate replacement of the former Eastern connections by Western relations, cau-

²⁶ E. N. Rózsa, 'Libya and the Hungarian EU Presidency', *IIIA Policy Brief*, No. 14 (2011), at <http://www.hiia.hu/pub/displ_eng.asp?id=TVYBGH>, 9 July 2013.

²⁷ Interview with János Martonyi, 'Global Opening in Hungarian Foreign Politics', 9 September 2011, at <<http://www.kormany.hu/hu/kulugyminiszterium/a-miniszter/beszedekek-publikaciok-interjuk/global-opening-in-hungarian-foreign-politics>>, 9 July 2013.

²⁸ A. Rácz, 'An Unintended Consequence...', p. 1.

²⁹ Idem, 'A Limited Priority...', p. 145.

sing a dramatic change first of all in export markets: as shown earlier, the step was imminent, lacked any organic evolution and left Hungary without Eastern export markets and cooperation. The only remaining tie was the “new Russia”, but only because of energy imports, and therefore, Moscow continued to be an important partner for Hungary in this sense.

At that time, and by the early 2000s, *Western European financial experts were praising Hungary, labeling it as the economic front-runner of Central Europe, for its huge efforts to comply with EU regulations and difficult economic tasks.*³⁰ Its route was paved to the European Community and even if the process itself proved to be successful, in a bit more than a decade Hungary lost its advantageous position in the region. The economic difficulties of the country are clear since the first years of the new Millennium, and the EU membership has been unable to solve the problems – or better to say, it has generated even new ones, for example, in the sector of agriculture, where traditional Hungarian actors met fierce competing Western counterparts, and lost. The socialist-free democrat coalition government agreed a package deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2008 – a rescue credit line of 20 billion Euros – although its effect was predicted to be miserable: the government was unable to react upon the challenges the deal presented. The turning point arrived in 2010, after Fidesz gained power after the so-called revolutionary election, turned its back to the IMF and began to encourage foreign interests in the country from the East.

Disappointment in the EU

The turn towards Eastern partners seems to have been boosted by several factors, mainly connected to the unsuccessful European steps aiming at the recovery of the economy and the criticism arriving from other EU countries because of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's national reforms. The economic difficulties of Hungary are undoubtedly serious; the huge amount of foreign-currency debt is a big concern, and Western financial organizations and several credit-rating agencies have considered Budapest as one of the most vulnerable members of the Community. During the first year of his government, Orbán wanted to let budget deficit reach 7-8% of the GDP, and to boost the economy, but the Community was against these moves because under current rules, present and potential future Euro-zone members must keep their budget deficits below 3% of the GDP. Since then, Hungarian foreign policy met with massive EU-criticism and the country's new foreign connections manifest a determined turn towards Eastern countries. This turn, together with the internal political reforms (aiming at power centralization with occasional anti-democratic touches) are in the focus of EU critiques, which, among other things, led to the endorsement of the so-called Tavares Report by the European Parliament. MEP Rapporteur Rui Tavares constructed a report about Hungary's “constitutional revolution” which described the situation of fundamental

³⁰ A. A. Nemeth, ‘The Country Where Growth Stopped’, *The European Strategist*, 24 June 2011, at <<http://www.europeanstrategist.eu/2011/06/the-country-where-growth-stopped/>>, 20 August 2013.

rights, democracy, freedom, the rule of law etc.³¹ Viktor Orbán commented the adoption during a press conference after the meeting: *Drawing conclusions from the past, Hungarians do not want a Europe where successful countries are punished and placed under guardianship, large countries abuse their power, double standards are applied and only small countries have to respect the larger ones and not the other way round*, he said, adding that *the Tavares report [...] applies double standards, poses a serious danger to Europe, violates the Treaty on the European Union and arbitrarily defines criteria*.³² The tone of his speech was similar to general governmental communication trends about the EU, which suggest that the Union was blamed from time to time for the unsuccessful economic outcomes. In an interview with *The Economist* in 2011, Viktor Orbán agreed with the *suggestion that success in macro-economic stabilization has not been matched by progress on the micro-economic agenda: debureaucratization, labor-market reform and particularly the black economy*. He put *some of the blame on the European Union, both for low growth and for failing to disburse structural funds more quickly*.³³ The reporter quickly noted that *other countries are growing a lot faster than Hungary*³⁴ with the same conditions, under the same circumstances. But blaming an entity, blaming the bureaucracy far from our borders, the well-known “Brussels wants us to” phrase just fits perfectly in this foreign policy, where everything has been shaken up. Former supporters of the Free Tibet Movement decided to silence these activists in themselves,³⁵ who were once critics of Moscow and Vladimir Putin’s embarrassingly anti-democratic use of power now seems to follow the “Russian way”. Time has changed, says Orbán, and criticizes the way Western democracies work, bringing Eastern countries such as China or Russia as an example. *To stay competitive*, he argues, *democracies have to adapt. They have to be less debt-dependent: debt creates weaknesses and hampers decision-making. They have to pay more attention to manufacturing, and to providing decent jobs for manual workers. [...] That led on to the question of whether something is fundamentally wrong with the way that western democracies make decisions. Mr Orbán has no truck with that, Russian, Chinese and Brazilian decision-making is slow too. It is just that they are doing better than the old West right now*,³⁶ Orbán thinks.

³¹ See the report here: <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2013-0229&language=EN>>.

³² ‘Tavares Report Called Unjust in a European Parliament Debate Today in Strasbourg,’ Prime Minister’s Office, 2 July 2013, at <<http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/tavares-report-called-unjust-in-a-european-parliament-debate-today-in-strasbourg>>, 2 August 2013.

³³ ‘Orbán and the Wind from the East,’ *The Economist*, 14 November 2011, at <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/11/hungarys-politics>>, 2 August 2013.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Young democratic activist Orbán organised a public protest against the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. In 2000, during his first term as prime minister, he even had a meeting with the Dalai Lama in Budapest. See more: D. Kalan, ‘Relationship of a Special Significance? A Chinese Direction in Hungary’s Foreign Policy under Viktor Orbán,’ *Croatian International Relations Review*, Vol. 18, No. 66 (2012), p. 63.

³⁶ ‘Orbán and the Wind...’

Hopes in the Chinese economy

Diplomatic and economic relations are evolving and becoming more intensive from year to year between European countries and Beijing, and the financial crisis of the Community just accelerated these events. All member states try to secure an outstanding place in the framework of cooperation with Beijing, so does Budapest as well. And even if Europeans have become much more critical of China according to some surveys³⁷ and the EU has serious concerns about the human rights situation in Beijing, the race for China and for Chinese investments has started.³⁸ As a new trend, China seeks bilateral connections with each country in the community and the European countries seek connections on their own – naturally based upon their national interests – instead of forming a single EU strategy for international relations.³⁹ Beijing appears not only as an investor, but also as a lender and savior, an economic partner that could help find a way out of the crisis.

It is useless to compare Budapest to the Western countries of the Community, but in its closer vicinity, Hungary is competitive. If we focus specifically on investments or trade relations, Hungary plays a prominent role in the region's relations with China. The country plays a particularly important role in China's foreign policy, as it is not only the most popular regional destination for Chinese immigrants, but also Hungary is the only country that has a Bank of China branch in the region. What is more, there is a Hungarian-Chinese bilingual elementary school since the fall of 2004.

Hungary has been establishing itself as a regional partner of China for years now and the second Orbán government's foreign policy openly declared its turn towards China – continuing and obviously extending bilateral relations *previously enacted by the left-wing governments headed by Péter Medgyessy (2002-04), Ferenc Gyurcsány (2004-09), and Gordon Bajnai (2009-10)*.⁴⁰ The visit of Wen Jiabao in the summer of 2011 seemed to mean an advantage for Hungary, compared to other countries in the region. The Chinese Prime Minister and Viktor Orbán signed twelve agreements, including a one-billion-euro extra credit or potential infrastructure investments. During this visit there was a shocking step of the Hungarian government against the protesters of Free

³⁷ See, for instance: <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/06/27/chapter-3-views-of-china-and-its-increasing-influence/>>.

³⁸ The Asian giant has now overtaken the United States as the greatest perceived threat to global stability in the eyes of Europeans, according to the opinion poll commissioned by the Financial Times. The poll, carried out by the Harris agency [in 2008] found that 35 percent of respondents in the five largest EU states see China as a bigger threat to world stability than any other state. See in: J. Wolf, 'Europeans View China as Biggest Threat to Global Security', *Atlantic Review*, 16 April 2008, at <<http://atlanticreview.org/archives/1058-Europeans-View-China-as-Biggest-Threat-to-Global-Security.html>>, 4 August 2013.

³⁹ I. Tarrósy, Z. Vörös, 'An Overview of EU-China Relations: From the Race for Energy Security to the Development of Soft Power and Public Diplomacy' in Sz. Pudruzsik, S. Kerekes (eds.), *China-EU Cooperation for a Sustainable Economy*, Budapest 2012, pp. 201-218; A. Inotai, *Kína világgazdasági szerepének erősödése. Az exportorientált "modell" jövője*, Budapest 2010, p. 206.

⁴⁰ D. Kalan, 'Relationship of a Special Significance?...', p. 61.

Tibet movement: although Orbán stated that they *did not lock up anybody*, the demonstrations were banned and local Tibetans summoned to attend the government immigration offices on that day.⁴¹ As Orbán noted in another interview in *The Economist*, *the government has the right to stop demonstrations that disrupt diplomatic relations. The Hungarian state has the right to pursue foreign policy in the national interest*. Additionally, the reporter added: *Perhaps, but other countries do allow protests within sight of visiting foreign delegations, including those such as the Chinese whose feelings are famously prone to injury. His didn't*.⁴²

But Hungary's so-called leadership in the region is very fragile, and many countries are willing to offer the Asian country immediate and full partnership; for example, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland or Romania – all of them are ready to act in this way. Clearly, *China sees the Central European countries as a gateway to the European Union*. [...] *Hungary would [definitely] like to become a hub for the Chinese economic presence in the region*.⁴³

All in all, economic connections with China could be beneficial for Hungary, but praising the “Chinese way of democracy” over that of what the European Union fosters is dangerous, together with the emphasis put on manufacturing based on Chinese labour market produces illogical outcomes, especially when the education sector gets less and less attention and money in Hungary from year to year.

Russian way of democracy – The power of energy

One of the major tasks of Hungarian diplomacy is *to support projects leading to increased security of [energy] supply*.⁴⁴ In general terms, energy security is *the issue that has lately produced the most spectacular flicker of revival of Visegrád cooperation as a consequence of the gas crises in 2006 and 2009*.⁴⁵ This is certainly in line with the efforts of the European Union, which has a strong interest to bring security in the entire European Energy System. From this perspective, the EU *is seeking a balanced energy partnership with Russia and is pushing for the renewal of a wide-ranging Partnership and Cooperation Agreement*.⁴⁶

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia remained an important partner for Hungary mainly because of energy trade – although Moscow has always played a decisive role in Hungarian politics. As a “shadow” of the former socialist era and the attitude of the actual government towards Russia and deeper energy-cooperation with them could always easily generate arguments among the political actors, and

⁴¹ ‘Orbán and the Wind...’

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ T. Matura, ‘Sino-Hungarian Relations in 2010’, *HIIA Papers*, No. 8 (2011), p. 7.

⁴⁴ ‘Hungary’s Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...’, p. 12.

⁴⁵ A. Sobják, ‘Rethinking the Future of the Visegrad Group at a Time of Heated Debate on the Future of the EU’, *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2012), p. 130.

⁴⁶ S. Boneva, ‘Enhancing Energy Efficiency in the European Union: A Challenge for the Next Decade’ in I. Tarrósy, S. Milford (eds.), *Challenges for the European Union in the Next Decade. A View from the Danube Region*, Pécs 2013, p. 89.

thus set the agenda several times. The actual energy needs of Europe have a major influence on Hungary as well, and because the Union was unable to conceive a single strategy, Budapest decided – as a right choice – to join both pipeline projects, the Nabucco, supported by the EU, and the South Stream, designed by Russia. While in opposition, Fidesz argued against the Russian project,⁴⁷ but since they are in government, they have strongly stood for the South Stream.⁴⁸ Based on this, it is clear how Moscow can influence the foreign policy of Budapest, and the substantial change of the previously anti-Russian Fidesz is clearly visible and shows the obvious adjustment of the party's foreign strategy. As the Economist noted, *in opposition, the party was a stern critic of the ex-KGB regime in Moscow, berating it for neo-imperialism and shenanigans on energy security, and complaining about Western weak-kneedness towards the threat from the east. Now the tone is rather different.*⁴⁹ Although some analysts noted that the relationship is not the best between the two sides⁵⁰, the agreements that have been signed in Moscow are enormous – but the details are still undisclosed. As the government website informs us, *it is in Hungary's fundamental interest to pursue good relations and close cooperation with Russia, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said when he met President Vladimir Putin [...]. The Prime Minister stressed Russia's importance and apart from its economic power, he also praised the richness of Russian culture. He pointed out that Hungary has always regarded Russia as a great nation with a great future. Therefore, Hungary would like to encourage Russian investments as well as maintain bilateral cooperation on energy, and it relies on Russia's "excellent professional credentials and world-ranking technology."*⁵¹ The business weekly HVG had an insider information that Russia could subscribe 4.6 billion dollars of Hungarian go-

⁴⁷ 'Függeszék fel a Déli Áramlat munkálatainak előkészítését', Fidesz, 13 July 2009, at <<http://www.fidesz.hu/index.php?Cikk=136262>>, 30 July 2013.

⁴⁸ 'A Fidesz határozottan a Déli áramlat mellett', NOL, 16 September 2011, at <http://nol.hu/gazdasag/a_fidesz_határozottan_a_deli_aramlat_mellett?ref=sso>, 30 July 2013.

⁴⁹ 'Orbán and the Wind...'

⁵⁰ See: 'An Analysis of Russian-Hungarian Relations in Perspective', *Hungarian Spectrum*, 2 February 2013, at <<http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2013/02/02/an-analysis-of-russian-hungarian-relations-in-perspective/>>, 8 August 2013. It is worth quoting a longer passage from the original text: *Viktor Orbán is in a difficult position when it comes to friendly relations with Russia because of the heavy political baggage he carries from his days in opposition. In those days he made irresponsible comments about Russia. Despite Vladimir Putin's warm welcome, there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with the Orbán government's Russia policy. Putin's Russia doesn't hide its true feelings toward Viktor Orbán, which in this case translated into a short audience, no scheduled press conference, and no lunch or dinner after the official appointment. In November 2010 when Viktor Orbán first visited Russia as prime minister these niceties were planned, but in the end they were dispensed with. By contrast, each time Péter Medgyessy or Ferenc Gyurcsány paid a visit to Moscow there was always a press conference and a dinner meeting. Russia has reason to be dissatisfied with trade relations and mutual investments between the two countries. In the last three years the rate of investment has slowed. To quote from Putin's welcoming speech: "Until recently, the level of investment between the two countries was well balanced. However, for the last three years it hasn't grown or has grown very slowly.*

⁵¹ 'Agreement on Energy Cooperation', Prime Minister's Office, 31 January 2013, at <<http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/agreement-on-energy-cooperation>>, 8 August 2013.

vernment bonds at an interest rate of 2.25%.⁵² The government quickly denied this information but the growing reality of the enlargement of the Nuclear Power Plant in the town of Paks, and Russia as the investor – even in the form of lending to the Hungarian government up to 10 billion euros to build the two new reactors (again with Russia as partner) as a result of the bilateral deal signed by President Putin and Prime Minister Orbán on 14 January 2014⁵³ – in the project certainly proves deepening connections.

To sum up, Russia is one of the strategically important key countries of the so-called “opening towards the East” policy. The Hungarian government has the definite aim to intensify bilateral cooperation, and as the Foreign Minister of Hungary János Martonyi pointed out, *the Government intended to settle all outstanding economic issues at the earliest opportunity. The most important tasks include the drafting of a new version of the long-term gas supply agreement that is to expire in 2015 and to settle the outstanding claims on both sides following the bankruptcy of Malév to the satisfaction of both parties. He added that it is also important to settle the case of Dunaferri in a satisfactory manner.*⁵⁴ As far as the flights between the two countries are considered, Hungary-based Wizz Air, the biggest low-cost airline in the region launched a Budapest-Moscow flight 5 times a week in August 2013 and also started to analyse the possibility of the Saint Petersburg destination. As undersecretary Péter Szijjártó noted, this is the success of the new policy of the government.⁵⁵ After periods of changing relations – to use Póti's typology (2006) – between 1990 and 2004 of *divorce with the Soviet Union (1990-1991)*; *peaceful co-existence (1992-1994)*; *normalisation (1994-1998)*; *distancing (1998-2002)*; *normalisation again (2002-2004)*⁵⁶ – a potential new rapprochement can be hoped for following the very logical steps of recent times. For both actors a well-functioning bilateral set of collaborative projects is of mutual interest.

The Middle East connection

Another priority region of Hungary's global opening covers the countries of the Middle East, especially those with abundant financial resources to invest, as both potential short-term and long-term partners for Hungary. Viktor Orbán travelled to Saudi Arabia in 2011 to discuss political and economic cooperation between the two

⁵² ‘Orbán 4,6 milliárd dollárért cserélte Moszkvára az IMF-et’, *HVG*, 6 February 2013, at <http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20130206_HVG_Orban_46_milliard_dollarert_cserelte>, 8 August 2013.

⁵³ ‘Russia to Increase Hungary's Nuclear Power’, Reuters, 14 January 2014, at <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/14/russia-hungary-idUSL6N0KO28L20140114>>, 13 March 2014.

⁵⁴ ‘János Martonyi: Russia Is One of the Key Countries in “Eastern Opening” policy’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 March 2013, at <<http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/news/janos-martonyi-russia-is-one-of-the-key-countries-in-eastern-opening-policy>>, 8 August 2013.

⁵⁵ ‘Moszkvai járatot indít a Wizz Air’, *index.hu*, 19 July 2013, at <http://index.hu/gazdasag/2013/07/19/moszkvai_jaratot_indit_a_wizz_air/>, 8 August 2013.

⁵⁶ L. Póti, ‘Hungarian Foreign Policy and ENP in the East: Energy – (and) Nationality-based Policy’, *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 3-4 (2006), p. 66.

countries. Apart from the Prime Minister's delegation, since the beginning of the new Fidesz-led era several other missions have visited the Arab World, either on behalf of the government or the City of Budapest, and tried to negotiate economic investment projects in Hungary.

Among the first (seemingly) successful projects one can list the new "national" airline company, the so-called Solyom [Falcon] Company – the investors of the company are from the Arab world, still unknown, but information about them is scarce. One source about them indicated that they were the owners of the Emirates Airlines, one of the biggest airline companies of the world. Although this was announced, the confidence of the management is pointing into such direction.⁵⁷ As for their expectations, the Solyom planned to launch a deal with a leasing company for six aircrafts, the first Boeing 737-500 to be delivered on 18 August. That is when the airline started its operation. *The carrier expects to run a fleet of 50 aircrafts by 2017, 20 of which should be regional, 20 narrow-body and 10 wide-body aircraft.*⁵⁸ The plans are grandiose, but with a big investor in the background, it might work – if the previous news is true. However, the weekly HVG refuted the info based on the spokesman of the Emirates. The website noted that they are not interested in the region.⁵⁹ As of May 2014, the official website of Solyom Hungarian Airways (see: <http://www.solyom.org>) informs its potential customers that routes are still not scheduled, just "most likely" will be flown.

The Caucasus in brief

The countries in the Caucasus, especially Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are also in the focus of the new policy, in particular, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with their *significant gas and oil deposits even by international comparison*.⁶⁰ So far, however, the only thing Budapest could achieve was an international scandal, the Ramil Safarov-case. In brief, Ramil Safarov killed an Armenian man with an axe in Hungary during a NATO program in 2004 and was imprisoned in Budapest until August 2012.⁶¹ Then, he got extradited to Azerbaijan. He was expected to serve the rest of his life sentence in Azerbaijan, but well before his arrival, it was obvious that he would be promoted in-

⁵⁷ 'Az Emirates állhat a Solyom mögött', Gazdasági Rádió, 31 July 2013, at <<http://gazdasagradio.hu/cikk/94158/>>, 8 August 2013.

⁵⁸ 'Emirates Airlines Tipped as Mysterious Investor behind Hungary's New Carrier Solyom', portfolio.hu, 31 July 2013, at <http://www.portfolio.hu/en/economy/emirates_airlines_tipped_as_mysterious_investor_behind_hungarys_new_carrier_solyom.26430.html>, 20 August 2013.

⁵⁹ 'Az Emirates biztosan nem áll a Solyom mögött', HVG, 31 July 2013, at <http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20130731_Az_Emirates_biztos_nem_all_a_Solyom_mogot#rss>, 20 August 2013.

⁶⁰ 'Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...', p. 41.

⁶¹ Background of the conflict: Azerbaijan and Armenia are in a bloody conflict over the disputed border territory of Nagorno-Karabakh for more than two decades. See more of the case: 'Azeri Killer Ramil Safarov: Nato Chief "concerned"', BBC News Europe, 6 September 2012, at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19499151>>, 22 August 2013.

stead, and that is exactly what finally happened. Armenia formally suspended ties with Hungary and accused the country of a secret deal with Azerbaijan.

Since then, the ties between Baku and Budapest have become warmer; the Hungarian Post even designed a commemorative stamp. It was a tribute to Heydar Aliyev's 90th birth anniversary. Moreover, an Azerbaijan Park is in the planning phase to be built in Budapest.

Besides energy-focused relations, Hungary emphasizes in its strategic document on foreign policy that she is *ready to share with the states of [Central Asia] its experiences, gained in the course of democratic transformation, in promoting human rights and cultural diversity*, especially due to the fact that *Hungary enjoys a good reputation and a certain degree of social capital through personal contacts dating back to the Soviet times, while a special element of [the] relationship is an awareness of common origins*,⁶² the argumentation reads.

AFRICA IS NOT THAT DISTANT, IS IT?⁶³

It may feel surprising, but Hungary also wishes to formulate its "own" Africa policy – as one can be assured when reading the policy document of global opening.⁶⁴ Good reputation and a wide network of personal contacts in many countries of Africa can certainly contribute to successful implementation, if the approach goes further beyond official government rhetoric. Hundreds of young Africans arrived in Hungary during the 1960s, '70s and '80s with scholarships from the Hungarian state, who represent *an unbreakable link between our country and the continent*,⁶⁵ according to the introductory text of the Budapest Africa Forum held between 6 and 7 June 2013, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), predecessor of the African Union (AU). These individuals – who, as Hungarian graduates with partial Hungarian identities, or at least with the feeling of attachment to their former alma maters and Hungarian culture, also bearing the knowledge of the local language – can function as "ambassadors" to foster bilateral ties. "There is much to be done", however, as the academic and NGO circles have been advocating for many years so that such potential commitments are channeled into concrete achievements for the benefit of both sides.

In addition to aspiring for *stronger interstate relations with the Sub-Saharan and Sahel regions*,⁶⁶ connecting to Africa via the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy

⁶² 'Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...', p. 41.

⁶³ This section is based upon: I. Tarrósy and P. Morenth, 'Global Opening for Hungary – New Beginning for Hungarian Africa Policy', *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1-2 (2013), pp. 77-96.

⁶⁴ 'Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...', the chapter on Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel runs pp. 47-49.

⁶⁵ See: <http://budapestafricaforum.kormany.hu/hungary-and-africa>.

⁶⁶ 'Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...', p. 48.

(CFSP) and through its own new policy, Hungary's priority for Africa is *to closely follow humanitarian issues, including food aid, along with agricultural, environmental, water-management and health issues, and to assess the needs for sharing our experiences related to democratic transition*.⁶⁷

Taking a closer look at the "Africa-content" of different development, aid, or business-related policies, we feel that Africa is still in a marginal position. How Hungarian aspirations can be achieved better and with more success depends on whether or not the "African thread" can become a real foreign policy goal, which is sufficiently represented both in the government and abroad. A quick multi-country comparison in Hungary's closest neighbourhood can show, however, that the present setting cannot support the new policy: Poland maintains five embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa (in Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, the Republic of South Africa), the Czech Republic seven (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, the democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, the republic of South Africa, Zimbabwe), Slovakia four (Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, the Republic of South Africa), and Hungary only three (in Kenya and the Republic of South Africa, together with the one in Nigeria, which was first closed in 2010, then reopened in 2013).⁶⁸ On their own, diplomatic missions are not enough for a successful policy implementation, but they are undoubtedly vital to build trust across local societies, business circles, or decision-makers. The policy of global opening has a definite answer to this by admitting that *Hungary needs to review how to address the problems arising from the short-comings of our network of representations in Sub-Saharan countries*, and underlining that *it would be pertinent to consider the (re)opening of at least two embassies, one in West Africa and the other one at the headquarters of the African Union, in Addis Ababa*.⁶⁹

Hungary has a positive image in numerous African countries from two angles: first, it did not take part in Africa's exploitation as a colonial power, second, with many of its former products, such as the Ikarus buses or Hajdu washing machines, and even the Elzett locks and the streamlined Diesel rail cars of the Ganz company can hold extra credits for refining and redefining relations. A good combination of utilizing "nostalgic" feelings of both university studies and products, the resident African diaspora in Hungary representing many nations, together with a strengthened and extended network of diplomatic representations as part of a coherent and consistent government policy contributes to success in the long run. All these, however, need to be coupled with direct and immediate commitments (as in the case of the Libyan crisis) as a EU and NATO member state.

Hungary has several direct serious security policy and geopolitical concerns and interests, as far as migration, peacekeeping or NATO duties are taken into account.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

⁶⁸ See: D. Kopinski, 'Visegrád Countries' Development Aid to Africa: Beyond the Rhetoric', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2012), pp. 33-49, at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15705854.2011.649172>>; 'Hungary Reopened its Embassy in Abuja', Prime Minister's Office, at <<http://www.kormany.hu/en/prime-minister-s-office/news/hungary-reopened-its-embassy-in-abuja>>, 14 April 2014.

⁶⁹ 'Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...', p. 48.

In the spring of 2013 the Hungarian government took part in the French-led military operation “Serval” in Mali with experts from the Hungarian Armed Forces.⁷⁰ For the economic and political refugees of Sub-Saharan Africa, Hungary is a potential target-country. Organized crime, international terrorism, AIDS and tropical diseases can all reach Hungary, too. Therefore, to contribute effectively to the stability of the region and to reduce poverty in the long run is Hungary's best interest, while at the same time, presents a crucial moral obligation for the country.

Hungary's global opening on the African continent fosters the extension of cooperation in Southern Africa, which is a logical step as the Republic of South Africa is the country's most important commercial partner in the entire continent. After Europe and the USA, China and the United Arab Emirates, it is South Africa that has increased its exports and has become Hungary's fourth largest market, intensified its business activities, and strengthened its cultural and diplomatic presence in Hungary. South Africa defined a regional approach in its foreign policy toward Central Europe, and has been encouraging South African businesses to invest in more countries of the Visegrád area, for example. In this respect, SABMiller can present a success story with investments in the beer industry all across Central Europe.⁷¹ Is there any sense to foster cooperation among the Visegrád states, therefore, or competing for better business and investment deals is more important for individual national interests? Our final section will look at how Hungary thinks about Central Europe and its Visegrád allies in its new policy of global opening.

CHANGING VISEGRÁD RELATIONS – A MORE COHERENT REGIONAL COMMUNITY?

József Antall, the initiator of the Visegrád Group Cooperation, Hungary's first prime minister after the change of the political system, was determined about his country's place and ultimate role in its region. On 22 May 1990, in an address to the National Assembly in Budapest he presented a straightforward plan on behalf of his government, underlining that *pan-European cooperation is accompanied by intensive regional cooperation*, and he assured the parliament that *Hungary will seek to foster it with all its neighbors*.⁷² This thesis has been a cornerstone of Hungary's foreign policy ever since, and therefore it is not surprising that the country's *primary intention is to further strengthen the regional policy, and to enhance a global opening*.⁷³

As the official foreign policy document states, the Visegrád countries *boast similar living conditions, thanks to which economic ties between these countries – especially since*

⁷⁰ See: ‘Magyarok Maliban: megjelent a kormányhatározat’, *HVG*, 8 March 2013, at <http://hvg.hu/itthon/20130308_Magyarok_Maliban_megjelent_a_kormanyhatar>, 22 August 2013.

⁷¹ See more of the company's European presence at: <<http://www.sabmiller.com/index.asp?pageid=833>>.

⁷² J. Antall, Parlamenti beszéd, ‘5. ülésnap’, 22 May 1990, at <http://www.antalljosef.hu/hu/5_ule_snap>, 23 August 2013.

⁷³ Interview with János Martonyi, ‘Global Opening...’

*our joint accession to the EU – have started to develop dynamically, and now feature prominently in each other's external economic ties.*⁷⁴ It also admits that major developments are crucial in the sectors of transport and energy infrastructure to serve further expansion in economic cooperation. As for the political dimension, in addition to the management of the minority issue (in particular, the Hungarian communities all across the region), to be able to enhance *common positions at the European negotiating table*,⁷⁵ alliance-building and frequent consultations are necessary for all the members of the group. At the same time, it is vital to understand the different roles the Visegrád countries can imagine for themselves – as long as this may influence the facility of formulating common positions, or just the opposite, the difficulty of representing a common aim. Péter Marton (2012) neatly elaborates on the “sources of Visegrád conduct” in foreign policy-making, and in his comparative analysis draws our attention to the *similarities* [that] *may be discovered in the uncertainty and fluidity of their role conceptions*,⁷⁶ which for the coming years need careful attention on the level of each government.

The future of group dynamics depends on the interest of the participating states, whether or not all of them want to establish closer cooperation as an intra-regional formation within the European Union. They have *a natural overlap of their immediate foreign policy interest zones: the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership states*, and they are also *vulnerable to internal divisions as a result of divergent positions towards the most significant players in the international arena, that is, the US, China, and [Russia]*.⁷⁷ Although there are unanimous success stories for the members, for instance, in the field of civil society, cultural and academic projects funded by the International Visegrád Fund (IVF), as Anita Sobják (2012) notes, *divisions are deep as far as positions in shaping the future of the European Union are concerned, therefore, expectations from the Visegrád Group should not be too high, but rather remain within the horizons of what can be deemed realistic*.⁷⁸ The IVF has been a commitment, which is taken seriously by all the members of the group, and can provide a good ground for further “expansion of thought” to support regional cohesion. The numerous grass-roots initiatives can reach out to the public at large, as well as include key decision-makers, together with lobby groups, think tanks, academics who all can contribute to “more Visegrád” within the Community. This can then reflect Foreign Minister Martonyi's thinking about the interest of Central Europe, *that the countries of the region do not compete with each other but that their interests are jointly represented towards the other regions*.⁷⁹ However, before noticing the promising steps of Hungary towards a deeper and more committed regional cooperation, we have to add that despite the grandiose comments and official documents, the participants of

⁷⁴ ‘Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...’, p. 21.

⁷⁵ A. Sobják, ‘Rethinking the Future of the Visegrad Group...’, p. 122.

⁷⁶ P. Marton, ‘The Sources of Visegrád Conduct: A Comparative Analysis of V4 Foreign Policy-making’, *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (2012), p. 12.

⁷⁷ A. Sobják, ‘Rethinking the Future of the Visegrad Group...’, p. 124.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 138–139.

⁷⁹ Interview with János Martonyi, ‘Global Opening...’

the Visegrád Cooperation have let each other down, or had been played out against each other by Western states several times, not to mention the Agricultural Agreements of the EU accession negotiations or as it happened in the case of the Climate Quotas. For a healthy cooperation, each of the members needs to recognize the fundamental importance of such a forum, especially in an ever-forming Community, where such a regional platform could be more successful in supporting of several common interests. In a “multi-speed” EU such cooperation can really find its momentum.

As for the recent situation, right after his oath of his second government⁸⁰ in 2010, Prime Minister Orbán Viktor's first official visit was paid to Warsaw. The gesture was exceptionally special, as this was the first time for a Hungarian Prime Minister to launch his foreign diplomatic routes in a regional country (not counting Austria in this context), also symbolizing the new connections between Poland and Hungary, emerging from the ideological bases of the governing parties and from the connections of the past.

2013 was a special year for Hungary with the opportune moment to enhance Central European cooperation. The country served as president of both the V4 Cooperation and the Central European Initiative. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed commitment to curve the main focus of the year along the lines of *eliminating the possible obstacles to Central European cooperation, representing the region's common goal within the European Union and to further the Central European participation of countries outside Europe*, therefore, emphasis was laid on *enhancing the international organizations' transparency, as well as aiding economic development and facilitating mobility*.⁸¹ The Hungarian government supported the concept of a *stronger Europe* with a *vision of a stronger Central Europe within the EU* to be able to improve *regional accessibility and the development of physical and human infrastructure [...] in order to increase the region's competitiveness*.⁸²

CONCLUSION

*To adapt our foreign policy to the new realities across the world*⁸³ is now the new mantra for Hungarian foreign-policy makers. There is an apparent change and adaptation in

⁸⁰ On 6 April 2014, the Fidesz-Christian Democrats (KDNP) coalition led by Viktor Orbán won the national elections and could form yet another government again with a two-thirds majority backing in the parliament. See more, for instance: ‘Hungary Election: PM Viktor Orban Declares Victory’, BBC News Europe, at <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26908404>>, 7 April 2014.

⁸¹ ‘2013 Central European Year in Hungarian Diplomacy’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 December 2012, at <<http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/news/2013-central-european-year-in-hungarian-diplomacy>>, 25 August 2013.

⁸² P. Rada, ‘The “Central European” Year of Hungarian Foreign Policy’, CEPA, 2 April 2013, at <<http://www.cepa.org/content/central-european-year-hungarian-foreign-policy>>, 20 August 2013.

⁸³ Quoting Szabolcs Takács in ‘Strategic Cooperation and Diverse Relationship’, *Diplomacy & Trade*, 31 January 2013, at <<http://www.dteurope.com/diplomacy/news/strategic-cooperation-and-diverse-relationship.html>>, 9 July 2013.

governmental communication which manifest that Hungary feels she has duties, but at the same time opportunities in different parts of the interconnected world, even in seemingly faraway regions of Asia, Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa. Hungary's declared "value-based foreign policy" wants to fulfill its central aims from two angles: to pursue the strategic goals of the European Union as one of its members states, and to advance its national interests *in all aspects that go beyond Hungary's borders*.⁸⁴

Our paper has shown that the future of Hungary is still a future with an EU-membership status – but recent tendencies are showing a growing interest towards the East, towards Eastern investments. This government policy, however, has another side as well: to secure new export markets for Hungarian companies and their trademarks which can become new actors in other competing spheres beyond the European realm. In this context, this policy is more of a "turning back" to the foreign policy of the socialist era with its peculiar "turning towards Eastern countries" objective, building upon the memories of products of the country still familiar to the public at large. We can easily notice the government's unique step to refinance its huge debt: Hungary offers 5-year-long residence permits for those foreigners who buy 250,000-euro government bonds. Naturally, with this permit a given foreigner is allowed to enter the EU without any proper control – not the most proper step toward building trust among EU countries, and hardly the best tool to foster investments.

Strategic planning, however, is welcome in the administration and in civil society, as long as resources are also made available in a coherent manner. This is to be done systematically in the forthcoming years, with the enhanced involvement of different stakeholders interested in the implementation of what the government aspires for in terms of increased cooperation with different parts of the world. Recent developments in the affairs of the western Mediterranean region, for example, may also underline how timely Poland's initiative is, seeking to *create a vision for the European Commission and the European Parliament and for coordinating the foreign policies of the EU member states*.⁸⁵ The "European Global Strategy" can strengthen the *outstanding role of the Visegrád Four in bridging the widening gap between the European Union and its neighboring countries*.⁸⁶ Therefore, Hungary's policy towards the East can make even more sense, supposing that in the closer geographical vicinity of the country, together with its V4 allies, she can truly redefine and enhance Central European cooperation. Hungary's attempts to re-position itself in an inter polar world, and thus to re-orientate its foreign policy according to the new dynamics and opportunities to seek for more financial stability back at home at the same time are certainly formulated at the right time. By the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century we will be able to examine how successful this policy of global opening will have been, and whe-

⁸⁴ 'Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency...', p. 3.

⁸⁵ R. Parkes, A. Sobják, 'This Is How the Visegrád Four Can Benefit from a Global Strategy', *Népszabadság*, 17 June 2013, at <http://www.budapesttelegraph.com/news/392/this_is_how_the_visegrad_four_can_benefit_from_a_global_strategy>, 28 August 2013.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

ther or not Hungary will have joined forces with its regional allies in the most relevant way to *assume a more prominent position* with the Visegrád Group *at the European negotiating table*.⁸⁷

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