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An Unintended Consequence: Is the Hungarian Commitment to the EU's Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Weakening?

Hungarian Engagement in Eastern Europe

Draft paper

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Introduction

This paper intends to address the contemporary foreign policy of Hungary, particularly its Eastern European direction in the wider context of Hungarian foreign policy planning. While the general commitment to a strong European Union, including its enlargement and neighbourhood policy remains unchanged in the declarations, since the government of Viktor Orbán has come to power in 2010, Hungary has been trying to intensify the non-European directions of its foreign policy. Following the end of the Hungarian EU presidency in June 2011, Budapest announced the doctrine of 'global opening' with the aim of strengthening Hungary's global attention. The global opening policy has had five priority directions: the post-Soviet region, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel, and last, but not least, Latin America.

What's more, parallel with the 'global opening', another new element has appeared in the foreign policy discourse of Hungary, and particularly in Prime Minister Orbán's discourse, namely the 'Eastern opening' (keleti nyitás). The exact official definition of the 'East' in this context is yet missing, but from the original five priority regions Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America are strikingly missing, while the commitment to intensify the relations with the other three directions appear to have strengthened.

At the same time the financial resources available for the purposes of foreign policy have been constantly decreasing in the recent two years due to the economic hardships Hungary has been facing. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its background institutions have also been severely affected by the budgetary cuts.

This leads us to the general question if the emergence of the above-mentioned new foreign policy tasks may result - albeit unintentionally - in the weakening of an old one, namely the Hungarian commitment to a strong EU enlargement and neighbourhood policy, particularly towards the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, taking into account the decreasing funds? As this paper is the first part of a larger research project, here the focus will be on the neighbourhood dimension, thus on Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. Here the term Eastern Europe is used in the sense of the Eastern Partnership interpretation. e.g. it means Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

¹ The views expressed here are of the author's own, and they do not represent either the official position of Hungary, or that of the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs.

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Hence, the concrete research question of this article is how the emergence of the new foreign policy priorities, e.g. the ‘global opening’ and later the ‘Eastern opening’ has affected Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe? Did it result in the weakening of the Hungarian commitment towards a strong European Neighbourhood Policy and particularly towards the Eastern Partnership? Or did it result in the intensification of Hungarian activities in Eastern Europe?

Concerning methodology, the research has to face a number of challenges. The first one is the obvious hardships originating from trying to hit a ‘moving target’, e.g. a policy that is still developing. Hence the examined process is yet open-ended, the author has to obviously limit himself in defining any long-term conclusion.

The second, and most important methodological concern is how to measure the ‘intensification’ or the ‘weakening’ of foreign policy activities towards a certain geographic or policy direction. Besides assessing the generally available financial resources for foreign policy, here two different indicators will be used in order to define the intensity of Hungarian foreign policy towards a given region. The first one is the diplomatic presence (e.g. the location and staff numbers of diplomatic representations), while the second one is the number and frequency of high-level visits to the region.

Regarding the sources, besides numerous primary sources (e.g. governmental and parliamentary documents, etc.) the analysis relies also on a number of secondary sources. However, one has to note that Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe is somewhat under-researched. Though one may rely on a number of primary sources, e.g. various governmental documents that set the strategic tasks of Hungarian foreign policy towards the region, in terms of academic research the coverage is rather weak. On modern Hungarian foreign policy in general there have been only three notable academic books published since the democratic transition: while Dunay and Zellner (1998) prepared their analysis in German, the edited volume by Gazdag and Kiss (2004) collected several Hungarian studies that address various aspects of modern Hungarian foreign policy. Recently a large monograph was published by Györi-Szabó (2011) that aims to overview Hungarian foreign policy in the 1848 (!) – 2010 period. In addition to these books, of course, there are several shorter publications that address various aspects of contemporary Hungarian foreign policy.

Regarding the Eastern dimension, Hungarian academic discourse is (almost naturally) dominated by the Russian direction. The book by Ernő Keskeny (2012) provides a thorough overview of Hungarian-Russian bilateral relations from the democratic transition to 2002. Career diplomat and ambassador János Terényi (2009) published a short, but important analytic paper on contemporary Hungarian interests regarding Russia. Besides, various aspects of bilateral relations have been addressed by a number of Hungarian authors: for example Zsuzsa Ludvig published an important piece on economic relations (2004), the development of cultural ties has been frequently addressed by former director of the Hungarian Cultural Center in Moscow, Ilona Kiss (2005), while the energy security aspects are professionally covered by András Deák (2011).

Research on Hungarian foreign policy towards the Eastern European region concentrates mostly on the developments in the three Western states of the Newly Independent States (NIS), i.e. on Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, and not on the bilateral relations of Budapest with the region. On Belarusian history and politics a number of articles have been published by András Radvánszky (2007), and the young expert Gábor Zimmerer (2010) together with the author of this very article. However, Hungarian-Belarusian bilateral relationship itself has been academically addressed only by a single college thesis paper written by Éva Nagy in 2008 (2008).

Moldova and Ukraine are much better covered, partially due to the small Hungarian minority living in the Trans-Carpathian, or *Zakarpattya* region of Ukraine, and also due to the geographic proximity. Modern and contemporary history of the *Zakarpattya* region have been extensively covered by the book of Csilla Fedinec and Mikola Vehes (2010) that has been published both in Hungarian and Ukrainian. Several other Hungarian experts also regularly deal with Ukrainian foreign and security policy, for example László Póti (2001), István Szabó (2009), and others. On Moldova also numerous academic analyses have been published in Hungary, ranging from the Transnistrian conflict (Végh, 2012) to the European integration aspects (Kovács – Szekrényes, 2011). In contrast, much fewer academic publications are written in Hungary about the South Caucasian region, and particularly on regional foreign policy. One may mention the recent article by Zsuzsanna Végh (2011), or the relatively intensive Hungarian coverage of the 2008 war in Georgia by András Deák, Tamás Hoffmann and others (2008).

Concerning its structure, the paper is composed of three main parts. First, the main outlines of Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe are studied as the general context of the research. Particular attention is going to be paid to the minority policy dimension, which is a key factor shaping Hungarian foreign policy. This chapter relies on a previous research project coordinated by Elsa Tulmets, the results of which have already been published (Rácz, 2011) in the *Perspectives* journal of the Institute of International Relations Prague. The second part deals with the new foreign policy concepts of the Orbán-government, i.e. the ‘global opening’ and the ‘Eastern opening’, and examines how they affected Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. This is going to be conducted by studying the financial and personnel resources dedicated to the region, as well as the high-level visits that took place there. The paper ends with a final, concluding part.

I. The place of Eastern Europe in Hungarian foreign policy

What does the ‘East’ mean in Hungarian foreign policy?

In Hungarian foreign policy thinking, the general term ‘East’ (*Kelet* in Hungarian) lacks a widely agreed upon meaning. Consequently, there is no single interpretation of the ‘Eastern’ – including Eastern Europe – either that would be similar to the Polish ‘*Kresy*’. When Hungarian officials and analysts speak about the ‘East’, this may mean any country from Russia to China, or from Turkey to India. Each and every time the word is used, a separate definition needs to be given first in order to specify the actual meaning of the ‘East’ in the given context. Besides the lack of a unified understanding of the ‘East’ in general, there is no lasting, historically motivated commitment either towards the Eastern European region like in the case of Poland, as the Polish *polityka wschodnia* (Eastern policy) originates from Poland's commitment to Eastern Europe. Hungary has no identity-related elements that would connect Budapest to Eastern Europe. There are practically no shared meaning of history, constitutional practices and institutions between Hungary and this region. If Hungary has such ties at all, they are mostly related to the Western Balkans.

From the region that today is covered by the Eastern Partnership, the priority countries after the transition were Ukraine, a direct neighbour of Hungary, and, to a smaller extent, the Republic of Moldova (Bába, 1994). Supporting the stability of Ukraine has been in the forefront of Hungarian foreign policy ever since the break-up of the Soviet Union. There were both security and value-based motives behind this attention paid to Kyiv. Budapest strived to

ensure the peaceful political transition of Ukraine, and also to foster the protection of the Hungarian minorities living in the *Zakarpattya* region.

Hungary established diplomatic relations with Moldova in 1992, and in the same year an embassy was opened in Chisinau. Following the end of the Moldovan civil war, Hungarian-Moldovan relations started to develop rapidly because of two main reasons. First, in Moldova the pro-independence political forces were interested in counter-balancing the influence of Romania, and Hungary seemed to be an ideal partner when taking into account the tensions in Hungarian-Romanian relations during the 1990s over the rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Second, as explained by the well-known analyst and politician Iván Bába, Hungary was interested in fostering relations to Moldova in order to counter-balance her bilateral tensions with Romania (Bába, 1994).

However, in general, Hungary paid very limited attention to the other countries of Eastern Europe. Diplomatic relations with them were established in 1991-1992, but besides a few mid-level visits, practically no progress was made in this respect during the early nineties. This was mostly due to the fact that while Hungarian foreign policy was looking westwards, concentrating on NATO and EU integration, the countries of Eastern Europe oriented themselves mostly towards the East, that is, towards Russia. According to a Hungarian diplomat, this period could be characterized as one of mutual indifference: *'We were not interested in them, and they were not interested in us. None of us were interested in the other too much.'*³

Compared to the pre-2004 period, since the EU accession Hungary has significantly intensified its presence and activities in Eastern Europe. The EU accession offered Hungary the chance to become a *policy maker*, and thus to depart from the pre-accession position of a *policy taker*. This applied also to the neighbourhood policy dimension. However, the priorities of the European Neighbourhood Policy and those of the Hungarian neighbourhood policy were only partially overlapping. While the EU promoted the relationship with both the wider Eastern and the Southern Neighbourhood, the Hungarian neighbourhood policy focused on the geographical neighbourhood of the country, i.e. first on the integration of Romania and Croatia, and when it came down to the Eastern neighbourhood, it focused on the reforms conducted in Ukraine and Moldova only (Kiss, 2007).

The other four countries of Eastern Europe were still hardly present among the foreign policy priorities of Budapest at this point. In relations to them, the unofficial strategy was simply to follow the European mainstream in general, and regional player Poland in particular. For example, regarding Belarus, a background strategy document prepared in 2007 as a draft to a new External Relations Strategy for Hungary suggested that Hungarian interests regarding Belarus could be best realized by supporting the political efforts of Poland (Magyarics, 2007).

This prioritization has not changed significantly after the launch of the Eastern Partnership initiative in 2009. Budapest pays the most attention to Ukraine and Moldova even in this framework (Rácz, 2010). Regarding the other four states, Budapest is likely to follow the general lines of EU foreign policy, without any significant bilateral initiatives in sight, with the modest exception of Azerbaijan, to which Hungary hopes to be connected via an alternative gas supply route. (Deák, 2011)

Russia is a moderating factor in the Hungarian Eastern policy, as the intention not to alienate Russia limits Hungarian activities toward the East. The key factors that shape Hungary's Russia policy are well discussed in the book entitled *A Power Audit of EU-Russia*

³ Interview with a Hungarian diplomat, Budapest, April 2011.

Relations (Leonard, Popescu, 2007). However, as this study is focused on Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe, the relationship with Russia is not going to be discussed here in detail.

The role of national minorities in Hungarian Eastern policy

Following the end of the First World War, Hungary lost two thirds of her territory and one third of her population. Approximately 2,5 million ethnic Hungarians became citizens of other countries (Romsics, 2001). From then on, a new dimension has emerged in Hungarian foreign policy - the commitment to the national minorities living abroad.

After the regime change in 1989, the new Hungary has defined her foreign policy along three main pillars. These were 1.) the Euro-Atlantic integration, 2.) good relations with the neighbouring countries, and 3.) responsibility towards the Hungarian minorities living abroad (Government of Hungary, 1990). Some experts argue that the first government, though it made important steps towards the Euro-Atlantic integration of the country, failed to realize how strongly the three priorities were interconnected. Thus minority policy has always been present in the Hungarian foreign policy thinking and identity since then, though with varying intensity (Kiss, 2007), but it was an absolute priority between 1990 and 1993 (Dunay, 2004).

The Orbán government that came to power in 2010 has considerably strengthened this minority dimension of the Hungarian foreign policy, in line with the general rightist-conservative agenda of the governing Fidesz – Christian Democrats coalition. Already in August 2010 a new law on double citizenship was adopted by the Hungarian parliament. According to the new modification of the old 1993 legislation (Government of Hungary, 2010a) ethnic Hungarians living anywhere in the world may acquire Hungarian citizenship in a very easy and quick process that last no longer than three months. Most people who apply for the citizenship are members of the Hungarian communities that live in the neighbouring countries. This puts a significant burden on the Hungarian consular administration in the given countries, as processing the applications for citizenship requires additional workforce and infrastructure.⁴

The new Hungarian constitution, finally adopted in April 2011 and in force from January 2012 further strengthened this tendency, and declared that:

“Bearing in mind that there is one single Hungarian nation that belongs together, Hungary shall bear responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living beyond its borders, and shall facilitate the survival and development of their communities; it shall support their efforts to preserve their Hungarian identity, the assertion of their individual and collective rights, the establishment of their community self-governments, and their prosperity in their native lands, and shall promote their cooperation with each other and with Hungary.”

(The Fundamental Law of Hungary, Article D.)

⁴ Interview with a Hungarian diplomat serving in the consular administration of the MFA. Budapest, April 2012.

This represented a significant change compared to the previous constitution, which spoke only about a *sense of responsibility* felt towards the Hungarians abroad, and was much less explicit on how Hungary should relate to the ethnic Hungarians abroad.⁵

However, these considerations play only a limited role in Hungary's Eastern policy. There are no Hungarian minorities present in the Eastern Partnership region, hence the traditionally strong commitment towards minority policy issues has not helped forming a strong Eastern policy. The sole exception to this pattern is Ukraine, due to the some 150.000 ethnic Hungarians that live in the *Zakarpattya* region. Consequently, the intensified commitment to the ethnic Hungarian minorities and the law on dual citizenship affect the Ukrainian relationship only. Moreover, even these implications are limited, as Ukraine does not permit or acknowledge double citizenship, mostly due to concerns related to the large Russian minority living in the country.

II. The new foreign policy concepts and their impacts on contemporary Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe.

II/2: From 'global opening' to 'Eastern opening'

The Hungarian External Relations Strategy adopted in 2008 (under the Gyurcsány-government) already realized that Hungary needs to intensify its global presence, and the country needs to address issues of global importance with an increasing visibility. However, the 'global opening' gained momentum only after the Orbán-government came to power.

The program of the new government, the Program of National Cooperation (Government of Hungary, 2010a) emphasized the need to intensify Hungary's foreign trade presence on global markets. This came together with the announcement of the 'global opening' (*globális nyitás* in Hungarian) concept by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Though in the first half of 2011 the EU presidency dominated Hungarian foreign policy activities, in the end of the year a new strategic document was published, entitled *Hungary's Foreign Policy after the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union*. (Government of Hungary, 2011b) This document declared that '*strengthening of Hungary's global attention is a goal of the Hungarian government,*' and the positions lost in the previous two decades due to financial austerity are to be regained, both in the geographic sense, and in policy terms. (ibid, pp. 38) Five priority regions have been set forth for the global opening: the post-Soviet region, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel, and last, but not least, Latin America.

An important component of the 'global opening' concept has been that it also served as a tool in Hungary's - finally unsuccessful - struggle for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council in 2011. Budapest needed to gain as many votes from the earlier neglected small and distant states as possible, leading Hungarian diplomats to make frequent travels to the Pacific region, to South America, etc.

The prioritized position of the 'global opening' in the Hungarian foreign policy administration was demonstrated by the fact that the position of the Deputy State Secretary

⁵ The old Constitution declared only that '*The Republic of Hungary bears a sense of responsibility for the fate of Hungarians living outside its borders.*' (Parliament of Hungary, 1990.)

Responsible for Global Issues was created. Ever since then, the Hungarian MFA and Minister János Martonyi personally have been pursuing this agenda. Martonyi recently returned from a successful trip to South America, he also traveled to China, and the ‘global opening’ has been strongly present in the MFA discourse.

However, parallel to the ‘global opening’ concept, a different discourse has emerged, namely the ‘Eastern opening’. This term is connected to Prime Minister Orbán: instead of the ‘global opening’, Orbán often uses the term “Eastern opening”. According to his personal website, www.orbanviktor.hu, where all his speeches and declarations are available, he never ever used the term ‘global opening’, while the “Eastern opening” or a synonym of it is frequently mentioned.

Already in 2010 he declared that ‘*Eastern winds are blowing in the world economy*’ (Orbán, 2010a). As he explained, in terms of Hungarian foreign policy this means that Budapest has to intensify her foreign relations with the Eastern countries, including Russia, China, Japan, South Korea and also Central Asia. The strategic aim behind this idea is to intensify Hungarian foreign trade with these large partners and also to attract investments from them in order to counter-balance the consequences of the Western economic crisis. (Orbán, 2011) Orbán used the explicit term of ‘*Eastern opening*’ (*keleti nyitás*) first time in Paris in May 2011. This opening up towards the East also includes plans to intensify relations with Azerbaijan and open an embassy in Uzbekistan, and frequent visits of Hungarian high officials to China.

From the terminological perspective, it is obvious that the ‘Eastern opening’ concept of Prime Minister Orbán contributes to the already discussed lack of a unified Hungarian definition of the ‘East’. The term ‘Eastern opening’ is, of course, much wider than the Eastern neighbourhood itself as it includes China, South Korea and also Central Asia. Further research is needed to define the exact geographical borders of Orbán’s ‘East’ concept.

This leads us to the question, what may be the difference between the ‘global opening’ and the ‘Eastern opening’. First, the actors are different: while the ‘global opening’ is an MFA concept, the ‘Eastern opening’ is connected to the Prime Minister. Second, the geographical focus is also different, as South-America and Sub-Saharan Africa seem to be absent from the ‘Eastern opening’ concept.

Third, there seems to be another growing difference between the two concepts along the multilateral-bilateral axis. The ‘global opening’ has been closely connected to Hungary’s wished-for role in the UN, and also to the EU Presidency, i.e. it is by definition a multilateral concept.

To the contrary, the ‘Eastern opening’ is very often described by Prime Minister Orbán as a possible alternative to the crisis-torn global economy and the Western economic model. For example, during his visit to Kazakhstan in May 2012 Orbán declared that ‘*Hungary intends to adapt herself to the shifts of global economy with the policy of Eastern opening*’⁶ (Orbán, 2012c). However, in the East there are no similar integration fora like the Western organizations, and the existing ones are obviously not options for Hungary. Consequently, although this has never been declared openly, one may be tempted to conclude that should the ‘Eastern opening’ be meant as some kind of an alternative to the Western economic (and political) integration, then *by definition* it should rely dominantly on bilateral actions instead of the multilateral Western model.

⁶ „Magyarország a keleti nyitás politikájával kíván alkalmazkodni a globális világgazdaság változásához.”
Author’s translation.

During the annual ambassadors' briefing held on 21-22 August 2012, Orbán received an open question from Ambassador Gyula Sümegehy, whether the 'Eastern opening' and the Western integration are opposed to each other. Though Orbán answered that the two should not be against each other, the very fact that a senior diplomat asked such a question demonstrates that this concern does indeed exist among the Hungarian foreign policy administration (Orbán, 2012c)

All in all, the re-formulated version of the original research question needs to be answered: has Hungary managed to strengthen its bilateral relations with the regions the 'Eastern opening' is aiming at? In the framework of the present research, this examination will be conducted on Eastern Europe.

II/2: Changes in the Eastern foreign policy of Budapest

In this section the recent changes in the implementation of Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe are going to be studied, with the intention to answer the question whether the 'Eastern opening' resulted in the intensification of Hungarian foreign policy activities in the region.

The financial resources

Since the start of the financial crisis, the growth of Hungarian economy has been constantly slowing, and by 2012 the country fell into a recession. The economic hardships obviously affect foreign policy making as well. Hence, in this chapter a closer look is taken at the financial resources available for the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, namely at the budgetary support it receives from the central state budget. As the main task of this paper is to assess the contemporary foreign policy of Hungary towards Eastern Europe, only the period of the second Orbán-government is going to be studied here, i.e. the years 2010-2013.

One has to add that comparing the annual MFA budgets is slightly complicated due to a number of reasons. First, the budget of the Information Office (i.e. the external intelligence service) is sometimes included in the MFA budget chapter (like in 2011 and 2012), and sometimes it is elsewhere in the state budget. Second, in 2010 and 2011 specific additional resources were dedicated to the Hungarian EU presidency, which of course, modified the overall sum of annual budgetary support. Third, while in 2010 the Prime Minister's protocol expenses were included in the MFA budget, from 2011 on these costs were moved to the Prime Minister Office budgetary chapter. Fourth, the opposite is true for the various international organization membership fees and other EU payments: they have been included in the MFA budget only since 2011.

All in all, in order to compare the real values of the annual MFA budgets, it is advisable to introduce a 'core budget' number. This 'core budget' is composed of the overall value of the MFA budgetary chapter, from which one needs to subtract 1: the payments into the EU budget, 2: the payments into the budget of various international organizations, 3: and also those expenses which have not been parts of the MFA budget earlier in the examined period (such as the Information Office, the EU presidency, etc.), so those which are either provided for new tasks, or appeared only due to intra-administrational reorganizations.

Hence, the 'core' budgetary financing of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been the following since 2010, calculated in Hungarian Forints:

Table 1: Budgetary financing of the Hungarian MFA in 2010-2013 [thousand HUF]

	2010	2011	2012 ⁷	2013 (planned) ⁸
MFA central administration [HUF]	7051,2	6892,9	6168,9	6123,7
Representations abroad [HUF]	35706,5	37616,5	31857,1	35213,6
Hungarian Institute of International Affairs [HUF]	143,0	184,3	174,2	154,2
Chapter-managed appropriations⁹ (e.g. other non-extraordinary tasks, including development aid, support for NGOs, etc.) [HUF]	1090,1	861,3	544,1	562,5
<i>Development aid</i> [HUF]	610	292,4	115,4	150,0
<i>Humanitarian aid</i> [HUF]	10,0	10,0	10,0	10,0
All in all the MFA ‘core budget’ [HUF]	43990,8	45555,0	38744,3	42054,0

It is visible from the chart that in the 2010-2012 period the financing of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its background institutions has been constantly decreasing, including the personnel costs, the expenses of maintaining and operating the representations abroad, and also the background research potential provided by the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs. It should be noted that all these are absolute yearly values, though for a proper real value comparison one should calculate the inflation as well.

The number of employees has also been cut considerably in the examined period. Though in 2010-2011 the number of MFA employees was much higher than nowadays, this was due to the tasks related to the Hungarian EU Presidency in the first half of 2011. Following the end of the presidency, while in 2012 altogether 1737 people were employed in the MFA (without the Information Office), this number is going to drop to 1598 in 2013. By going into details, while the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs is allowed to keep its 20 staff, the central MFA administration will decrease from 645 to 631 people, while at the representations abroad 947 people will be employed in 2013, instead of the 1072 in the previous year.

Though the planned budget for 2013¹⁰ prescribes a considerable numerical increase in the financing of the diplomatic representations abroad, the commentaries of the text say that most

⁷ Parliament of Hungary (2011)

⁸ Parliament of Hungary (2012)

⁹ Without the membership fees of various international organizations and the payments into the EU budget.

¹⁰ Parliament of Hungary (2012)

of the increase has been granted in order to realize the ‘Simplified citizenship law’, i.e. to grant Hungarian citizenship to Hungarians living abroad, predominantly in the neighbouring countries.¹¹ Besides, one may be tempted to ask how realistic it is to set the budget numbers for next year already in June of the previous year, but answering this question is not among the tasks of this paper.

All in all, one can firmly state that in the examined 2010-2013 period the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has to fulfill its task by having less and less resources, both in terms of finance and personnel, while the ‘global opening’ and the subsequent ‘Eastern opening’ constitute fundamentally new tasks. Interestingly enough, in the already analyzed budget plan for 2013 there are no financial resources allocated for the ‘Eastern opening’ at all – actually even the term “keleti nyitás” – is not mentioned in the text.

The human resources: diplomatic presence

The diplomatic presence in the region reflects the above demonstrated, selective importance of the Eastern Partnership region for the Hungarian foreign policy. In the three Western countries, and especially in Ukraine and Moldova Hungarian diplomatic presence is relatively strong. In the Moldovan case the operation of the Common Application Center in the Hungarian embassy in Chisinau contributes to the comparatively large Hungarian diplomatic presence there, while in the case of Ukraine the Hungarian minority in the *Zakarpattya* region induces strong diplomatic (and particularly consular) presence. Diplomatic presence is further strengthened by three honorary consuls, who operate in Lviv, Lugansk and Simferopol. In Belarus Hungary currently has a mid-size embassy with four diplomats and eight administrative staff members, but taken into account the fact that when the embassy was opened in 2008, only two diplomats and one administrator worked there, the growth is remarkable.

In contrast, Hungarian diplomatic presence in the South Caucasus is very limited. Altogether there are only six Hungarian diplomats serving in the whole region, three in Tbilisi and three in Baku, supported by a number of administrative staff. In Armenia there is no Hungarian diplomatic presence at all, except for a honorary consul; the country is covered by the embassy in Tbilisi.

The table below indicates the recent changes in Hungarian diplomatic representation in the region, in the 2011-2012 period, when the ‘Eastern opening’ doctrine gained momentum:

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 403.

Table 2. Hungarian diplomatic presence in Eastern Europe¹²

Country	Diplomatic relations established	Hungarian embassy opened	Number of staff in 2011 ¹³ (D: diplomatic A: administrative personnel)	Number of staff in 2012 ¹⁴ (D: diplomatic A: administrative personnel)
Armenia	1992	-	-	-
Azerbaijan	1992	2008	4D + 2A	3D + 3A
Belarus	1992	2008	4D + 7A	4D + 8A
Georgia	1992	2008	3D + 3A	3D + 3A
Moldova	1992	1992	6D + 7A ¹⁵	8D + 7A
Ukraine	1991	1991	26D (13D in Kyiv + 8D in Uzhgorod general consulate + 5D Beregovo consulate.)	33D (18D in Kyiv + 9D in Uzhgorod general consulate + 6D Beregovo consulate.)

As it is seen from the table, despite the intensifying ‘Eastern opening’, Hungarian diplomatic presence in Eastern Europe increased only selectively. The staff numbers in the Caucasus, Belarus and Moldova either stagnated or increased only minimally. In the case of Moldova the increase was due to the fact that the Common Application Center functioning in the Hungarian embassy issues Schengen visas already for fifteen (!) EU countries¹⁶, and it has been seriously understaffed compared to the amount of tasks it has had.¹⁷

In comparison, a spectacular growth has taken place in Ukraine, as seven (!) new diplomats started to serve in the country. However, according to the relevant document,¹⁸ this increase is not connected to the ‘Eastern opening’, but to the law on double citizenship. While the ‘Eastern opening’ is not even mentioned in the budgetary documents for 2012 and 2013, both texts emphasize that Hungary considerably increased the number of its consular administrative staff working in the neighbouring countries in order to handle the requests for double citizenship submitted by ethnic Hungarians. The process started already in 2012¹⁹, but for 2013 an even larger increase is planned both in staff numbers and financial resources.

¹² The figures are retrieved from the websites of the embassies and consulates in 2011.

¹³ Excluding the honorary consuls and the local staff employed, such as drivers, cleaners, etc.

¹⁴ Excluding the honorary consuls and local staff employed, such as drivers, cleaners, etc.

¹⁵ Excluding the local personnel working in the EU Common Application Center

¹⁶ Common Application Center. Available at: http://www.cac.md/about_en.html. Last accessed: 11 Aug 2012.

¹⁷ Interview with Hungarian diplomat, Budapest, 20 August 2012.

¹⁸ *Parliament* of Hungary (2012), pp. 403.

¹⁹ *Parliament* of Hungary (2011), pp. 2 and 6.

Hence, in conclusion one may state that though various Hungarian officials, including the Prime Minister often refer to the ‘Eastern opening’, Hungarian diplomatic presence in Eastern Europe has become considerably stronger only in one country out of the six states of the region, namely in Ukraine, where the minority dimension has a role to play.

A failed opening in Central Asia

A demonstrative negative example of whether the ‘Eastern opening’ has affected Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe is the case of Central Asia. Though the five Central Asian republics do not belong to the Eastern Partnership region, their case deserves some attention anyway.

Currently Hungary has only one embassy in Central Asia, functioning in Kazakhstan. Though the Astana embassy is a very small one with its two diplomats²⁰, it has to follow the domestic and foreign policy developments also in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan is covered by the Hungarian embassy in Iran, while Uzbekistan belongs to the competency of the Hungarian embassy in Moscow.

Strengthening Hungarian diplomatic presence in Central Asia has long been planned. During the Hungarian EU presidency in 2011 a resident diplomat was deployed in Tashkent to the Polish embassy there, with the primary task of preparing the setup of the Hungarian embassy in Uzbekistan. In November 2011 then President of the Republic Pál Schmitt visited Uzbekistan, and during the visit a Protocol on Cooperation was signed between the two foreign ministries, together with several other agreements. President Schmitt reportedly promised to setup a Hungarian embassy in Tashkent²¹ soon. However, due to the financial cuts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2011-2012, the plan was finally cancelled, and deployed diplomat had to leave Tashkent at the end of his mandate.

This case again demonstrates that the declarations about the ‘Eastern opening’ actually do not necessarily mean that the necessary additional financial and personnel resources would be dedicated to the realization of this task.

High-level visits to the Eastern European region

The third indicator through which the author intends to examine whether Hungarian foreign policy has become intensified parallel to the ‘global opening’ or ‘Eastern opening’ is the high level Hungarian official visits paid to the region, or high level visitors received from there in Budapest.

The table below informs on the highest level bilateral meetings of Hungarian top officials with their respective counterparts from the Eastern European region. In order to prove whether relations have become intensified, the meetings in the 2006-2010 period are pictured separately from the activities of the current Orbán-government that has been in power since June 2010.

²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary (2012a))

²¹ Interview with a Hungarian diplomat, Budapest, 2 May 2012.

Table 3: High-level official visits and meetings of Hungarian top officials with partners from Eastern Europe

Country	High-level official visits and meetings (either in Budapest, or in the given country)							
	Prime Minister		President of the Republic		Speaker of the Parliament		Minister of Foreign Affairs	
	2006-2010	2010-	2006-2010	2010 -	2006-2010	2010 -	2006-2010	2010-
Armenia ²²	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	0
Azerbaijan ²³	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	0
Belarus ²⁴	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Georgia ²⁵	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Moldova ^{26,27}	3	4	0	0	4	1	6	4
Ukraine ^{28,29}	5	2	2	2	1	1	4	3

When comparing the Eastern European activities of the Orbán-government with those of its predecessors, one needs to pay attention to the fact that the four years of the previous government could only be carefully compared with the two years since Viktor Orbán has been the Prime Minister of Hungary. Hence, instead of a linear numerical comparison, one shall focus on the trends visible from the bilateral meetings and visits. Moreover, by assessing these visits one shall keep in mind that the Hungarian and Polish EU-presidencies in 2011 and their coordinated policies on the Eastern Partnership had a certain distorting effect, i.e. they temporarily increased the foreign policy weight of Budapest (and Warsaw, respectively).

Concerning the concrete results, it is clearly visible that the EU-level boycott of Belarus is fully respected by Hungary. The last high-level visit was the one by Belarusian M-minister of -Foreign Affairs Sergey Martynov to Budapest in February-March 2010, when he participated in the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad and Eastern Partnership countries. Since this meeting no high level visit has taken place.

Relations with Armenia from the aspect of high-level visits are practically stagnating. On the contrary, relations with Azerbaijan have become remarkably more intensive since 2010: Orbán visited Baku already twice, and former President of the Republic Pál Schmitt also paid a visit to Baku, in addition to the visit by Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament László Kövér. The situation is the same with Georgia: compared to the altogether two top-level meetings that took place in the 2006-2010 period, since then there have been already five such meetings, most of them in Budapest.

²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia (2012)

²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary (2012b)

²⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary (2012c)

²⁵ Embassy of Georgia to the Republic of Hungary (2012)

²⁶ Embassy of the Republic of Moldova to Hungary (2012)

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary (2012d)

²⁸ Embassy of Ukraine to Hungary (2012)

²⁹ Besides, in the case of Ukraine there were two ‘asymmetric’ meetings, e.g. when former Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány met not with his exact Ukrainian counterpart, but with the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko. One of these meetings is mentioned under the ‘Prime Minister’ title, while another one is under the ‘President’.

In terms of high-level visits, Moldova and Ukraine keep their prioritized positions in Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. Top officials from both countries regularly meet their Hungarian counterparts, and the relations are even more intensive on the lower, more technical levels. Hence, in these two directions one may firmly state that the Orbán-government has maintained the high intensity of bilateral relations in the last two years. It remains to be seen whether this maintained level of activities is going to turn into even more intensive relations during the second half of the Orbán-government period.

III. Conclusion

The Eastern European region in general, i.e. Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, has been of moderate importance only for contemporary Hungarian foreign policy. This was so partially due to the lack of tight historical connections, and also due to the intention of Budapest not to alienate Russia, its key energy supplier. Minority policy, which is a defining factor of Hungarian foreign policy particularly in the countries neighbouring Hungary played only a very limited role: out of the six countries of the Eastern European region, only Ukraine has a Hungarian minority with some 150.000 Hungarians living in the *Zakarpattya* region.

The present study intended to answer the research question how the emergence of the new foreign policy priorities of the government of Viktor Orbán, i.e. the ‘global opening’ and later the ‘Eastern opening’ has affected Hungarian foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. Has it resulted in the weakening of the Hungarian commitment towards a strong European Neighbourhood Policy and particularly towards the Eastern Partnership? Or has it resulted in the intensification of Hungarian activities in Eastern Europe?

An important factor is that while ‘global opening’ was always mentioned as a tool to strengthen Hungary’s position in multilateral frameworks, e.g. in the EU and the UN, the ‘Eastern opening’ to the contrary is often pictured as an alternative of Western Europe, weakened by the euro-crisis, in the discourse of the Hungarian Prime Minister. Consequently, the concept of ‘Eastern opening’ emphasizes dominantly the bilateral dimensions of foreign policy instead of the multilateral EU-frameworks. Hence, an additional question needs to be answered: has Hungary managed to strengthen its bilateral positions in Eastern Europe, in line with the principles of the ‘Eastern opening’?

The research was based on the examination of three indicators in order to measure the intensification of Hungarian foreign policy towards the region. First, as a general context, the financial resources that have been available for the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a primary state organization responsible for foreign policy since 2010, were examined. Research shows that the net financing of the MFA from the state budget is constantly decreasing, which is obviously connected to the fact that Hungarian economy has fallen into a recession. The shortage of funds affects both the central administration of the Foreign Ministry and the representations abroad. Though for 2013 a considerable increase is planned, it remains to be seen whether the budget proposal adopted already in June (!) 2012 will prove to be realistic.

Regarding the actual diplomatic presence in the Eastern European region, one finds that Hungarian diplomatic presence has become stronger only in Moldova and Ukraine, while in the other four countries it has dominantly stagnated. The growth in Moldova is explained mostly by the need to maintain the EU Common Visa Application Center. Hence, the only Eastern European country, where Hungarian diplomatic presence has become stronger due to

organic bilateral foreign policy motivations in Ukraine. However, the strengthened Ukrainian positions are related mostly to minority policy considerations (e.g. the double citizenship law), and not much to the ‘Eastern opening.’

The high-level visits to and from the Eastern European region give a similar, strongly differentiated picture. Though the two years that passed since Viktor Orbán has come to office can only carefully be compared with the previous full four years term, certain trends are visible. The Orbán-government has managed to intensify the high level contacts with Azerbaijan and Georgia. Relations to Armenia and Belarus are stagnating, while the traditional prioritized positions of Moldova and Ukraine have been maintained.

It remains to be seen whether the increasingly frequent, but still occasional high level contacts with Georgia and Azerbaijan could be converted into any lasting concrete foreign policy results, particularly in the light of the decreasing financial resources. As it was demonstrated earlier, neither in the 2012 budget, nor in the proposal for 2013 are there any financial resources dedicated for the purposes of the ‘Eastern opening’.

On the basis of the above one may come to the conclusion that the ‘Eastern opening’ concept of the government of Viktor Orbán has not resulted in any significant, structural upgrade or improvement of the Hungarian foreign policy activities in Eastern Europe. Hence, a short answer to the research questions can be that though the ‘Eastern opening’ concept has not resulted in the explicit weakening of the Hungarian commitment towards Eastern Europe and a strong European Neighbourhood Policy towards the region, it has not brought any visible improvements in the Hungarian contribution to it either. Seemingly Eastern Europe is not among the priority regions of the ‘Eastern opening.’ Taking into account the already serious financial austerity, one cannot exclude the possibility that the lack of resources together with this non-prioritized position are going to result in actually decreasing Hungarian foreign policy capabilities and a weakening presence in Eastern Europe, which may obviously be followed by a decreasing Hungarian contribution to the relevant EU-policies as well.

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