

5. Breakthrough of Civil-Military Relations in Hungary

I Introduction

There are three forms of national security policy, on two levels. One of the forms is the military security policy, which contains all measures to act against external threats. The second form, the internal security policy is designed to minimise the possibilities of the internal attempts to weaken or demolish the state. The third form, the situational security policy, deals with the threat of deterioration as a consequence of long-term social, economic, and political changes, reducing the power of the state.

Each form of national security policy has an operating and an institutional level. The operating level deals with the direct means concerning that security threat. The institutional level deals with the formulation and execution methods of the operational policy.

Civil-military relations are the main institutional part of the military security policy. The direct operating issues of military policy, on the other hand, include the size and supply of the armed forces; the types of organisation, deployment, and armaments; the methods of application of military forces. These questions are usually in the focus of public debates.

The institutional issues include balancing the relationship between civilians and the military and maximising military security with minimum social consumption. Also, it is important to find the right pattern of civil-military relations to assure the country's security without risk.

The military institution is shaped by two imperative factors: functional and societal. The functional force originates from the threats to society's security; the societal force, on the other hand, comes from social ideologies and dominant institutions in the society. The mutual effect of these two forces is the root of civil-military relations. As Huntington notes: "The degree to which they conflict depends upon the

intensity of the security needs and the nature and strength of the value pattern of society. Adjustment and balance between the two forces are not inevitable: some societies may be inherently incapable of providing effectively for their own military security”¹.

In the history of the modern states, the relationship between civilians and military is a crucial element of politics. The civilians need the services of the military, but at the same time, they must be sure that the armed forces do not intervene in politics. It is a situation, where the armed forces has virtually the only physical power to press the politicians to perform their mandates, so the politicians are interested in maintaining a stable and good relationship with the military.

Ideal civil-military relations are based on an elaborated civilian control. In such a state, the powers of civilian and military groups in society are equal. There are two ways for civilians to minimise military power in society. One of them is subjective civilian control, where certain significant civilian groups maximise their power to control the armed forces. Subjective civilian control is usually connected to one or more groups’ interests, and it suggests certain relationships among civilian groups. The appearance of the military profession complicates further the question of civil-military relations. In the new situation, the dominant civilian groups have to confront not only other civilian groups but also new, independent, functional military groups. The rise of the military profession makes possible a new and more expressive definition of civilian control.

Objective civilian control, as opposed to subjective civilian control, maximises military professionalism. It is the allocation of political power among military and civilian groups, which is conducive to the appearance of professional behaviour and attitudes among the members of the officer corps. Samuel Huntington wrote that: “The antithesis of objective civilian control is military participation in politics: civilian control decreases as the military become progressively involved in institutional, class, and constitutional politics. Subjective civilian control, on the other hand, presupposes this involvement. The essence

¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, p. 1.

of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism; the essence of subjective civilian control is the denial of an independent military sphere.”²

To achieve the basic requirement for any system of civilian control and to maximise military power, objective civilian control reduces the power of the military by professionalising the armed forces, and by keeping them far away from politics at the same time. It is the best way to decrease the influence of the military, while increasing the military security.

II Sovietised Military

There were two significant changes in civil-military relations during the last five decades in Hungary. The first one occurred right after World War II in the 1948-53 period. The second transformation started in 1989/90, and it is still going on. During the first period the main mission of the military was transformed from the defence of the nation state to the protection of the communist regime, while during the second period the political leaders tried to remedy what the predecessors had damaged.

The main difference between the task of the military in democratic and socialist societies is that in the socialist system the armed forces have not only external, but internal responsibilities as well. This internal function is to secure the power of the communist regime and to defend it from domestic opponents. During the socialist era in Hungary, the crucial tasks of the military stemmed from Marxist-Leninist ideology and the political structure of the one party state. The Hungarian Communist Party (HCP) militarised the entire society and built up a close and strong relationship with the armed forces. However, this connection was not always balanced. The military was a strictly controlled subordinate to the HCP, which was superior. The HCP needed loyal military to defend the communist regime from its external and internal enemies. At the same time the military needed the HCP support to ensure its relatively high material status and social prestige.

² Ibid., 83.

But, this relationship was not unclouded. The HCP penetrated the entire Hungarian military structure by means of political control to ensure the loyalty of the military. From the HCP's perspective, the Main Political Administration (MPA) was the principal organisation to maintain ideological and political notions. This hierarchy of political officers infiltrated the entire military structure from company level to the highest leadership. The Party also utilised the regular and military intelligence organisations to guarantee the trustworthiness of the military men, in addition to electing high-ranking officers into different positions of the Party's structure.

Additionally, among the six Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) states, the Hungarian Army was controlled by external powers. They were the Soviet armed forces, representing Soviet politics, and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO), an alliance system controlled by the Soviet political and military elite. Zoltan Barany stated in his book, "The Soviet Union subordinated the East European military establishments and attempted, less successfully, to integrate them not with each other but with the Soviet armed forces."³

From 1949, sovietisation gained speed, and both economic and political spheres came under Soviet control, following the Soviet model. As the HSP gained power, a significant transformation happened in the Hungarian military structure and control. During the period of 1945-53 the defence structure and the civil-military relations changed radically in Hungary.

Actually, the Communist Party was successful in dominating the Hungarian armed forces because it enjoyed Soviet support, and the HSP, which won the 1945 election and provided the Minister of Defence, did not pay enough attention to impede the politicisation of the armed forces. By the end of 1946, almost all key positions in the military were in the Communists' hand. By 1948, almost 100 percent of the career military officers were HCP members. The HCP clearly ruled the armed forces.

³ Zoltan D., Barany. *Soldiers and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945-90. The Case of Hungary.* p. 18.

During the coalition period the Communist Party held five National Military Conferences to give guidance to the armed forces on political, ideological, and organisational issues. At the first conference, in June 1945, speakers such as Central Committee secretary Janos Kadar examined the internal political situation, and emphasised the need for improved political education among the officers and soldiers. At the second conference, in June 1946, the Communist Party celebrated the fact that almost all important command positions in the armed forces were in communist hands. The third National Military Conference, in 1947, did not radically change the civil-military relationship in Hungary. At the fourth conference, in May 1948, the speakers emphasised the need for army modernisation.

Until that time, the coalition parties had the right to organise party groups in the barracks. At the fifth conference, in November 1948, Minister of Defence announced in his speech the reorganisation of the party's involvement in the military and criticised the performance of the educational officers.

On December 1, 1948, the Main Political Administration (MPA) was established to supervise political and ideological matters in the military. This organisation was the most important political organisation to ensure political control in the military. Barany writes, "With the creation of the MPA the already faint line between the state and the party was erased for it was responsible as a party organisation to the HCP command and as a military structure to the Ministry of Defence (MOD)."⁴

The establishment of the MPA changed the system of educational officers. The MPA formed a network of Marxism-Leninism evening courses to prepare the ideological orientation of military cadres. Also, the MPA published numerous books of Marxist historical and sociological analyses and it organised reading-writing proficiency courses for illiterate soldiers and several cultural events in the barracks. The educational officers were replaced with political officers whose missions were the same as the Red Army's commissars.

⁴ Ibid., 38.

In this new dual-command system the political officers did not limit their activities to controlling the socialist-type political education; rather, they influenced the military decision making process as well. It generated a kind of hate among the carrier officers against the political officers, and eroded military discipline and morale. The carrier officer seized every single opportunity to blame the political officers for the errors. The other significant means of party control over the armed forces was the HCP's Military Committee. It was formed in 1946, and all members were senior Communist officers chaired by the minister. The Military Committee was responsible for the direct control of political affairs in the armed forces until 1949.

In November 1950, the Defence Committee was established under Soviet pressure. It consisted of only three members: HCP's General Secretary, Matyas Rakosi, HCP's Deputy General Secretary, Erno Gero, and Defence Minister, Mihaly Farkas. This three-member Defence Committee operated in secret, and made all-important political, military, and even economic decision until the death of Stalin.

Parallel to these organisations, the personnel level was very important. Several military leaders were also party functionaries. From 1945, the HCP worked hard on removing officers who served in the army under governor Admiral Miklos Horthy. Special committees were formed to investigate the records of the officers on professional and political aspects. Beside the review of officers' records, thousands of officers were eliminated from the armed forces, and hundreds of them were executed or given prison sentences as war criminals.

The purge in the military was carried out by the Military –Political Department (MPD) empowered with the tasks of military counter-intelligence, the disclosure and prosecution of anti-regime activities, and the maintenance of high morale in the military. Barany's data show the following: Between 1949 and 1950 twelve generals and 1,100 high-ranking officers were removed from the armed forces as a consequence of the purges which affected lower-ranked military cadres as well.

Military courts sentenced approximately 10,000 individuals in 1951, 6,500 in 1952, and 4,600 in 1953.⁵

After 1945, the substitution of personnel, and the new educational system that concentrated on political-ideological re-education instead of professional military skills destroyed the prestige of military. Increasing the strength of the armed forces, more and more Communists were enlisted from the worker-peasant circle of society.

During this period Soviet influence was considerable not only in politics, but also in military affairs. Military advisors promoted the Soviet dominance. Their primary mission was to reorganise the armed forces' high command. The first group of military advisors gave friendly hand when the Hungarian leaders requested it. However, from 1949, the primary mission of the second group of advisors was to sovietise the entire Hungarian military and wipe out its national character. These advisors, controlled directly from Moscow, first reorganised the army commandership including the General Staff. Later, they initiated into service the Russian-style training system, uniforms, professional manuals, and military regulations.

Year by year, the number of Soviet military advisors increased, and Soviet advisors were appointed side-by-side to each high-and-midlevel Hungarian commander. With this system of advisors, actually, the Soviet High Command integrated the Hungarian army into the Red Army. Soviet dominance was assured by the training system of Hungarian officers as well. From the end of 1948, officers loyal to the HCP and to the Soviet Union were sent to the Soviet Union to study. The Soviets trained the future Hungarian military commanders for three-four years, forming them according to Soviet expectations.

After the World War II, during the transition period of 1945-53, the Communists struggled for a leading position in politics, expanding dominance over military. In this period, the Hungarian Communist Party, under Soviet supervision, gained significant control over the armed forces in Hungary. Even high-ranking military officers were in

⁵ Ibid., 39.

high political positions and took part in the political decision-making process. First, they were members of the Communist Party, and then only secondly, members of the career officer corps.

III “New Era?” 1953 – 1988

After the death of Stalin in 1953, the basic relationship between the military and the HWP did not change radically in Hungary. The HCP controlled the Army, and professional incompetence and ideological rigidity remained the main characteristic of the highest command in the Hungarian People’s Army (HPA). At the time of the Revolution in October 1956, 8085% of the officer corps was comprised of members of the Party, and 6070% of the conscripts belonged to the HWP’s youth organisation, the Communist Youth League (CYL).

Military prestige and morale declined from 1953. With the reduction of the HPA’s size, hundreds of career officers found themselves on the street from one day to the next in the period between 1953-56. Barany notes the following: “Since the Yugoslav threat no longer existed and Soviet demands for the expansion of the satellite militaries stopped after 1953, the government implemented a cut in the following fall. The [Ministry of Defence] MOD announced further troop reductions ranging between 15,000 and 20,000 in September 1955, July and August 1956. In the fall of 1956 the HPA’s size was approximately 120,000.”⁶

In the October revolution of 1956, the Hungarian military acted neither as an interest group, nor as a participant in policymaking process. Instead, the military elite simply waited for instructions from HCP headquarters, and when it did not receive clear directives, it was unable to stand on its own. Co-operation between the government, Party, and military leadership was accidental. In order to improve communication, the HWP Central Committee sent its own permanent committee to the MOD.

⁶ Ibid., 58.

The Revolution can be considered a consequence of the major factional conflict that arose within the political elite. The army did not play a significant political role in this conflict. Civil-military relations broke down during the first crisis situation the HPA faced. The reasons for this fact were manifold.

After the failed Revolution the HWP's most important military task was to reorganise the HPA. The first step was a draft of Officer's declaration in November 1956. Those who intended to remain in the HPA signed and pledged to serve the new government and to fight unflinchingly against the regime's external and internal enemies. Data show from Barany's sources that "about 80 percent of the officers (8,865) chose to sign the declaration, 2,435 elected not to. It is worth noting that with the 200,000 people who left the country went thousands of conscripted soldiers as well as 1,448 officers. Those officers who did not accept the conditions set out in the Declaration were dismissed."⁷

The other step for the HPA's reorganisation was the further strengthening of party control over the armed forces. The HWP Central Committee issued a new policy concerning the military, named Guiding Principles of Party and Political Organs within the Military. Although some aspects of civil-military relations changed in the 1953-88 period, the HWP maintained firm control over the military.

The Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact influenced the HPA in many ways as well. After the 1956 Revolution, the Soviet troops remained "temporarily" stationed in Hungary for 35 years. As Barany notes: "Moscow made the same offer to Budapest in 1958 but Kadar flatly refused, saying 'there is absolutely no resentment in our country against the presence of your troops on our territory.' Thus, Kadar rejected the offers, referring to 'the danger of Western provocation,' which he maintained could well result in another counterrevolution."⁸

Also, the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO) had significant political and military influence among the socialist countries. Barany

⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁸ Ibid., 76.

writes that: “The WTO had a great deal of political significance in the bloc to the extent that it (1) provided a formal framework of binding the Communist states together; (2) limited the sovereignty of individual member states by forbidding their participation in other alliances; and (3) served as a useful forum for the expression of the bloc’s support of various Soviet foreign policy positions and initiatives.”⁹

Some Western analysts argued that the WTO’s main goal was to unite Soviet forces with their Eastern European counterparts in a military campaign. Additional goals were to maintain the Soviet capability for rapid military intervention in Eastern Europe, and to diminish the resistance of the Eastern European armies against the Soviet occupation forces, but not to maintain military preparedness in the Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) countries.

In the 1970s the state of civil-military relations and the entire military reflected the actual political, economic, and social situation in the country. One of the most important missions of the armed forces was its internal function. The 1976 Defence Law defined the internal missions of the armed forces: “co-operation in the protection of national security and domestic order; participation in the national economy and in the education and training of youth; and rendering assistance at times of natural disasters.”¹⁰

The Soviet influence was still strong however, and the HCP’s control over the military was strengthened with the so-called lists of sensitive positions. Seven classified lists of positions were created between 1968 and 1985. The Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (HSWP) exercised all rights to appoint loyal cadres to these positions.

The lack of military professionalism, the lack of national character of the army, the frequent harassment and abuse of law, hard service-time for conscripts and officers and financial problems caused further decline in military prestige from the early 1970s to late 1980s.

⁹ Ibid., 77.

¹⁰ Defence Law, 1976.

The 1980s showed a limited democratisation of the military, and a little mellowing of its strict subordination to the Soviet Union and the WTO. More and more military delegations visited different Western countries and military organisations. By the end of 1980s not only Hungarian economic and political life, but also the military was ripe for radical changes and reforms as well.

IV Breakthrough

During the socialist-communist years the Hungarian armed forces was a typical Soviet-type military organisation. After the political changes in 1989, both civilian and military leaders were challenged to reform the entire military according to the new situations in Central Europe. The civilian-political reform was interwoven with military reform. From 1989, one of the most important questions was the command, the structure, and the size of the future Hungarian military. Furthermore, Hungary was one of the vanguards of the revolution in Central and Eastern Europe that started in the late 1980s. Communism collapsed, and the former countries of the Soviet Bloc threw off their yokes.

In Hungary, after four decades of socialist-communist dominance, the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party (HSWP) lost its strength. In 1988, the Kádár's 32-year reign, known as "Goulash communism," collapsed, even though it had been a soft communist dictatorship, with Hungary being the most liberal country of the Eastern European communist regimes. The HSWP could no longer contain the internal opposition movement, although in some cases the party tried to repress it. With the external forces of *perestroika* and *glasnost* being led by the Soviet leader, Michail Gorbachev, the party removed Janos Kadar and his closest supporters party and country leadership, and named Karoly Grosz as the new party leader. This move was in essence a bloodless purge of the old guard in favour of a younger, less hard-line leadership.

The first large, threatening opposition movement was that of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF), which emerged in September 1987. As developments continued, more and more anti-system parties

and groups were formed, such as the Alliance of Free Democrats (AFD). In addition, in 1989, the communists split into two parties. The reformers left the HSWP and formed the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP). The traditional pre-communist-era parties also re-emerged: the Smallholder Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the National Peasants Party.

From March 1989, the roundtable negotiations between the HSWP and the opposition parties started to set up the policy for the political transformation process. Also, Prime Minister Miklós Németh announced a significant military reform on 1 December 1989 to try to isolate the armed forces from politics.

The situation was troublesome and the military were strained. The first issue under Hungary's defence reform was to clarify the command and control structure over the defence ministry and Hungarian People's Army, and the authority lines between the president and government in peacetime and wartime. Also, it was important to arrange repatriation of the Soviet troops from Hungary, and remove the socialist party's influence on the military.

According to the 1949 Constitution, and its changes in October 1989, National Assembly representatives were elected for four-year terms, and the president was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Parliament had the right to make decisions concerning the use of the military, and the National Assembly was entitled to declare states of war and conclusion of peace. In wartime, it declared states of emergency and set up the Defence Council. The Constitution of 1949 provided the legal background of the constitutional changes in October 1989.

The defence reform of 1 December 1989 separated the Hungarian military into two parts: a defence ministry subordinate to the Prime Minister, and a Command of the Hungarian Army, subordinate to the President. The Németh government did this because it predicted that a new non-communist government would come to power after the 1990 election. It hoped to keep the presidential position together with the position of the commander-in-chief as well.

Yet these reforms could not resolve the tensions in civil-military relations. The first civilian defence minister Lajos Fűr was appointed in May 1990, but he and his staff mainly dealt with social and political matters, and the armed forces remained separate and beyond his purview. The struggle for control of the military continued among the president, the Prime Minister, and the defence minister.

A member of the Parliamentary Defence Committee argued that the president was clearly the commander-in-chief, but there were two restrictions on his command. First, the National Assembly was authorised to make decisions on deploying armed forces within Hungary or abroad. Second, each issue on national defence required the Prime Minister's countersignature as well. The Constitutional Court had the right to make a decision on this issue. The Court concluded that the president as commander-in-chief would issue only guidelines (not orders) to the military, and the Prime Minister and the defence minister had the authority to exercise executive power. In accordance with the Court's decision, the defence ministry began to re-organise the military structure at the end of 1991.¹¹

The new military reform of 1992 had two major goals. One was to subordinate the military command to the defence ministry; the other was to replace career military officers with civilians in order to establish control over the military by the ruling party (Hungarian Democratic Forum).

The 1992 reforms also solved many problems that the 1989 defence reform had caused. The Commander of Home Defence Forces was required to be subordinate to the president during crisis or war, but in peacetime, the defence minister would exercise the command and control of the armed forces.

In accordance with the formal military reform, the size of the armed forces was reduced from its 1989 size of 150,000 to 100,000 by the end

¹¹ Jeffrey Simon, *NATO Enlargement and Central Europe: A Study in Civil-Military Relations* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence University Press, 1996), 137-148.

of 1992. The structure of the armed forces was also reorganised. In accordance with the 7 December 1993 Defence Law, on January 1994, the government announced, that it would merge the defence ministry and the General Staff of the Army Command. This was scheduled to ensure civil control over the military in peacetime as well as in war.

In the May 1994 parliamentary elections the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) gained 209 seats in the 386seat Parliament. The socialist Prime Minister Gyula Horn appointed retired Colonel György Keleti as the new defence minister. He had been the press spokesman under the former defence minister, but had left the military to become a Member of Parliament.

First, Keleti reorganised the defence ministry, reducing its number by 10%. Then, he reorganised the General Staff, giving more authority in military planning, including intelligence. Keleti decided to separate the defence ministry and army headquarters, but later, influenced by a British study, he changed his mind, and at first suggested leaving unfilled the position of Commander of the Hungarian Home Defence Forces (HHDF), but later suggested eliminating the position.

He also realised that the existing structure of the military could not be financed from the budget. First, he planned to reduce the personnel by calling up fewer conscripts, then reducing the service time of the conscripts from 12 months to 9. Later, he added to the reduction of the armed forces by cutting the number of military districts from four to two.

Ultimately, the budget constraints determined the possibilities. From 1994, the Armed forces cancelled military exercises above the company level.

Civilians in Parliament complained about the low probability of re-establishing civil control of the military. Parliamentary Defence Committee Chairman Imre Mécs noted: “The executive should control military matters, but this is not done with the necessary effectiveness, so the National Assembly’s Defence Committee has to reinforce its

supervision in this domain.”¹² Therefore, Mécs asked for expansion of the authority of the Defence Committee, and he suggested increasing the numbers on the committee.

The other members of the Defence Committee complained that the defence ministry did not provide them with all required information. The defence minister and the members of the Defence Committee clashed when the minister failed to inform and discuss military procurement and, in another case military deployment abroad. Despite the limited capability of the Defence Committee, it was one of the most active parliamentary defence committees in Central Europe.

The reform of the Hungarian Home Defence Forces continued during 1995. Resolution 88/1995 (6 July) of the Parliament defined the direction of the medium-term and long-term transformation of the armed forces and their size. The medium-term reorganisation was expected to be completed by 1998 and the long-term one by 2005. In the future as a result of transformation, Hungary should have Defence Forces that are modern, of a smaller size than today without losing their deterrence capability and are suitable for integration into NATO, and based partly on voluntary service and partly on conscription. The transformation must cover every component of the structure of the Defence Forces (organisation, size of personnel, proportion of commissioned and non-commissioned staff, armament and other military equipment, operations, combat-readiness, training and supplies, etc.).¹³

In October 1995, the government began co-ordination talks on the status of professional soldiers. Finally, in May 1996, the parliament passed a new law, but the soldiers were unsatisfied. The service was difficult, the salary was low, and the future of military careers was vague. Consequently, many professional soldiers continued to leave the armed forces. A member of the Parliamentary Defence Committee described the situation in the military as tragic, because of the personnel matters and the technical conditions.

¹² Ibid., 164.

¹³ “Military Legal Background”. Honvedelmi Miniszterium. 1997.

Despite the financial problems and the budget constraints, Hungary continued force modernisation according to NATO accession. From 1995, Hungary enhanced the participation in different missions, including peacekeeping, Partnership for Peace (PfP), and NATO Implementation Forces (IFOR). Additionally, after the Dayton agreement, Hungary allowed the United States to set up a station of army-service-corps logistics units in Hungary. Hungary reacted positively to NATO's offer since the principles and the flexible character of PfP provided an opportunity for the further development of co-operation with NATO countries. From the start, Hungary has made it clear that it considers participation in Partnership for Peace as an extremely valuable, but not exclusive, element of its preparation for accession.

The bilateral and multilateral co-operation among the countries is also very important. Great importance is being attached to the Planning and Review Process (PARP), which was launched in the framework of PfP at the beginning of 1995. The co-operation pursued in the framework of the IFOR operation to bring about a settlement of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia was an extremely important dimension of relations between Hungary and NATO.

The next important stage was the NATO's offer to the countries interested in accession to start a country-specific, individual and intensified dialogue with the Alliance on the elements of substance-of-preparation for accession, and on the expectations *vis-a-vis* future member states. Hungary was among the first to start the dialogue with the officials responsible on the NATO staff.

In November 1997 80% of Hungarians voted in a referendum in favour of NATO integration. After the referendum one of our most important challenges was to ensure effective and efficient democratic, civil control of the Hungarian Armed Forces. The key elements of this were actually established in the early 1990s, during the transition period from communism to our present system. Now, Hungarian security and defence issues are laid out in the Basic Principles of National Defence, in the act on National Defence and, most importantly, in the Constitution.

The keyword of the preparation of the Hungarian Home Defence Forces for accession is “interoperability.” The replacement and further development of military equipment, weapon systems, and installations according to NATO standards were not the only or primary dimensions of the preparation. The most urgent task has been rather, the development of what is called “interoperability of the minds” which includes the transformation of the structures, procedures, and training systems of the HHDF. One further requirement of NATO membership was the establishment and implementation of democratic and civilian control over the armed forces, and parliamentary supervision over the military and the defence budget.

Budgetary and interoperability in minds causes serious problems even now in the time of Hungarian NATO-membership. We still have not accomplished the fusion of MOD and General Staff which situation generates various problems in practical work. The General Staff, the supreme body of the HHDF, is responsible for the realisation of the HHDF’s development, combat and mobilisation. In the current system, the National Defence Ministry and the HHDF, in some cases, have the same responsibilities. Current reforms of the Armed Forces will see the integration of these two bodies by the end of this year, eliminating the current problems and duplications in the functioning of the military management.

It is a widely accepted idea in Central European countries such as Hungary, that it is impossible to find any one unified, coherent Western model. The integrated National Defence Headquarters plays an important role in democratic civil-military relations and provides effective oversight of the Armed Forces. The integrated defence structure relies on teamwork and a balanced mix of civil and military expertise. Once adopted in Hungary, this kind of organisation, structure and management would reduce duplication, would cost less, and ensure prompt decision-making and execution of orders. It would also ensure that objective advice was provided to the Minister and government on defence issues, ensure that governmental policy, regulations and guidelines were followed by the Armed Forces and, last but not least, establish a NATO-compatible defence structure in Hungary.

The Constitution of the Republic of Hungary is the basic institutional framework, which defines the position of the Armed Forces, the Defence Ministry and the Hungarian Home Defence Forces (HHDF) within Hungarian society. According to the Constitution, the President is the Supreme Commander of the Hungarian Armed Forces, with parliament exercising civil control over the Armed Forces through its National Defence Committee. It approves the principles and fundamental elements defining the security policy and basic principles of defence, consents to the sending of elements of the Armed Forces abroad, ensures the accountability of the Home Defence Minister to parliament, and oversees services, training, procurement and the position of the HHDF in the Hungarian security system.

The Defence Ministry is responsible for advising the Minister and State Secretaries; development of defence and legal policy; development of foreign policy (military issues) and management of NATO policy; professional military advice; laying basic principles of the HHDF; financial planning and management; procurement; management of civil and media issues; employment of personnel for the Ministry and other subordinated organisations, and supervision of military training and education.

V General Aims

The Republic of Hungary bases itself on the indivisibility of security, noting the fact that, today, no European State or organisation can guarantee security for itself alone or to the detriment of others. Security is a complex issue, which has economic, political, military, human rights, environmental and other aspects. Hungary can only preserve its security in co-operation with neighbouring countries and others in the European region. The European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Western European Union (WEU), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe (CE) all play an important role in the security of the continent. Hungary wishes to contribute to its own security and to the security and stability of Europe by carrying out the modernisation of the country and its military on the basis of co-operative membership with these institutions.

Euro-Atlantic integration figures as one of the most important objectives of Hungarian security policy. The defence policy of Hungary is built upon the unity of co-operation, deterrence and defence. The principle of co-operation is testament to the fact that Republic of Hungary sees Euro-Atlantic integration as the primary guarantee of security, wishing to attain it by enhancing bilateral and regional ties and strengthening the institutions of European security and co-operation. The principle of deterrence and defence demonstrates the intent of Hungary to maintain a defence capability in harmony with international treaties. The principle of deterrence also mandates that the Hungarian Defence Forces shall be kept at a level of combat training that should not allow for the risk of an armed aggression against the country, and that would help to prevent armed conflict from erupting by threatening the aggressors with serious losses or defeat.

The military factor continues to play an important role in guaranteeing security, but its missions, tasks and operations differ from those of previous eras. Among the peacetime missions of the military gaining importance are: to prepare for and to prevent armed conflicts and crises from erupting; to participate in peacekeeping and peace-support missions; and to prevent and handle national or manmade disasters and non-military threats affecting security. Naturally, the primary role of the armed forces continues to be the protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The most important task of Hungarian Defence Forces at this time is the armed defence of the country. One of the basic requirements facing the military nowadays is that it should be capable of preventing armed conflicts endangering the country, of managing emergency or crisis situations, and of conducting defensive operations. Establishing and continually enhancing these capabilities and improving the quality of preparation and equipment of the forces are high priority tasks. The principle of adequate defence, as well as the present geo-strategic situation of Hungary, its characteristics, material and human resources justifies an armed force that is comparable to those of similar-sized countries.

VI Conclusion

With respect to the civil-military relations in Hungary after World War II, two significant transformation periods can be observed. The first major transition happened right after the war, between 1945-53, when the communists gained power and reformed the military according to communist notions. The second significant transformation started in 1988-89, when democratic forces came to power in Hungary, and started to reform the military as well. From 1989, Hungary and its military have come a long way toward democratic consolidation. However, much still remains to be achieved in terms of a real democracy.

The 19-member Defence committee of the National Assembly is one of the bastions of democratic civil-military relations in Hungary. To ensure democratic civil control over the military, for instance, no Member of Parliament can be a member of the military. To achieve effective civilian oversight of the military, however, Hungary has to adopt a new constitution based on democratic principles. Hungary also still has to develop the already existing National Security Council, an interagency organisation subordinate to the Prime Minister, so that it can bring together the ministers to form national security policy, and give clear directions to the military.

There is much to improve in the Defence Ministry as well, in the terms of real civilian oversight of the military. First, the minister could achieve wider public support if this yearly report on defence policy and the state of the military is not confidential. Second, the duplication of functions between the General Staff and Defence Ministry should be abolished. Third, the number of military officers serving in the MOD should be decreased. Fourth, there should be a rotation system for the officers to serve in the MOD, then after a certain period, to go back to the General Staff and units. Finally, Hungary needs more civilian experts and specialists on military matters to ensure effective civil control over the armed forces. Clearly, the Hungarian goals concerning democratic civil-military relations has not been accomplished completely yet.

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