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THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF EU ACCESSION IN HUNGARY

Agnes Batory



Introduction

For the second time since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty – seen by many as a watershed in the history of European integration – the European Union (EU) is set to expand. Unlike in 1995, when the group joining the Union consisted of wealthy, established liberal democracies, ten of the current applicants are post-communist countries which recently completed, or are still in various stages of completing, democratic transitions and large-scale economic reconstruction. It is envisaged that the candidates furthest ahead will become members in time for their citizens to participate in the next elections to the European Parliament due in June 2004. The challenge the absorption of the central and east European countries represents for the Union has triggered a need for internal institutional reform and new thinking among the policy-makers of the existing member states. However, despite the imminence of the ‘changeover’ to a considerably larger and more heterogeneous Union, the domestic profiles of the accession countries have remained relatively little known from the west European perspective. In particular, the implications of enlargement in terms of the attitudes and preferences of the new (or soon to be) players are still, to a great extent, unclear. How will they view their rights and obligations as EU members? How committed will they be to the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*? In what way will they fill formal rules with practical content?

Naturally, the answers to these questions can only be tentative at this stage. Nonetheless, the policies they have proposed, particularly since accession negotiations started, and the rhetoric they use in the debate on EU membership give some indication of the attitudes of central and east European political elites to 'Europe'. By analysing the domestic discourse in some detail, this paper seeks to introduce the context in which the issue of EU membership and European integration is played out in one of the leading candidates, Hungary. The paper is structured as follows. First, it gives a brief overview of Hungarian foreign policy in the 1990s, focusing on the main developments in Hungary–EU relations to date. The subsequent section introduces the party system and looks at the attitudes of the main political parties: Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP) and its coalition partners, which held office from 1998 to April 2002, on the one hand, and the current Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)-Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) coalition on the other. This analysis draws on formal policies as articulated in party manifestos as well as the rhetoric of leading figures in the respective parties. Finally, the paper reviews the evolution of public opinion on EU membership, showing the strong support for integration and considering the potential for the increase of Euroscepticism that nonetheless exists among the citizens. A brief conclusion sums up the paper and offers an indication of how Hungary as a new member state may fit into the EU.

Hungarian foreign policy and the country's relations with the EU

Already in the late communist era Hungarian governments went as far in their efforts to improve relations with the then European Community (EC) as it was possible to do in the political climate of the day, taking the lead among central and east European countries in this respect. The July 1988 Trade and Cooperation Agreement between Hungary and the EC was concluded just one week after the EC and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) of the Eastern bloc had established diplomatic relations, but following five years of negotiations. At the time, it 'was generally accepted that this was the most far-reaching agreement that the EC was likely to sign with any of the six Central European countries since Hungary had implemented the most radical economic reform programme of the Communist East.'¹ From the Hungarian point of view, the agreement with the EC was part of a general policy of opening up to Western structures. The country had been admitted to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1982, and in the late 1980s the last communist

government under the premiership of Miklós Németh also established contacts with the European Parliament and applied for membership of the Council of Europe.²

With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the CMEA and the Soviet Union itself, the scope of Hungarian foreign policy expanded radically. József Antall, the first post-communist prime minister, used this new independence to define his government's basic goals in foreign policy in the early 1990s as Euro-Atlantic integration, good relations with other countries of East Central Europe, and the representation of the interests of ethnic Hungarians abroad, living in the countries neighbouring Hungary, primarily Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. Although the extent to which a 'European' orientation or the role of Hungary as a 'kin-state'³ was emphasized changed over time according to the ideological colouring of the governing parties of the day, these objectives have remained at the core of Hungarian foreign policy to the present time.

As for European integration, the agenda of Antall, as well as his counterparts elsewhere in East Central Europe, was highly ambitious. The Hungarian government's 1990 'Programme of national renewal' set the goal of the conclusion of an association agreement with the EC to 'provide the foundations for future full membership', which was expected by 1995.⁴ (In the event, the association agreement entered into force in December 1991 and took full effect in February 1994.) This objective partly reflected the anti-communist, and therefore by default 'Western', orientation that characterized the first post-communist governments throughout the region. More importantly, membership of the EC (soon to be transformed into the European Union) and NATO was seen to facilitate economic transformation and act as a security guarantee in a new, post-Cold War international environment.⁵ This perception was widely shared by the political elite, and was reflected in the fact that the parliamentary resolution granting a mandate to the Hungarian government to apply formally for membership of the EU was adopted almost unanimously in March 1994.

However, progress towards full integration into the EU was, from the candidates' perspective, disappointingly slow. In the early 1990s, the EC, taken by surprise by the extent of change on its eastern borders and preoccupied with its own internal reforms that ultimately led to the Treaty on European Union, responded in a more or less ad hoc manner to the challenge presented by the post-communist countries' transformations. The Europe Agreement (EA) or association formula first extended by the EC to the post-communist countries was little more than 'a classical trade agreement, supplemented by a "political dialogue", ... and backed by technical and financial assistance'.⁶ It was not until the Copenhagen

European Council of June 1993 that the (by then) EU endorsed the post-communist countries' aspirations for membership and defined the conditions for achieving it in terms of the candidates' democratic stability and ability to integrate into the European market.⁷ The first of the European Commission's annual reports (*avis*) reviewing the candidates' progress resulted in the decision to start accession negotiations in 1998 with five post-communist countries, including Hungary, selected by the Luxemburg European Council on the basis of their ability to meet the Copenhagen criteria in the medium term.

Preparing for membership and conducting the negotiations extended over four legislative terms in Hungary, with each election in this period – in 1994, 1998 and 2002 – bringing a change of government. Yet the accession process did not suffer major setbacks, indicating robust political support for the country's integration into the EU among the parties with governing (or coalition) potential, even if there was not necessarily agreement on the acceptable conditions for achieving it, as will be shown below. Following the formal application for membership by the first post-communist government, between mid-1994, when it entered office, and the 1998 election, the Socialist-Free Democrat coalition screened Hungarian legislation to assess its compatibility with EU norms. Gyula Horn's cabinet also submitted a large amount of information to the European Commission on the basis of which the first, relatively positive, *avis* was compiled in 1997, adopted the preliminary negotiating positions and the principles that would guide the Hungarian delegation, and participated in the official opening of accession negotiations in March 1998.⁸

In the following four years, Viktor Orbán's three-party government – consisting of Fidesz-MPP (the largest of the coalition partners by far), the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), and the agrarian Independent Smallholder Party (FKGP) – conducted the negotiations, keeping the country among the leading applicants in terms of 'chapters' of the *acquis* on which provisional agreement was reached in Brussels. Preparation for membership, however, proceeded more slowly in agriculture than in other policy areas, partly because of the general difficulties involved in the reconstruction of this sector.⁹ In the wake of regime change, many of the large state- or collectively-owned cooperative farms were dismantled and the cultivated land returned to its previous owners or otherwise privatized. This resulted in the fragmentation of the property structure and the proliferation of small(er), uncompetitive agricultural enterprises. More importantly, political will for reform was lacking in the junior coalition partner, the Independent Smallholder Party, which held the agricultural portfolio.

By July 2002, Hungarian governments had completed negotiations with the European Commission on 26 of the 31 chapters of the *acquis*. Although some of the most difficult chapters, among them agriculture and financial and budgetary provisions, are still open, the new Socialist-Free Democrat government (which entered into office in May 2002 under the premiership of Péter Medgyessy) hopes to finish negotiations by the end of 2002. The amendment of the relevant provisions of the constitution, allowing the government to sign the accession protocol, is scheduled to take place in late 2002. The question of joining the Union will be put to a referendum in 2003.

The Hungarian party system and the main parties' attitudes to the EU

From the domestic perspective, the first post-communist Hungarian government's quest for closer ties with the EC/EU was not particularly visible or salient against the background of the party political upheavals of the early 1990s. At that stage, pro-European policies also required a lower level of engagement from the government in Budapest as compared with actual preparation for membership in the second half of the decade. The domestic discourse therefore remained on a general level, focusing on symbolic or geopolitical arguments supporting Hungary's 'return to Europe', without much discussion about what this would entail in more concrete terms.¹⁰

This situation, however, changed in the late 1990s, particularly in the third legislative term (1998–2002). While the mainstream parties maintained a basic pro-membership policy, differences emerged in their priorities, the negotiation strategy they proposed to employ *vis-à-vis* Brussels, the weight given to more value-oriented as opposed to purely material considerations in relation to the EU and what sort of Europe, if at all, they hoped Hungary would join. Moreover, in addition to these rather nuanced differences in the core of the party system (reviewed below), after the 1998 elections a more fundamental division appeared in parliament, setting the national-populist, extreme-right Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) apart from the other parliamentary parties. The Justice Party calls EU membership itself, rather than the conditions of accession, into question.¹¹

In April 2002, the party failed to pass the electoral threshold of 5 per cent but, with approximately a quarter of a million voters, its base was not negligible (for the election results see Table 1).

Following the April 2002 elections, only four parties gained representation in parliament, all of which support Hungary's accession to the EU: the national-

TABLE 1: ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY (NUMBER OF SEATS, 1990–2002)

	April 1990	May 1994	May 1998	April 2002
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)	33	209	135	178
Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ)	93	70	24	20
Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (Fidesz-MPP)	22	20	148	164
Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)	165	37	17	24
Independent Smallholder Party (FKGP)	44	26	48	0
Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP)	21	22	0	0
Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP)	-	0	14	0

Note: Parliamentary parties of the 1990–2002 period only. Parties in governing coalitions in bold.

Source: National Election Office (www.valasztas.hu).

conservative Fidesz-MPP and its small ally, the Christian-democratic Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF – now often seen as more centrist or moderate than Fidesz-MPP); the social-democratic successor of the former state-party, MSZP; and the liberal SZDSZ. (Apart from the Justice Party, the agrarian Smallholder Party that had been present in parliament until 2002 failed to gain representation.) The party system is dominated by the Socialist Party and Fidesz-MPP. These parties together received over 80 per cent of votes and mandates in both 1998 and 2002. The Democratic Forum was able to secure parliamentary representation in the last two elections only in an electoral alliance with Fidesz-MPP. The Alliance of Free Democrats – a party that had grown out of the pre-1989 radical anti-communist Democratic Opposition – is more independent, drawing on a distinct electoral basis concentrated in the capital, Budapest, but its share of the votes has decreased considerably since regime change. In the last elections, the parties' support showed a distinct geographical pattern, with the Socialists and the Free Democrats doing well in Budapest and the other cities, whereas the Fidesz-MPP–Democratic Forum alliance enjoyed greater popularity in the countryside.¹²

Party alliances and government formation are structured primarily not by a regime change divide, pitting former communists against former anti-communists, but rather according to two main ideological dimensions. These relate to conservative versus liberal and nationally oriented versus more cosmopolitan/universal values on the one hand and socio-economic policy on the other.¹³ The Socialists and Free Democrats are liberal and secular in outlook. The rhetoric of the centre-right parties – Fidesz-MPP and the Democratic Forum – emphasizes national and Christian values. The parties' socio-economic policies are, naturally, more volatile. The first Socialist-Free Democrat coalition was, from the West European point of view, somewhat paradoxically more free-market-minded than the centre-right parties were, implementing a radical austerity programme in the

mid-1990s that set the economy on a growth course,¹⁴ although in domestic terms it was highly unpopular. The Fidesz-led government of 1998–2002 intervened directly in the market at times and some of Viktor Orbán's statements in his party's 2002 election campaign warned against the influence of 'big business' and foreign investment.¹⁵ While the current Medgyessy cabinet is generally seen as investment- and market-friendly (the junior coalition partner Alliance of Free Democrats is renowned for its neo-liberal economic philosophy), it started its tenure in office with an extensive social welfare package, significantly increasing public-sector wages.

Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Party

Looking at the centre-right first, Fidesz-MPP's rhetoric on Europe changed significantly during the 1990s, shifting 'closer to conservative conceptions, grounded in cultural attributes, than to the technocratic approach represented by the ... [Socialist-Free Democrat] coalition' and, one may add, its own earlier views.¹⁶ This change was rooted in a remarkable ideological transformation. 'From what had started out as a radical alternative youth movement, and then as a party that often described itself as "social-liberal", by the late 1990s,¹⁷ Fidesz was ... transformed into a centre-right "catch-all" party espousing conservative and nationalist values at least as much as liberal ones'. Reflecting this, in 2000 the party decided to leave the Liberal International – of which it had been a member since 1992 – and the European Liberal, Democratic and Reform Party (ELDR) and join the centre-right European People's Party.

While Fidesz-MPP had unequivocally stated in its 1994 manifesto that Hungary's fastest possible integration into Europe was its primary foreign policy objective, a centrepiece of its programme for the 1998 elections was standing up for the national interest. Fidesz-MPP politicians saw EU accession as a bargain, the terms of which were to be determined in negotiations characterized by 'the niggardliness of partners',¹⁸ and viewed Hungary's EU membership as a

'natural claim to harmonize ... [the country's] position on the cultural map of Europe with ... [its] position in the European economy.'¹⁹ Hard bargaining with 'Brussels' also became a pronounced part of the party's rhetoric in government from 1998. Indeed, emphasizing that 'there [was] life outside the Union'²⁰ and making other controversial statements, Viktor Orbán as Prime Minister – often, perhaps unjustifiably, likened in this respect to former Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus – gained a reputation as one of 'the most outspoken critic[s] of the EU from among the leaders of applicant countries'.²¹

In contrast, the adoption by Fidesz-MPP and its coalition partners of the so-called 'status law', an act of parliament that granted rights in the spheres of employment, social services and education in Hungary to foreign nationals of Hungarian descent in 2001, demonstrated a greater emphasis on 'national politics'.²² Romania and Slovakia rejected the status law and blocked its application in its original form, arguing that certain provisions had extra-territorial effect and discriminated against Romanian/Slovak citizens of non-Hungarian descent in terms of access to the Hungarian labour market, for instance.²³ Signs of disapproval also arrived from various international organizations and the EU.²⁴ These, however, seemed to have little effect on the government's approach, indicating that promoting the role of Hungary as motherland for all ethnic Hungarians remained its priority.

This is not to say that the Orbán cabinet was necessarily unyielding in the negotiations with the EU – indeed, Hungary made considerable progress in terms of closing chapters between 1998 and 2002 – but merely that Fidesz-MPP's rhetoric towards a domestic audience centred on its image as a staunch defender of the national interest. The question of legalizing the acquisition of farmland by foreign (EU) nationals, which is currently banned, as part of the free movement of capital within the Union's market – one of the most contentious issues surrounding EU membership in the domestic debate – illustrates this.

According to the provisional agreement reached by the Orbán government in Brussels, EU nationals will be entitled to buy land in Hungary after a transition period of three to seven years from accession, subject to fulfilling other conditions. At the same time, 'The future has started', the party's 2002 election programme, focused on Fidesz-MPP's achievements in office. Under the heading 'Hungary at the heart of Europe' it stated that it 'succeeded in protecting Hungarian land, which foreign persons or corporations cannot buy'.²⁵ Following the elections, the party in opposition initiated a referendum to prevent the liberalization of the land market and, without questioning the objective of joining the EU *per se*,

Viktor Orbán warned that EU membership might put thousands of Hungarian farmers out of business.²⁶ More recently, Orbán made his party's support for the constitutional amendments necessitated by accession (which require qualified majority voting in parliament) conditional upon the government's acceptance of a number of his party's (not directly accession-related) initiatives.²⁷

A factor behind the recent radicalization of Fidesz-MPP's rhetoric was the exceptionally tight contest in the 2002 elections. The party's strategists appear to have best judged their chances of securing additional electoral support, which may have tipped the balance in favour of the Fidesz-MPP-Democratic Forum alliance, best by, first, ensuring high turnout among their supporters and, second, appealing to the sympathizers of the radical right. Both the Justice Party and the Smallholder Party unconditionally ruled out the possibility of foreigners acquiring land in Hungary; a slogan of the Smallholder Party, for instance, ran 'The motherland is not for sale'. In the aftermath of the elections, MIÉP went further, calling on its supporters to reject EU membership in the future referendum on accession in May,²⁸ and pledging to initiate a referendum to rule out the liberalization of the land market in June.²⁹ In some respects, Fidesz-MPP's proposals thus show parallels with the agenda of its extreme-right competitors.

Although opinion has not yet crystallized within Hungarian parties with regard to the direction European integration should take in the future, the views of Fidesz-MPP's leading politician, Viktor Orbán, about the kind of Europe he believed Hungary should join were clear. 'We would like to see a union based on nations', he was reported to say, rejecting the idea of a 'European super-state' or 'a European United States'.³⁰ Another representative of his party expressed the view that it is in 'Hungary's interest that the future, post-accession EU preserves the importance of decision-making by nation-states and ... the power of local levels'.³¹ These views indicate a preference for intergovernmental decision-making and a 'Europe of nation-states' – a vision perhaps closer to the ideals of Charles de Gaulle or Margaret Thatcher than those of Jean Monnet.

The Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats

A common European outlook is an important integrating force in what may seem like an unlikely alliance between two parties that started their lives as opponents before regime change in 1989–90. The social-democratic successor of the state party of the former regime, MSZP, now a member of the Socialist International, and the heir of the democratic opposition, SZDSZ, have been coalition partners in two

post-communist governments, including the current Medgyessy cabinet. The Socialist Party's pro-EU profile was a result of a lengthy process of internal reform and development. During the first few years after the party 'negotiated its way out of power' in 1989, as an analyst puts it, the dominant strategic vision within MSZP's leadership was to develop a traditional, working-class social democratic image.³² However, having returned to power in 1994, the party soon found itself trapped between its leftist profile and its inability 'to follow a policy of welfare social-democracy while an economic re-structuring is going on'.³³

The Socialists' solution, as their 1994 manifesto 'For a modern democratic Hungary' already demonstrated, was to tone down ideology altogether and rely, instead, on a claim to expertise and managerial competence in electoral competition. This development was due in no small part to the (first) coalition with the Free Democrats, which at the time tipped the balance in favour of the social-liberal wing within MSZP. The adoption of a pragmatic, technocratic stance and the commitment to modernization, which thus became key components of the Socialist Party's new identity, also implied the imperative 'to catch up with Europe'³⁴ and therefore, unsurprisingly, put European integration as a top foreign policy priority for the party while in government with SZDSZ between 1994 and 1998.

In opposition, the Socialists' 2002 manifesto echoed that of Fidesz-MPP in 1998 in promising 'consistently to represent ... national interests' and negotiate better deals in Brussels by giving up the Orbán government's 'aggressive tone, unnecessary conflicts with, and patronising of, the negotiation partners'.³⁵ The party pledged that its foreign policy would be 'free of party-political interests and ideological prejudices'.³⁶ At the same time, playing the 'national interest' card, MSZP called for renegotiation of the land-ownership deal in Brussels, arguing that the conditions the Fidesz-led coalition had reached were unsatisfactory, as well as the status law with Romania and Slovakia. Although it is too early to judge the new government's record, the rhetoric has certainly changed: the Medgyessy cabinet seems to judge a conciliatory tone more effective than the confrontational style they believe characterized Viktor Orbán's tenure in office.

Although electoral support for the Alliance of Free Democrats is only a fraction of that of the Socialist Party, its policy influence as junior coalition partner in charge of four of the sixteen government portfolios is not negligible. This influence is likely to act as a restraint on the government in terms of fiscal discipline, and reinforce MSZP's pro-EU commitment: among all Hungarian political parties the Free Democrats have traditionally emphasized their support for European integration most strongly. Indeed, the

broad notion of Europe as a synonym of modernization, and the more specific goal of becoming a member of the EU 'as a guarantee of maintaining ... the democratic order and the rule of law, deepening the market economy, and increasing living standards',³⁷ as its 1998 manifesto put it, consistently feature in the party's rhetoric. The Free Democrats commended the Alliance to the voters as 'the party of European Hungary' in their 2002 election campaign.

As far as the current governing parties' stances in the 'future of Europe' debate are concerned, leading personalities of the Socialist Party voiced explicitly 'federalist' views. Former prime minister Gyula Horn, for instance, called for a transfer of more power to the European level, welcoming the process, which in his view had already started, of transforming the EU along the lines of 'German-style federalism'.³⁸ Another representative of his party argued for 'a significant shift in a federal direction, and enhancing the power of the nation as a community of solidarity with a new, international social contract'.³⁹ SZDSZ shares these views insofar as a further delegation of sovereignty both 'upwards' to the Union and 'downwards' to regions and local governments was seen to be desirable.⁴⁰

Public opinion on the EU

In contrast with Poland and the Czech Republic, where the Euro-enthusiasm of the early 1990s gave way to volatility and increasing Euroscepticism, public opinion has consistently backed the political elite's aspirations to lead the country into the EU. In May 2002, 84 per cent of Hungarian respondents who intended to vote said they would cast their ballots for EU membership in the future referendum on accession (the corresponding figures are 75 per cent in the Polish and 62 per cent in the Czech case, respectively).⁴¹ There is thus little doubt about the outcome of the referendum, particularly if patterns of voting behaviour are similar to those experienced in the 1997 referendum on joining NATO. On that occasion, 85 per cent of the votes supported joining the Alliance, but only 49 per cent of citizens bothered to cast a ballot at all, and a larger than average number of anti-NATO voters stayed away from the polls.⁴² In the future referendum on EU membership too, turnout and the differential mobilization of the electorate are likely to be key factors increasing the proportion of votes in favour of the Union.

Despite the widespread support for EU membership, Hungarians were aware of the fact that accession would have a differential impact on society. According to the 1998 *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer*,

farmers, manual workers and low-income strata were seen in many post-communist countries as groups that would lose out 'as ties with the EU become closer'.⁴³ In Hungary, the public expected agricultural producers, people living in Eastern Hungary,⁴⁴ the elderly (pensioners) and people who did not speak foreign languages to be negatively affected by accession to the EU.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, pro-EU attitudes are the least likely among these groups: in socio-demographic terms, the typical Eurosceptic voter is elderly, less educated than the average, perceives him/herself to be a member of a lower social class, and is likely to live in the least developed and urbanized parts of Hungary.⁴⁶ These expectations about who will be dis/advantaged by Hungary's integration into the EU may well turn out to be correct; but they are based on relatively little information. The European Commission's 2001 *Applicant Countries Eurobarometer* revealed that 67 per cent of Hungarian respondents considered themselves not very well or not at all informed about their country's accession to the EU. The information campaign, expected to start in the near future to prepare the ground for the referendum, may positively contribute to increasing public awareness of the integration process.

Conclusion

By the end of 2002, a decision is expected from the current member states, selecting the first post-communist countries to join them in what started out as an exclusively west European enterprise. On the basis of the European Commission's assessment of the candidates' progress towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria, Hungary's long quest for EU membership is likely to be over soon. To qualify for accession, this country, like all other candidates, has to be ready to implement the *acquis* in its entirety, including policies which some current member states formally opted out of or have so far failed to apply successfully.⁴⁷ While

temporary arrangements are available in the form of transition periods, demonstrating willingness and, as the Copenhagen Council put it in 1993, 'the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union', is non-negotiable.

In the past decade, Hungarian governments showed considerable determination to hit this 'moving target'⁴⁸ and incorporate the ever-expanding body of EC legislation into the domestic legal and political system. The accession process was taken forward by successive governments that, irrespective of the party composition of coalitions, sought to make progress in the negotiations. Since the April 2002 elections, the four parties represented in the National Assembly converge on a basic, pro-membership policy, with the only radical Eurosceptic party of significance, the Justice Party, excluded from parliament. The two major parties of the Hungarian party system, the centre-left Socialist Party and the centre-right Fidesz-MPP, have both pledged to take the country into the EU while also defending the national interest in the accession negotiations. The rhetoric of the two parties, however, differs considerably: former prime minister Viktor Orbán has cultivated a reputation of 'hard bargaining' and confrontation with 'Brussels', while leading personalities in the Socialist Party seem to consider a tone of cooperation and conciliation more effective in representing Hungary's interests. MSZP's European orientation is reinforced by its coalition with the Free Democrats, a party that made EU accession and the ideas underlying European integration cornerstones of its programme. As far as the future of the Union, rather than the question of *joining* the Union, is concerned, the centre-left seems to be more prone to support a deepening of integration. How the attitudes of the parties will translate into policies remains to be seen, but the record of Hungarian governments so far suggests that they will play a constructive role in a larger European Union.

Endnotes

¹ Peter Van Ham, *The EC, Eastern Europe and European Unity: Discord, Collaboration and Integration since 1947* (London: Pinter, 1993), p. 171.

² László Lengyel, 'Foreign policy or national policy', in Csaba Gombár, Elemér Hankiss, László Lengyel and György Járnai (eds.), *Balance: The Hungarian Government 1990–1994* (Budapest: Korridor, 1994), pp. 354–76.

³ On the Antall government's foreign policy see George Schöpflin, 'Hungary as a kin-state', in his *Nations, Identity, Power* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), pp. 370–78.

⁴ The Government of the Republic of Hungary, *A nemzeti megújulás programja* (The programme of national renewal) (Budapest: Miniszterelnöki Hivatal, September 1990), p. 177.

⁵ See Heather Grabbe & Kirsty Hughes, 'Central and Eastern European Views on EU Enlargement: Political Debates and Public Opinion', in Karen Henderson (ed.), *Back to Europe: Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

⁶ Ulrich Sedelmeier and Helen Wallace, 'Eastern Enlargement', in Helen Wallace & William Wallace (eds), *Policy-making in the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 4th edn, 2000), pp. 438–9.

⁷ Copenhagen Council decision quoted in European Commission, 'Enlargement of the European Union: An Historic Opportunity; A

general overview of the enlargement process and the pre-accession strategy of the European Union', 2001, p. 8. A final criterion concerns the Union's own capacity to absorb new members 'while maintaining the momentum of European integration'.

⁸ In 1997, a referendum endorsed Hungary's NATO membership. The country was officially admitted to the Alliance in 1999.

⁹ The agricultural sector added 6.3 per cent gross value to the GDP in 2000 and employed approximately 8 per cent of the population (1997). European Commission, 'Enlargement of the European Union: Candidate Countries in Facts and Figures', 2001 (Eurostat data) and www.factbook.net/hungary/empl_sector.php (viewed 8 September 2002).

¹⁰ See Henderson, *Back to Europe*; and Heather Grabbe and Kirsty Hughes, *Enlarging the EU Eastwards* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs/Pinter, 1998).

¹¹ See, e.g., 'A MIÉP elnökségének nyilatkozata' (The statement of the MIÉP presidium), 2 September 2002, viewed on www.miep.hu.

¹² George Schöpflin 'The Hungarian elections and beyond', *Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty Newslines*, 24 April 2002.

¹³ See also Agnes Batory, 'Europe and the Hungarian parliamentary elections of April 2002', *OERN/RIIA Election Briefing No. 1*. (www.riia.org). For a general account of the Hungarian political system see generally András Körösi, *Government and Politics in Hungary* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Between 1997 and 2001, GDP grew at a yearly rate of over 4 (and some years over 5) per cent, slowing down somewhat more recently but still outperforming the CEE, or indeed, the EU average. Privatization is well-advanced: approximately 80 per cent of the GDP is produced by the private sector. For an economic policy analysis see the *OECD Economic Surveys*; and for the indicators the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *Transition Report 2001*, pp. 156–7.

¹⁵ 'Orbán loses, but only just', *The Economist*, 25 April 2002. After the elections, Viktor Orbán said that the new cabinet 'should not be described as one in which the government supports big capital against its own people but rather as one where big capital "par excellence" has formed the government': *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Newslines*, 17 June 2002.

¹⁶ Tibor Navracsics, 'The missing debate? Hungary and the European Union', *Sussex European Institute Working Paper No. 21* (1997), p. 15.

¹⁷ Bill Lomax, 'The 1998 elections in Hungary: Third Time Lucky for the Young Democrats', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* Vol. 15, No. 2 (1999), p. 114.

¹⁸ Fidesz-MPP, 'A polgári Magyarorszáért: A Fidesz-MPP vitairata' (For a civic Hungary: The discussion paper of Fidesz-MPP), 1996, p. 119.

¹⁹ József Szájer (vice-chairman and parliamentary group leader of Fidesz-MPP), 'Az európai csatlakozás küszöbén' (At the doorstep of European accession), *Népszabadság*, 11 November 1998.

²⁰ 'Orbán: Van élet az Unión kívül' (Orbán: There is life outside the Union), *Népszabadság*, 18 September 2000.

²¹ *Magyar Hírlap*, 8 July 2000. For a review of Orbán's rhetoric on Europe see generally István Hegedűs, 'European Ideas, Hungarian realities', *Federal Trust European Essay No. 1* (1999), pp. 10–11.

²² According to the law, citizens of the countries neighbouring Hungary are entitled to these benefits only if they are in possession of so-called 'Hungarian identity cards' or certificates, which look similar to passports, bear a stylized crown of St Stephen (the symbol of historical Hungarian statehood) on the cover and are issued by the Hungarian authorities to persons deemed to be of Hungarian descent.

²³ In December 2001, an agreement between the Romanian and the Hungarian prime ministers extended some of the benefits – for instance those relating to work permits in Hungary – to all Romanian citizens regardless of ethnic origin. See Brigid Fowler, 'Fuzzing citizenship, nationalising political space: A framework for interpreting the Hungarian "status law" as a new form of kin-state policy in Central and Eastern Europe', *One Europe or Several? Programme Working Paper 40/02* (Brighton: Sussex European Institute, January 2002).

²⁴ See, for instance, 'EU asks Hungary to intensify consultations with neighbors over status law', 18 July 2001; 'Belgian ambassador criticizes Hungarian status law', 17 July 2001; 'EU parliament on Hungarian status law', 12 July 2001; 'EU official says Hungary must reach accord with neighbors on status law', 2 July 2001; 'PACE [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe] chairman criticizes Hungarian status law', 26 June 2001, all in *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Newslines*.

²⁵ Fidesz-MPP, 'A jövő elkezdődött - Választási program 2002' (The future has started – Election programme 2002), viewed at <http://www.fidesz.hu/download/48.pdf> on 24 February 2002.

²⁶ 'Koldusként nem az Unióra' (As beggars 'No' to the EU), *Magyar Nemzet*, 22 July 2002.

²⁷ 'Orbán szavait hihetetlennek tartja David' (Orbán's words described by David as unbelievable), *Népszabadság*, 14 September 2002.

²⁸ 'MIÉP-gyűlés: ellenállásra szólítanak fel' (MIÉP rally: Calls for resistance), *Magyar Nemzet*, 5 May 2002.

²⁹ 'MIÉP népszavazást akar a földkérdésről' (MIÉP wants referendum on land issue), *Magyar Nemzet*, 11 July 2002.

³⁰ 'Orbán describes his vision for Europe', *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Newslines*, 12 July 2001; 'Nem kell európai szuperállam – mondta Münchenben Orbán, Schlüssel és Stoiber' (We don't want a European super-state – say Orbán, Schlüssel and Stoiber in Munich), *Népszabadság*, 20 November 2000.

³¹ 'Európai szövetségi köztársaság vagy valami más?' (Federal Republic of Europe or something else?), interviews with the representatives of the parliamentary parties in *Magyar Hírlap*, 24 May 2001. It has to be noted that the Orbán government's Minister of Foreign Affairs, János Martonyi – himself not a member of Fidesz-MPP – seemed to have more of an 'EU-federalist' disposition, stating for instance in a lecture that 'our interest ... is for the process of European integration not to stop ... and not to be reversed' and that the future Europe 'will be a Europe beyond states [but also] a Europe of nations'. János Martonyi, 'A Magyar külpolitika fő kérdései' (The main questions of Hungarian foreign policy) in Ferenc Virágh (ed.), *Kiáltó szó az Eckhardt Akademián* (Crying voice at [FKGP's] Eckhardt Academy), No. 30 (2000), p. 24.

- ³² Daniel F. Ziblatt, 'The adaptation of ex-communist parties to post-communist Eastern Europe: A comparative study of the East German and Hungarian ex-communist parties', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, No. 2 (1998), p. 125.
- ³³ András Bozóki, 'Between modernisation and nationalism: Socialist parties under post-Socialism', *Central European University Political Science Working Paper No. 7.* (1997), p. 8.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ László Kovács (MSZP chairman and former Minister of Foreign Affairs), 'A jóléti rendszerváltás külpolitikai programja' (The foreign policy programme of social regime change), 20 February 2002; Viewed at <http://www.mszp.hu/download/kampany/kabinet/kulugy.ppt> on 28 February 2002.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ 'Az integráció útja: Hogy tartuk a jó irányt – SZDSZ választási füzetek' (The way of integration: For a modern, European Hungary, SZDSZ election papers), 1998, p. 3.
- ³⁸ 'Magyarország is Európa jövőjéről vitatkozik' (Hungary debates the future of Europe), *Magyar Hírlap*, 6 July 2001.
- ³⁹ Tibor Szanyi MP, vice-chairman of the parliamentary committee on European integration, in: 'Európai szövetségi köztársaság vagy valami más?' (Federal Republic of Europe or something else?), interviews with the representatives of the parliamentary parties in *Magyar Hírlap*, 24 May 2001.
- ⁴⁰ István Szent-Iványi, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee (1998–2002), quoted in *Magyar Hírlap*, 24 May 2001.
- ⁴¹ TÁRKI/Central European Opinion Research Group survey, May 2002. For trends over the 1990s see the European Commission's *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer and Applicant Countries Eurobarometer* series.
- ⁴² Mónika Gulyás, 'A népszavazás intézményi-történelmi összehasonlító perspektívában' (The referendum in institutional-historical perspective), *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 1999, No. 4, pp107–32.
- ⁴³ European Commission, *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 1998*.
- ⁴⁴ There are relatively great regional disparities in Hungary, with levels of income significantly lower in Eastern Hungary than the Transdanubia (Western region) or the capital.
- ⁴⁵ Szonda-Ipsos, 'The winners and losers of our accession to the EU', September 1997; Szonda-Ipsos, 'The European Union and Hungarian public opinion', April 2000.
- ⁴⁶ For the statistical data see generally Agnes Batory, 'Attitudes to Europe: A comparative politics approach to the issue of European Union membership in Hungarian party politics', PhD thesis, Cambridge, 2002.
- ⁴⁷ László Csaba, 'Hitting a moving target: Economic challenges for Hungary in the EU enlargement in comparative perspective', *Central European Political Science Review* 2, No. 6 (2001), p. 57; see also Attila Ágh, 'Europeanization of policy-making in East Central Europe: The Hungarian approach to EU accession', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol.6, No. 5 (1999), pp. 839–54.
- ⁴⁸ Csaba, 'Hitting a moving target', p. 57.

Agnes Batory is an Associate Fellow of the European Programme, RIIA.

Email: agnesbatory@hotmail.com

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THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Chatham House 10 St James's Square London SW1Y 4LE
Tel 020 7957 5700 E-mail contact@riia.org
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