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THESIS

**SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN EAST CENTRAL
EUROPE**

by

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March 2002

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SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the sub-regional cooperation in East Central Europe. It argues that the changed security environment after the fall of the Iron Curtain made the states of the region realize the need for close cooperation in order to meet the requirements of membership of the larger security institutions. It draws upon the example of the Hungarian-Romanian joint Peacekeeping Battalion as an example of military cooperation at the sub-regional level.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION	7
A.	DEFINITIONS	8
B.	CONTRIBUTION TO SECURITY	9
C.	SUB-REGIONALISM IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS	15
D.	SUB-REGIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY	18
E.	MILITARY COOPERATION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES	19
III.	CONTEMPORARY EAST CENTRAL EUROPE	27
A.	HUNGARIAN-SLOVAKIAN RELATIONS	30
B.	HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS	31
1.	The Status Law	33
2.	Tensions	38
3.	General Evaluation of the Situation	42
IV.	HUNGARY'S BILATERAL COOPERATION AND THE ROMANIAN - HUNGARIAN JOINT PEACEKEEPING BATTALION	45
A.	BILATERAL RELATIONS	45
B.	ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN PEACEKEEPING BATTALION	47
1.	Tasks	49
2.	Personnel	50
3.	Coordination	50
4.	Training	51
V.	CONCLUSION	55
	LIST OF REFERENCES	67
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	71

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Hungarians in Central and Eastern Europe.	58
Figure 2. Hungarians in Romania.	59
Figure 3. Hungarians in Slovakia.	60
Figure 4. Hungarians in Burgenland.	61
Figure 5. Hungarians in Croatia.	62
Figure 6. Hungarians in Slovenia.	63
Figure 7. Hungarians in Transcarpathia.	64
Figure 8. Hungarians in Vojvodina.	65

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis analyses the importance of sub-regional cooperation in the East Central European region. It draws upon the example of the Hungarian-Romanian Joint Peacekeeping Battalion as a working model of military cooperation at the sub-regional level.

This thesis argues that sub-regional cooperation and organizations are an essential tool for the East Central European countries in pursuing and preparing for membership in the European Union. This cooperation not only promotes free trade between the signatories, but also prepares their economies for membership in the larger socio-economic institution.

However, the creation of the Visegrad Group and the Central European Free Trade Agreement is not to be considered as a countermeasure to the European Union, but rather as an association for the EU aspirant countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, as a joint vehicle in achieving the desired goals. These organizations were created not to mutually compete for membership, but rather for the better representation of the mutual interests with the accessory negotiations with the European Union.

The close cross-border contacts that interweave every level of the societies of the involved countries promote tolerance in a region where the disputes over minority rights and borders have been causing trouble for decades. These contacts help consolidating democracy and overcome

the historical real or fictitious injustices and promote good relations between nations.

The establishment of the Hungarian-Romanian Joint Peacekeeping Battalion is a good working example for military cooperation at the sub-regional level, while the diplomatic relations between the establishing states have not always been considered unclouded.

The international peacekeeping unit was created to improve and enhance bilateral and military relationships, to further promote the stability of the East Central European region and to support international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

A closer look at that military contact provides insight into how this type of cooperation forms and influences the relationship of two countries with a typical historical problem.

I. INTRODUCTION

The tremendous changes that the Central and Eastern European region have experienced are extremely challenging for these emerging democracies. Expanding NATO membership as well as extending the borders of the European Union towards the East plays a role in the security of the region. Hungary, as one of the leaders in this process and in order to become a member of the European Union, depends heavily on its neighbors. On the other hand, the neighboring countries also need the support of Hungary and the other states for this process. This dependency on each other to create security in the region is one of the most significant features of relations in that part of Europe.

Hungary, as the country with the largest minority living outside its borders in the surrounding states, and also as one of the candidates for membership in the European Union in the near future, has the greatest interest in improving relations with its neighbors, and consequently, the living conditions of the Hungarian minority. Moreover, the minority question has always been a sensitive issue in politics and the bilateral relations of the region.

The study of the importance of sub regional cooperation provides a needed look inside the future of that particular region. The Hungarian-Romanian bilateral cooperation, and specifically military cooperation, can be an example of fulfilling the tasks of contributing to the relations of two countries, and consequently, to the improvement of European security. A closer look at that

military contact could provide insight into how this type of cooperation forms and influences the relationship of two countries with a typical historical problem.

During the past twelve years, dramatic changes have been occurring in Central and Eastern Europe. It was the decade of the democratization process, which saw radical changes in the structures of the economy. The security environment of Europe basically changed with the fall of the communist regimes. The new democracies in the region have recognized new tasks, pursued NATO and European Union membership, and adopted the term "Euro-Atlantic integration".

At the same time, the candidate countries have implemented a series of new rules, laws, and procedures in order to meet the strict requirements for membership in those organizations. These countries have realized the importance of cooperation and that the common tasks and the links that this cooperation creates between them not only strengthens their relations, and is not just a necessary means of reaching the desired goals, but also strengthens the stability of the region.

Sub-regional cooperation and sub-regional organizations are the basis for ensuring peace, security, and stability in their area of operation. Especially in Europe, where the expansion of NATO and the European Union can lead to new tension between the new member countries and those not selected for membership, such cooperation can bridge such divisions and prepare the new candidate countries for membership.

Another important and essential role of sub-regional cooperation is the creation of a so-called "soft security" in the region, which can improve confidence and trust between the countries and create mutual and informal networks for the nations involved.

In the past decade, Hungary has signed agreements with Slovenia, Italy, Ukraine, and Romania to establish common peacekeeping battalions. Each side has made considerable efforts to fulfill all the requirements of these agreements. Establishing good relations with neighboring countries is one of the preconditions of the desired Euro-Atlantic integration.

Hungarian-Romanian relations have not always been unproblematic. The disputes over minority rights, especially the large Hungarian population living in Romania, have several times strained relations between the two countries.

Both parties have realized the importance of a close relationship and cooperation, and are working hard to help each other accomplish the common goals. One example of this cooperation is the Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping Battalion. I intend to study the emerging sub-regional cooperation in the Central and Eastern European region and analyze its importance. I will focus on the Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping battalion as one of the best examples of military cooperation in the region. I will study the influence of these kinds of contacts on bilateral relations.

My hypothesis is that improved political relations can be advanced by different types of military cooperation.

Multilateral military cooperation and relations can progress even actual improvements in political relations. The results and the successes of the Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping battalion provide a perfect example of sub-regional cooperation and its importance in facilitating trust between the two countries, improving bilateral military cooperation, security, and the common goals of the states involved.

This particular military unit was established to strengthen relations based on common interests and follow international contracts and obligations because of the new demands of the changed security environment tasked with providing humanitarian assistance to international peacekeeping operations. NATO procedures and methodology have been used for its command and control, and the unit's personnel consist of experts in humanitarian operations.

A case study methodology will be used to study the hypothesis of this thesis. The case study will focus on the importance of sub regional cooperation and its relevance. I intend to discuss the political background of the establishment of that military unit, and focus on how this kind of relationship and military-to-military program contributes to strengthening bilateral relations and improving security in the region. Governmental documentation from the Hungarian Romanian peacekeeping battalion will be used.

Chapter II will focus on the importance of sub regional cooperation and how it improves the security of the region and the bi- or multilateral relations between the states. I will expound upon why this kind of

cooperation is extremely important in Central and Eastern Europe. Chapter III will examine the contemporary political situation of the region and Hungarian and Romanian relations.

Chapter IV will examine the origin of the Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping Battalion, its history, achievements, and contribution to the original task. In this section a more in depth look will be provided as to how this particular program helps improve military-to-military relations, and consequently, the bilateral relations of the two countries involved.

Lastly, Chapter V will conclude with the outcome of my research and possible recommendations for improving both the military and political relations between Hungary and Romania.

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II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION

The end of Cold War and the third wave of democratization not only ended the bipolar world, but also created a dynamically changing, and restructured international security environment. In addition to the large international security organizations such as NATO and the EU, many smaller initiatives are currently seeking to secure and promote stability on a smaller scale. Not much attention is paid to these organizations, but they are very important to their area of operations. Their variety and complexity helps to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in a small or sometimes relatively small region, and their overlapping fields consequently contribute to the peace building process on a global scale.

Sub-regional cooperation creates “soft security” by assuring understanding, confidence building, creating mutual, sometimes informal networks among neighboring countries in order to achieve common goals, and obviously strengthens democracy through its cross-border features. Among these very basic roles, bi- and multilateral military cooperation plays a role in terms of openness and in cooperation for peacekeeping, peace support operations, and missions other than war that also strengthens the confidence and trust in that particular area. In this chapter, these very basic roles of sub-regional cooperation will be examined. An attempt will also be made to define the reasons and means that countries in transition to democracy in a given area use to achieve stable security and accomplish common tasks. The functions of these cross-

border contacts in consolidating democracy will be analyzed, and finally, the role of military cooperation as a part of this progress will be examined.

A. DEFINITIONS

Before discussing the main features of sub-regional cooperation and its detailed role in contributing to ensuring and promoting security, some basic terms should be clarified. First, the expression 'region' widely used by many people usually refers to a geographically defined area, an entire continent or a single territory covered by several states. Sub-region, in this context, means a geographically, historically and politically more coherent smaller area.¹

Second, another set of terms, which are very fashionable, especially in the region of post-communist countries in East Central Europe, are cooperative security and collective defense. "Cooperative security - a political and legal obligation of member states to defend the integrity of individual states within a group of treaty signatories - and collective defense - the commitment of all states to defend each other from outside aggression".² The term, "fashionable" refers to the will and commitment of these countries to join NATO and the EU as primary organizations providing collective security in the European region.

Finally, the term "promoting stability" means active stability outside the borders of a given group of states forming the system of cooperative security. The members are

¹ Cottey, A.: *Introduction*, in *Sub-regional Cooperation in the New Europe*, ed. by Andrew Cottey, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 5.

² Cohen, R.: *Cooperative Security: From Individual Security to International Security*, The Marshall Center Papers, 2001, p. 1.

very concerned with the stability of the individual states within and those, which border the system, and are afraid of escalating problems that threaten their own security.³

B. CONTRIBUTION TO SECURITY

The last decade has witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite regimes that fundamentally changed the security environment, not only of the surrounding and directly affected countries, but also the security of Europe and the entire globe. The main security threats are not in mass military confrontations between nation states, but rather in conflicts between ethnic groups within a relatively small region, transnational organized crime, nuclear disasters, illegal immigration, and more recently, international terrorism. The previous enemy states moved from the arms-race and nuclear deterrence to disarmament movements: confidence building, joint peacekeeping and other military operations have been launched. Sub-regionalism is not only the result of these changes, but it also causes peaceful changes. Sub-regional cooperation is an effective tool in finding a solution to newly emerged security problems.

The most probable causes of armed conflicts between nation states in the new security order are historical debates, whether about real or fictitious injustice, over minorities and/or borders, weak societal, judicial and democratic structures especially in transitional democracies, economic and social differences between states, the collapse or weakening national security structures, and porous borders very subject to smuggling, terrorism, organized crime, illegal immigration or the

³Ibid, p. 9.

smuggling of people.⁴ Sub-regional cooperation appears to be a very useful and effective solution to deal with these new security issues that may be starting to affect some of the countries in transition.

Sub-regional organizations can more readily react to problems in the region than the bigger institutions because of their relatively small area of operation and the same geographical situation, similar historical background, and close political ties. The increase in bi- and multilateral cooperation on different issues such as economic development, environmental issues, infrastructure, culture and security, just to mention a few, is proving vital in order to strengthen and deepen confidence and promote good relations with neighboring countries which is necessary for stable regional security. These organizations are flexible and concentrate more on specific needs and fulfill specific purposes.

As an example, sub-regional cooperation is vital in many ways towards promoting stability in terms of interdependence and economic cooperation within and between the states. It encourages free trade and leads to the development of common infrastructure, and destroys the artificially created obstacles of the Cold War. Thus, it is dependent on the use of common infrastructure and the development of these dimensions is necessary to engender greater trade and economic cooperation.⁵ The establishment of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) is a very good example of this type of cooperation where the

⁴ Bjurner, A: *European Security at the End of the Twentieth Century: The Sub-regional Contribution*, in *Sub-regional Cooperation in the New Europe*, ed. by Andrew Cottey, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 9.

⁵ Ibid, p. 11.

founding countries of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and later the Czech Republic and Slovakia, used the organization as a joint vehicle for promoting their economic development, their preparation for membership in the EU and NATO, and lastly, as a common and stronger institution to represent their common needs and interests on the international scene.

The Central European Free Trade Agreement was concluded by the Visegrad states on 21 December 1992, in Cracow, Poland. This multilateral agreement regulated the free trade between Hungary, the Czech republic, Slovakia and Poland and came into force on 1 March 1993. Later, in 1996 joining Slovenia enlarged the organization. Later, in the summer of 1997 with Romania's membership in CEFTA was further expanded.⁶

The main aim of the alliance, as the establishing document signed in Cracow, emphasizes is membership of the European Union. Intensification of cooperation within the framework of CEFTA was intended to help preparing the member nations for integration with the EU, though not to be understood as an end, but rather as a mean of a strategic goal of European integration. It was not created to form a separate group, but to accelerate the integration process with the EU. The aim of the agreement is the gradual introduction of a free trade area by its members during the transition period, to end by 1 January 2001 at the latest, in accordance with the CEFTA provisions and Article 24 of the GATT.⁷

⁶ Kupich, A.: *The Central European Free Trade Agreement: Problems, Experiences, Prospects*, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 90.

⁷ CEFTA's Aims, Objectives and Extent Available online at: <http://www.ijs.si/cefta/eng/frame.html-12>

The objectives of the agreement are to harmonize the development of economic relations among signatories through expansion of trade, to speed up the development of the commercial activities of the member states, to raise standards of living, and to ensure better employment opportunities, increased productivity and financial stability. Another objective of the agreement is to ensure fair trade between members and, through the removal of trade barriers, to contribute to the balanced development and expansion of world trade.

The Agreement covers industrial and agricultural products and contains general provisions which encompass rules of origin, co-operation in customs matters, internal taxation, general exceptions, security exceptions, state monopolies, payments, the rules of competition concerning undertakings, state aid, public procurements, protection of intellectual property, dumping, general safeguards, structural adjustment, balance of payments difficulties, re-exports and serious shortage, a evolutionary clause, a joint committee, and other trade associations.⁸

There are many important factors of forming an economical organization such as CEFTA, in the framework of sub-regionalism cooperation. First, the ability of the member states to increase their trade with each other helps promoting their prosperity and support their transition to market based economies. Second, with the integration, they would build a bridge between the EU and the rest of the rest of East Central Europe. Third, forming an alliance

⁸ Ibid.

strengthens the bargaining power of the member states in entry negotiations with the European Union.⁹

Second, sub-regional organizations, due to their smaller size and being part of the environment that created them and within which they operate, are more effective than the larger institutions. Their tasks and structures make them able to address solutions to specific problems that are indigenous to that particular area. These institutions, because they were created based on common interests are able to respond to tasks that specifically require a quick and mutual response by the member states. These problem areas might be the new security challenges described above.

Third, cross border contacts and bi- and multilateral cooperation also can play important roles in strengthening and consolidating democracy. This is true especially in the East Central European region replete with relatively new democracies with historical debates over minority rights. Sub-regionalism builds and strengthens contacts between societies across borders and since this kind of cooperation between emerging democracies is vital, these micro contacts thus pervade the every day lives of ordinary people of those countries and consequently support democratization.¹⁰

Another significant security building measure of sub-regionalism is that these organizations unite countries in a relatively small geological area with a shared history and a common sense of destiny. The security environment that dramatically changed after the collapse of the

⁹ Kupich, A.: *The Central European Free Trade Agreement: Problems, Experiences, Prospects*, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 91.

¹⁰ Bjurner, A: *European Security at the End of the Twentieth Century: The Sub-regional Contribution*, in *Sub-regional Cooperation in the New Europe*, ed. by Andrew Cottey, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 12.

previous regimes in East Central Europe caused the new democracies to seek new perspectives. The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are seen as the lead in European security and the only way to be a member of the Western world. Since regaining their independence, the East Central European countries have sought to become members of these organizations. They also realized that their shared history of communism resulted in facing similar difficulties in the democratization process and have in the same way, attempted to qualify for integration into the democratic world. These countries have realized the importance of cooperation and that the common tasks and the links that this cooperation creates between them not only strengthens their relations, and is not just a necessary means for attaining the desired goals, but also fortifies the stability of the region.

Finally, sub-regionalism helps overcome the historical real or presumed injustice over border disputes or minority rights between the states. The very basic idea of creating cooperation between states is dominated by the openness and the creation of larger communities across borders and offers a non-confrontational way of exploring national identity while at the same time, the common interest helps to bridge the gap in diversity.

In sum, sub-regionalism contributes to the security of the area in many ways. The interdependence and economic relations of the members promote the very basic resources needed to further the existence of cross border contacts through the development of investments and infrastructure. The flexibility makes it easier for sub-regionalism to

address problems easier than larger institutions by concentrating attention on the problematic areas of mutual interest. Everyday contacts pervade the ordinary lives of societies and strengthens democracy, which seems to be very vital in the case of newly emerged nation states in transition. Cooperation among uniting countries with a shared history and common destiny creates openness and builds confidence, and thus helps overcome historical disputes. By realizing new tasks, the states involved can use the sub-regional institutions as a vehicle towards the integration process to larger organizations that require higher economic and institutional achievements.

C. SUB-REGIONALISM IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

After the break up of the former regimes in the East Central European region, many of the new democracies and their first democratically elected governments announced their wish to "rejoin" the democratic world and Europe. The uncertainty in forming the new international system and the domestic need for consolidation of the new democratic institutions played an important role for the East Central European countries in choosing solutions to their security problems.¹¹ They envisioned going "back to Europe" through NATO and, obviously, the European Union. There were attempts by individual countries that had made sufficient progress in political and economic reforms among the post communist states, namely Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, later the Czech Republic and Slovakia, to join the Western organizations.¹² These states "enjoyed"

¹¹ Joó, R.: *The Democratic Control of Armed Forces*, Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, 1996, p. 36.

¹² Cottey, A: *The Visegrad Group*, in *Sub-regional Cooperation in the New Europe*, ed. by Andrew Cottey, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 73.

special status in the "barracks" and thus had economical, political, and institutional advantages. However, these individual states have realized that in order to accomplish the requirements of consolidated democracy and to be qualified for membership, they need to better accommodate their efforts to cooperate with each other.

The experience of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland in cooperation gives a good example for the role of sub-regional cooperation in integration. Evidently, the three candidate countries realized the common tasks and they called each other for "coordination for their policies" and "synchronization of steps". As they argued that they "should not mutually compete" for membership in the Western institutions, they should rather create something meaningful in the political vacuum. Forming the alliance of the so-called *Visegrad Group* and establishing the Central European Free Trade Agreement, the governments of the member states made it clear that they were not interested in creating a separate group in the region, but rather, were interested in working together in order to join the existing Western institutions.¹³

One of the main features of sub-regionalism in the integration is that it allows exceptionally flexible ways to accommodate diverse groups of states of different size, political systems, economical development, and cultures. It can also accommodate different motives of cooperating states even with contradictory agendas. For one thing, the enlargement of the "western club" has contained the danger

¹³Ibid, p. 70.

of creating divisions between the countries invited to join and those that it excluded.

The Visegrad states, except Slovakia, have joined NATO and are still pursuing membership in the European Union. The principles for NATO membership contained democratic reforms, including civilian and democratic control over the military, a free market economy, respect for human rights, and good relations with neighboring states along the lines of the OSCE principles.¹⁴ These criteria have been partially repeated in the context of integration into the EU. These institutions cannot afford possible conflicts near their borders, or allow countries to export unmanageable tensions.¹⁵ As the debate over determining exact dates, and announcing which countries will be asked to join continues, sub-regional cooperation is designed to create balanced relations. Hungary is not interested in excluding its neighbors from the European integration, and thereby will establish and strengthen bi-lateral cooperation in numerous ways in order to ensure each other's democratic and economic development and be eligible to be asked to join.

The role of sub-regionalism in the integration process significantly contributes to bringing widely diverse countries together. It is an effective tool for uniting countries in a region with different motives and significant problems. Sub-regional cooperation is a vehicle

¹⁴ Tempfli, L.: *The Effects of NATO Enlargement on Budapest's Policies Regarding Ethnic Hungarian Minorities*, Master Thesis, NPS Monterey, CA, 1999, p. 61.

¹⁵ Hungary has been criticized for tense relations over the rights of Hungarian minorities with Romania and Slovakia. One of the recent events is the approval of the bill concerning Hungarians living abroad by the Hungarian parliament that resulted in heated debates and tensions between Hungary and Romania. Another issue causing diplomatic tensions between Slovakia and Hungary was the case of a planned waterpower plant on the river Danube, which was "temporarily" solved by The Hague International Court of Justice.

in helping economic and democratic development of neighboring countries in order to meet the requirements of membership of larger democratic institutions.

D. SUB-REGIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

As was argued earlier, sub-regionalism in the region of relatively new democracies and the security environment's need for its creation has the main advantage of being very flexible and being able to produce different levels of actions such as collective benefits as international bodies, the development of cooperation between the members and the involvement of 'sub-state actors'.¹⁶

The very nature of sub-regional cooperation is capable of facilitating numerous forms of 'bottom-up' cooperation by involving different non-governmental organizations such as businesses, universities, cities, and environmental groups. These cross-border contacts between neighboring countries create a network that ensnares the whole region and creates ties between societies. While the output of this action can hardly be measured, it is clear that this kind of trans-frontier cooperation contributes to the development of democracy between the states involved.¹⁷ By promoting domestic stability and interdependence with neighboring countries, these kinds of contacts can lead to improvements in international relations within a region.

Another significant feature of sub-regional cooperation is that it also provides a basis for establishing ties and contacts outside the "core" countries

¹⁶ Bailes, A. J. K.: *Sub-regional Cooperation in Post-Cold War Europe* in *Sub-regional Cooperation in the New Europe*, ed. by Andrew Cottey, St. Martin's Press Inc., 1999, p. 175.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 176.

or the region. These contacts and their development is a separate but overlapping and closely related process. The support from the central and local authorities and the ability to overcome the practical problems that may arise is vital to the development of this kind of cooperation. Obstacles might arise from the fear that authorities might lose control, the compromising of security, the fragility of state authority in border regions, the loyalty of minorities, and the worries about emerging national movements and therefore possible expansion of border disputes with the neighboring countries.¹⁸ The post communist countries are subject to these difficulties in the East Central European region where the former regimes suppressed the ethnic conflicts between the states in the "camp", and the fear of emerging nationalist and revisionist movements and border minority disputes appeared as a burning problem, and some are still waiting for a solution.

Sub-regional cooperation has the potential advantage of pre-empting these disputes, easing tensions, and particularly, with the strengthening of military contacts in sensitive areas, it provides transparency and credibility. Thus, it is an effective tool for preventing conflict.

E. MILITARY COOPERATION AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES

Although military cooperation at the sub-regional level has little to do with "hard" security issues such as defense policies or security guarantees, it can facilitate other significant ties among the states in the geographic area. Military contacts are the essential part of security-

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 177.

building measures and are vital in strengthening confidence and transparency. Furthermore, military cooperation in the integration process has an important role to foster good relations and make defense policies transparent.

The progress of the Visegrad states in pursuing NATO membership at the level of military contacts provides good insight into the importance of this kind of cooperation and how it can contribute to the security of a given region. Good relations with neighboring countries, as mentioned earlier, were not only a requirement for membership, but also the basic pillar of successful minority policies. This resulted in concluding various "basic" treaties between the aspirant countries, as well as with countries outside the Visegrad group.¹⁹ Bilateral cooperation among the Visegrad states included regular meetings of their Ministries of Defense. They were committed to consultation on different issues, most importantly de-politicization and the development of proper democratic control over their armies, and military doctrines. They agreed to conduct joint training, maintain military education exchange, maintain equipment, and cooperate in the development of weapons and weapon systems. Agreements also contained provisions for using each other's military facilities. These treaties also incorporated transparency provisions, including prior notifications of major troop movements and exercises within the border regions.²⁰ Within this sub-regional framework, many bilateral agreements were concluded with other NATO

¹⁹ Hungary regulated its relations with Romania and Slovakia through basic treaties between 1991 and 1996 where the dispute over the rights of ethnic Hungarians caused strained relations.

²⁰ Cottey, A.: *East Central Europe After the Cold War*, St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 132.

countries. These agreements also contained increased contacts at the small unit level.

Other military regional agreements were concluded simply in the light of maintaining good relations with neighboring nations, transparency, and confidence building measures. For example, Hungary signed an "open skies" agreement with Romania in 1991. This "innovative" agreement addressed the historically hostile relations between the two countries in the region and the need for good will between the two countries, and it was to strengthen the trust within the framework of military cooperation. The agreement concerned flights of specially equipped military aircraft over each other's respective air spaces.²¹

The Treaty on Open Skies establishes a regime of unarmed aerial observation flights over the territories of its signatories. The Treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of size, a direct role in gathering information through aerial imaging on military forces and activities of concern to them. Open Skies is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to date to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities.²²

President Eisenhower first proposed the original concept for the Treaty to Soviet Premier Khrushchev at the Geneva Conference of 1955.²³ The Soviets promptly rejected

²¹ Michta, A. A.: *East Central Europe After the Cold War*, Greenwood Press, 1992, p. 150.

²² Fact Sheet: The Open Skies Treaty, Enhancing Mutual Understanding, Available online at: <http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/ja1/wwwhse0140.html>

²³The Open Skies Concept. Available online at: http://www.dnd.ca/eng/archive/1997/aug97/rusoskies_b_e.html

the concept and it lay dormant for a generation. An initiative of Former President Bush in 1989, the Open Skies Treaty was signed in Helsinki, Finland, on March 24, 1992. It was negotiated between the members of NATO and members of the former Warsaw Pact; the latter dissolved during the course of the talks.²⁴

Another significant sub-regional organizational breakthrough in the military field was the agreement to establish a joint Hungarian-Romanian peacekeeping battalion. The battalion was created in accordance with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Confidence and Security Building Measures, in order to enhance the existing bilateral political and military relations, and to provide mutual international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.²⁵ Besides the primary goals of this military unit, one of its main tasks is "to conduct joint exercises in order to maintain and increase the capabilities of interoperability".

In another example, a tri-lateral military agreement came to light during the meeting of the Foreign Ministries of Hungary, Slovenia and Italy in 1998. They concluded that the tri-lateral agreements, among them the particular agreement based on the mutual task of helping Hungary and Slovenia become members of NATO and the EU, could play a significant role and prove to be a determining factor in the field of European infrastructural relations. The defense cooperation between the three countries can serve

²⁴ Fact Sheet: The Open Skies Treaty, Enhancing Mutual Understanding, <http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/ja1/wwwhse0140.html>

²⁵ Bill on Establishment of Joint Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping Battalion. Available online at <http://www.htmh.hu/dokumentumok/asz-ro-e.htm>

as a model in Europe, as well as in the international sphere, and contributes significantly to the stability of the region and also to the forming of the wider security architecture of Europe. The diplomats emphasized the importance of the establishment of the joint Slovenian-Hungarian-Italian peacekeeping brigade.²⁶

Military cooperation can be conducted on the sub-regional level also by bilateral security and defense ties with individual countries that are already members of the larger security institutions. The East Central European countries pursued cooperation with NATO countries, and at the political level, they established expanded diplomatic contacts and bilateral cross-border treaties, including commitments to consult and cooperate on defense and security issues. These developments could lead to closer relations between the western democratic world and the ambitious East, and their foreign and security policy-making elites, and to some practical cooperation such as joint proposals for arms control negotiations. At the military level, such cooperation can also contain expanded military contacts, officer exchanges for training and educational purposes, and most importantly, advice on civilian-military relations, defense planning and military strategy.²⁷

In sum, military cooperation, as part of sub-regional contacts, is important in confidence building measures in forming new security architecture of the region. These

²⁶ Press statement on the occasion of the meeting of Foreign Ministries of Slovenia, Italy and Hungary, 1998 Available online at: www.mfa.gov.hu/sajtoanyag/sajtele11.htm

²⁷ Cottey, A.: *East Central Europe After the Cold War*, St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 144.

contacts can provide an effective tool for developing peacekeeping or peace support capabilities, and also serve practical purposes in developing democratic civilian control over the armed forces as well as in the integration process in preparing them for membership in larger security institutions.

Sub-regional cooperation in the transition from non-democratic regimes to democracy has a significant role in implementing democratic values in many ways. The multiple ties that this cooperation creates links countries in a region with different motives and culture towards achieving common tasks. It permeates societies, creates formal and informal networks, and helps overcome historical disputes over imagined or real unfairness between neighboring countries. Sub-regionalism unites countries and resources to fulfill requirements for the integration into larger security institutions, helps develop economic welfare by improving trade, and infrastructure as the case of the Central European Free Trade Agreement proves. These organizations by their very nature are able to react quickly to acute problems in the area, and to address effectively newly emerging security issues. Moreover, the various numbers of bi- and multilateral agreements that the cooperating countries conclude contribute to confidence building in the region, create and strengthen good relations with neighboring states, and consequently contribute to their stability. The military contacts and agreements have the capability to enhance transparency and openness, and also provide an effective tool for possible crisis management. Lastly, sub-regional cooperation provides an important framework for strengthening security

in the region, and thereby contributes to greater stability.

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III. CONTEMPORARY EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

This chapter provides an overview of the contemporary political situation created in East Central Europe after the fall of the communist regimes. It also examines the actual questions about security in the region pertaining to the integration process and national minority problems. The political relations between Hungary and Romania formed after Hungary joined NATO and before the expansion of the European Union are discussed.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, one goal of almost all of the previously politically, economically and militarily Soviet-controlled states in the region was membership in NATO and the European Union. Since expanding democracy and the market economy are the main goals, and at the same time preconditions for joining NATO and the European Union, these efforts by themselves support the stability and security of the geographic area.

While each country in this area is trying to overcome the past by applying new democratic values and accomplishing the necessary political and economical reforms, each is at different stages in this process. Poland, the Czech Republic²⁸ and Hungary have been successful in addressing the social and economical problems that are part of this transformation and were thus asked to join NATO first. Also, the European Union has entered into discussions about membership with these countries, as well

²⁸ On January 1, 1993, the Czechoslovak state was peacefully divided and the independent Czech and Slovak Republics were founded. Source: <http://www.czech.cz/czech/history.html>

as Estonia and Slovenia, which will play a significant role in the security of East Central Europe.

After the end of the classical East-West confrontation, the region was influenced by the disintegration as well as the integration of the area.²⁹ After the collapse of the communist states different and strongly held regional political and national interests started to form. This progress was, in some cases, followed by separatism, and the use of political violence by these countries, such as in the case of the violent confrontation between the Romanian government and striking miners in 1991.³⁰ These cases can be identified by identity crises rooted in intolerance by thinking in a different manner, and differences in ethics and religion. The transformation is followed by a strengthening of national movements that consequently resulted in a slow down in economic reforms, and at the same time, an increase in the conflicts between local ethnic groups.

The armed forces in every country went through significant reforms. In most cases, there was a reduction in personnel and equipment and the budget was under the strict control of the governments and parliaments. At the same time, the military seemed to be the only way to control domestic conflicts.

Permanent problems remain in the region because of ethnic issues, which resulted in civil war in the former Yugoslavia. Large ethnic minorities have historically been

²⁹ Sakwa, R. and Anne Stevens ed.: *Contemporary Europe*, St. Martin Press, New York 2000, p. 215.

³⁰Radio Free Europe: Romanian Miners Strike Available online at: <http://www.rferl.org/nca/special/minerstrike/>

living in all East Central European countries. Hungary's first priorities are to protect and support the ethnic minority interests of those Hungarians living abroad³¹, and especially those in Transylvania, Lower Slovakia and Vojvodina.³² More and more criticism is being leveled against the countries in the region concerning their politics towards the gypsies.³³ Many European Union countries introduced an obligatory visa system with those countries where most gypsies³⁴ lived before moving to the European Union. One of the major requirements and serious obligations for the integration of the new candidate countries is the consolidation and resolution of the so-called "gypsy-question" by helping the Romas integrate into these societies and improve their living conditions.³⁵

It is not only an obligation for Europe as a whole, but for Hungary, as one of the leading countries in successfully transitioning to democracy, it is also in their best interests to cooperate with those states excluded from the first round of enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic integration. By sharing its experiences in transformation and integration, Hungary plays a go-between role between NATO, and after joining the EU, the European Union member countries and the countries of the region waiting to join these international institutions, and

³¹ See figures on pp. 58-65.

³² Available online at: <http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kulugy/>.

³³ Criticized deficiency in Human Rights in Hungary available online at: <http://www.magyarhirlap.hu/Archivumindex.php3?cikk=100000044218&next=0&archiv=1>

³⁴ In Europe the members of this ethnic group as referred to as members of the Roma and Sinti nation.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch: *Rights Denied: The Roma of Hungary*, Available online at: <http://hrw.org/reports/1996/Hungary.htm>. Also see the Commission of The European Communities: *2001 Regular Report on Hungary's Progress Towards Accession*, Available online at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2001/hu_en.pdf.

especially with its neighboring countries. These relations can be enhanced by bi- and multilateral cooperation as well as through these large international institutions, as demonstrated by the Visegrad Group, CEFTA, the Central European Initiative and other bilateral agreements.

A. HUNGARIAN-SLOVAKIAN RELATIONS

Hungarian-Slovakian relations have significantly improved during the past three years due to the constructive approach of the new government that followed former Prime Minister Meciar's administration. Slovakia was able to start the accession negotiations with the European Union in 2000 because of the new government's work. In Slovakia, using the Hungarian example, the communication campaign aimed at obtaining the popular support of the public in the government's efforts to join NATO has proven successful. Fifty percent of the population favors NATO membership. During the Kosovo air strikes it was only about 30 percent.³⁶

Hungary officially started diplomatic contacts with the Slovakian Republic on January 1, 1993 after the break-up of the former Czechoslovakia. At the same time, Hungary officially opened its embassy in Slovakia's capital. Hungary solidified its relations with Slovakia in 1995 with the signing of the Treaty on Good-neighborly Relations and Friendly Cooperation. The development of the bilateral relations made it possible for Hungary to open a consulate in Kosice on August 18, 2000, while the Slovak Republic

³⁶ Source: The Relationship of the Slovak Public to the North Atlantic Alliance - Value and Attitude Contexts available online at: http://www.ivo.sk/subory/krivy-gyarfasova_sfpa_fall2001.pdf

opened a consulate in Bekescsaba, Hungary on September 1, 2001.³⁷

B. HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN RELATIONS

Hungarian-Romanian relations until the mid-1990s were strained. These relations were characterized by the continuous disputes over the two million strong Hungarian ethnic minorities in Transylvania. Nicolai Ceausescu's policy of forced assimilation and the creation of central-agro centers in the area resulted in the disappearance of Hungarian villages.³⁸ Relations worsened when Hungary demanded UN Human Rights Commission investigations into alleged Romanian violations of Hungarian human rights, and at the same time, Hungarian diplomats called upon Romania to stop the resettlement agricultural program. During this time, the official statement released by the Hungarian foreign ministry stated that "relations reached the bottom point".³⁹ At the same time, Ceausescu was pressing other Warsaw Pact countries to intervene with Hungary because of the fear of the democratic reforms in Hungary and that these reforms might lead towards Hungarian territorial revisionist movements.⁴⁰ These tensions in diplomatic relations influenced the military, particularly in June 1989, when Hungary announced that military units would be deployed to the Hungarian-Romanian border.⁴¹

However, some analysts state that the Hungarian government overreacted to the situation in order to gain

³⁷ Available online: <http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kulugy/>

³⁸ Cottey, Andrew: *East-Central Europe After the Cold War*, St.Martin's Press, New York, 1995, p. 105.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 106.

political support from the public. Some say that the Romanian army, with poorly trained and equipped conscripts, posed no potential military threat. The situation was settled by Hungarian defense cuts and, at the same time, when the Hungarian Ministry of Defense articulated its viewpoint by stating that the traditionally good relations of the two armies remained.⁴²

Paradoxically, besides the long-standing historical diplomatic opposition between the two states, a quasi acknowledgment exists between the officer corps of the two armies. Andrew A. Michta notes in the context on the treaty of "open skies" conducted in May 1991 by the two countries that:

the good working relationship between the Hungarian and the Romanian officer corps is a byproduct of the past Soviet insistence that the two armies cooperate as part of the WTO's common air defense. Over the years, frequent personal contact between Romanian and Hungarian officers forged friendships that would outlast the life span of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and would serve as a foundation for regional military cooperation after 1989. Reportedly, during the Romanian uprising against the Ceausescu dictatorship, the Hungarian General Staff offered supplies and logistical assistance to the Romanians as well as assurances that it would prevent any unauthorized border crossing from Hungary into Romania. In effect, the Hungarian army assured the Romanians that, should the Warsaw Pact contemplate a military operation against Romania, Hungary would refuse to participate. This capital of goodwill may prove to be priceless in the long run, as instability generated by the Yugoslav civil war threatens to

⁴² Ibid.

spill across the country's borders and engulf the region.⁴³

The so-called "basic treaty", the Treaty on Good-neighborly Relations and Friendly Cooperation signed in 1996, and the arrangements of the new Romanian government formed after the elections in 1996, significantly eased the tensions between the two countries.⁴⁴ After the election in 2000, the post-communist party of Ion Iliescu was able to form a minority government, and the party leader replaced President Constantinescu. The fact that extreme right wing political forces significantly improved their presence in the elite political sphere can be viewed as a warning sign. Romania's first priorities are still the European and the Euro-Atlantic integration. In the spirit of these priorities, a new administrative law was passed allowing the ethnic minorities to use their native language officially in those administrative territories where their presence constitutes more than 20 percent of the population.

1. The Status Law⁴⁵

Hungarian-Romanian relations now have been clouded by Romanian opposition to the introduction of the so-called "status-law"⁴⁶ passed by the Hungarian Parliament. This law has been causing problems in the political and the public arena from the moment it was proposed within Hungary, as

⁴³ Michta, A. Andrew: *East Central Europe After the Warsaw Pact, Security Dilemmas in the 1990s* Greenwood Press, New York, 1992.

⁴⁴ Dunay, P.: *Hungarian-Romanian Relations: A Changed Paradigm?* Chailiot Papers, Available online at: [http://www.weu.int/institute/chailiot/chai26e.html#HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN%20RELATIONS:](http://www.weu.int/institute/chailiot/chai26e.html#HUNGARIAN-ROMANIAN%20RELATIONS)

⁴⁵ Some of the references used in the following sections, due to the recent events, are news from respective Hungarian newspapers translated by the author.

⁴⁶ Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians Living Neighboring Countries, Available online at: <http://www.hungaryemb.org/FrontPage/Borders/Status%20Law/Text.htm>

well as in the neighboring countries that feel their Hungarian ethnic minorities would be affected. The diplomatic disputes forced different commissions and committees of the European Union to articulate their standpoints. Those most opposed to the status-law are the Slovak Republic and Romania where the largest Hungarian minorities reside.

The law is created in accordance with the Hungarian constitution that makes responsible every Hungarian government in power for Hungarians living abroad, to promote the preservation and development of their manifold relations with the mother nation. It is in accordance with the Hungary's integration with the European Union, and in keeping with the basic principles espoused by international organizations, and in particular by the Council of Europe and the European Union. The legislation creating the status-law was committed to maintaining and developing the good neighborly relations and regional cooperation, the development and of bi- and multilateral relations in the East Central European area, and further deepening Hungary's stabilization role in the region. The law emphasizes that "Hungarians living in neighboring countries form part of the Hungarian nation as a whole"⁴⁷ and this is the responsibility of the mother nation "to promote and preserve their well-being and awareness of national identity within their home country".⁴⁸

This law became effective on January 1, 2002. Since this date, Hungary has established bureaus in its

⁴⁷ Act LXII of 2001 on Hungarians Living Neighboring Countries, Available online at: <http://www.hungaryemb.org/FrontPage/Borders/Status%20Law/Text.htm>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

neighboring countries in order to issue the so-called Hungarian identification cards. The primary requirement for issuing the card is that the individual applying officially for this card declares himself/herself to be Hungarian. The applicant must comply with at least one of three other demands.

- Membership in a local Hungarian safeguarding interest or civil association
- Church records identifying the applicant as Hungarian
- The state in which the individual holds citizenship identifies the applicant as ethnic Hungarian

The identification card is an official document issued by Hungarian authorities for five years. The dependents of a Hungarian living in a mixed marriage obtain a "dependent identification" entitling them to the same benefits.

- The concerned individuals for purposes of education and culture are entitled to the same benefits as Hungarian citizens
- They can be decorated with Hungarian state awards
- The individuals can hold jobs for three months out of the year and are also entitled to medical and social state benefits
- Access to Hungarian public transportation with the same regulations as ordinary Hungarians
- Access to Hungarian high school and postgraduate education systems
- Participants in the education system have access to the same benefits as Hungarian students
- Teachers who teach abroad in Hungarian can further their education in Hungary
- The Hungarian associations working abroad can receive Hungarian state subsidies. The law also

determines the tasks of the Hungarian public broadcasting and mass communications companies.⁴⁹

It is indisputable that the Hungarian minorities living outside of Hungary, except for some countries during certain historical periods, when compared to Hungarians living in Hungary, were thrust into an economically and socially disadvantageous situation. They were left out of the Hungarian political situation and they could not experience their cultural affiliation unambiguously either. The mass communication, publishing, educational, and cultural life of those minorities living outside of Hungary when even using their own mother tongue of Hungarian, is very different constitutionally and in content from that in Hungary. The ethnic Hungarian minorities around Hungary simultaneously felt that Budapest had "betrayed" them, and in order to be successful in their own home nations, felt that it was worth it to give up their nationality. During the state politically supported assimilation started many years ago, a large portion of historical and cultural Hungarian values could have been destroyed, and to some degree, already have been.

The law states that it was created, among other things, to "ensure Hungarians living in neighboring countries form part of the Hungarian nation as a whole and to promote and preserve their well-being and awareness of national identity within their home country".⁵⁰ According to Hungarian official statements, the Romanian party asked that this part of the law be deleted before starting

⁴⁹ Nepszabadsag Online: Kérdések a Törvényről. (Questions About the Law), Available online at: <http://www.nepszabadsag.hu/Extra.asp?EXTRA=kuipol/statuslexikon>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

negotiations at the Prime Minister level. Although this part of the law, "forming part of the Hungarian nation", is what ensures Hungarian ethnic minorities that they belong to the mother-nation, gives them "status".

The foreign political priorities worked out by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declare that the national political aims are to promote the idea that Hungarians living in neighboring countries can preserve their national identities, traditions and exercise their minority rights in their homelands. In order to accomplish these tasks, this "law" is to provide benefits and support and went into effect on January 1, 2002.

If an analysis is made of how much this law contributes to the adherence to the idea of promoting the their well-being in their home countries, some disputable results can be found. Basically, besides the education and connected support in Hungary, there is no special reason to remain in the homeland since, in order to benefit from other kinds of advantages entitled by the law, one should travel to Hungary.⁵¹

The Hungarian public has always felt ambivalence towards the visits and the presence of Hungarians living abroad. Besides employers, others have always condemned the "Romanian" employees for taking jobs in Hungary, or for being street vendors. These people can be easily recognized because of their accents, and have never been really considered "members of the nation" by the public.

⁵¹ Nepszabadsag Online: Kedvezménytörvény: Miért Volt Rá Szükség? (The Benefit Law: Why Was It Necessary?) Available online at: <http://www.nepszabadsag.hu/extra.asp?extra=kulpol/statuslex-miertkell>

The benefits law was created to be symbolic. Though not officially stated, some political ambition exists that Hungarians living in neighboring states should be proud of their Hungarian nationality and should carefully preserve it. It gives them the impression that they should feel better that they are not Ukrainian, Romanian or Slovakian. Finally, the identification card represents this symbolic system since the crown on the front of the card is basically irritating to the internal political life in the neighboring states.

2. Tensions

It would be a political load for some of the governments of the neighboring countries to take on the responsibility that "it is better to be Hungarian in Romania than Romanian" while this law has such an indirect meaning. The Romanian government is occupied with handling its own national political forces while the right-wing nationalists threaten the Slovakian government as their fierce enemy, accusing it to be too gentle with the Hungarian minority issues. It is not comforting that proof exists that politically in many countries, the political elite keeps the ethnic minorities in an underprivileged situation. In this situation, the status law distinguishes between the citizens of a given country by national ethnicity.⁵²

The tensions between the two states started in September 2001 when Hungarian diplomats began negotiations with the neighboring countries concerning the introduction of the proposed benefit law. Hungarian Prime Minister

⁵² Nepszabadsag Online: *Miért Ellenzik a Szomszédos Országok?* (Why the Neighboring Countries Oppose?) Available online at: http://www.nepszabadsag.hu/extra.asp?extra=kulpol/statuslex_szomszedok

Viktor Orbán stated on November 21, 2001 that the negotiations were in the advanced stages with Croatian and Ukrainian officials. There is some cautious support from Serbia, and Slovenia has never vetoed anything concerning the issue. The Prime Minister was optimistic about the negotiations with Romania and Slovakia with the dialogues about to start in just days. He also stated that cautious statements should be released concerning the EU enlargement. It is not Hungary's responsibility to determine the method of enlargement, but Hungary is supporting the less prepared countries' accession. In the meantime, the Hungarian Republic should not wait until the other candidates reach the necessary preparedness.⁵³

A lingering "political statement" war started through the media. On September 21, a statement appeared in the first pages of a leading political newspaper in Romania and Hungary. Iliescu was noted as saying that NATO would have made a better decision inviting Romania and Bulgaria to join with the three other Central European countries, because this decision would have better served the purpose of stability in the region.

Meanwhile, the Romanian party addressed their requests to the Hungarian officials and demanded changes to the status law "arguing it was extraterritorial and would discriminate against its local population, turning them into second-class citizens"⁵⁴.

⁵³ Nepszabadsag Online: *Orbán: Nem Várunk Másokra* (Orban: We Do Not Wait for Others) Available online at: <http://www.nepszabadsag.hu/Extra.asp?Extra=Belpol/hir47&Date=11/21/01&Volume=5>.

⁵⁴ CNN.com/World Available online at: <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/12/22/hungary.romania/index.html>

As for international reactions, the country reports of the European Union regarding the progress of the candidate countries towards accession⁵⁵, the report⁵⁶ of the Venice Commission⁵⁷, and the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities of the OSCE, do not condemn the Hungarian legislation for the creation of the status-law. The report of the Venice Commission analyzes and draws examples from the constitutions and similar acts like the Hungarian status law of other countries that state the governments' responsibilities for their own national ethnicities living in the neighboring countries. Among other countries, the Austrian, the Slovak, the Romanian, the Bulgarian and the Slovenian parliaments passed similar act concerning the support of the national minorities by the mother nation.

The commission concludes the report by stating that the home-states have responsibility for their minorities living over their borders. However, the conclusion emphasizes the negotiations and the role of the bi- and multilateral treaties for the solution of the disputes over the minority rights. It also states that a state may issue acts concerning foreign citizens abroad, as the effects are to take place within the borders. Also, if the act considers other fields that treaties do not cover, prior

⁵⁵ Available online at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2001/hu_en.pdf

⁵⁶ In June 2001 Romania and Hungary separately requested an independent comparative study concerning the "Status Law" *Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by Their Kin-State adopted by the Venice Commission*. Available online at:
<http://www.venice.coe.int/site/interface/english.htm>

⁵⁷ European Commission for Democracy through Law also known as the Venice Commission.

the implementation consent should be sought by the relevant home-states.⁵⁸

On December 22, the Prime Ministers of the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding⁵⁹. In this context, the two parties agreed on mutually supporting each other in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, and also adopted the recommendations of the Venice Commission concerning the Status Law. The memorandum declares that every Romanian citizen will enjoy the same benefits of those taking jobs in Hungary.

While Romania criticized the law on many points, Adrian Nastase requested amendments to the proposal. The Hungarian Prime Minister declared that the law was completed without any adjustments. They finally agreed on negotiating the executive orders. Due to the agreement on the execution of the memorandum, Romanian diplomats reached another compromise. The law will have no effect on the non-Hungarian dependents by stating that this is not permitted by the recommendation of the Venice Commission.

The signing of the Memorandum created another political tensions in the Hungarian internal political arena. The next elections are to be held in April 2002, and the opposition has already started a mass attack on the government. This is an interesting turn of events, since the FIDESZ (Young Democrats Association Civic Party), who formed the majority government in 1998, during the previous term when the Hungarian Socialist Party was a majority

⁵⁸ *Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by Their Kin-State adopted by the Venice Commission.* Available online at: <http://www.venice.coe.int/site/interface/english.htm>

⁵⁹ Available online at: <http://www.ekormanyzat.hu/hirek?kateg=hirek:43&doc=7581>

government and signed the Basic Treaties⁶⁰ with the neighboring countries, was fiercely opposed. They accused the socialists of betraying the ethnic Hungarians living abroad. Nowadays, the opposition parties have been doing the same by stating that the government lets cheap Romanian labor loose on the Hungarian economy while there are thousands of Hungarian citizens unemployed and waiting for state social benefits. This can enrage Hungarians towards Romanian workers. The opposition parties unanimously rated the memorandum as an unacceptable compromise.⁶¹

At the same time, the Slovakian government seems to have come to its senses, and seeing the success of Romanian diplomacy, is trying to obtain similar concessions.

3. General Evaluation of the Situation

The Hungarian government, after the formation of the new Romanian government, did not expect dramatic changes in Hungarian-Romanian relations. In Romania, Hungarian diplomatic relations became part of the everyday internal politics. The rigorous attitude in "Hungarian matters" became an important "self-legitimizing" means for many politicians. The government balances its every actions on how they can improve the conditions of the minorities without challenging the sympathy of the media and not leading to a loss of the public support of the majority party. As a result, Hungarian higher education does not have any support from the state. The government has no intention of handing over the properties and land that belonged to the Church before the communist regime.

⁶⁰ Treaties on Good-Neighborly Relations and Friendly Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary, the Slovak Republic, and Romania.

⁶¹ Magyar Hírlap Online, 24.December 2001: *Szabadon Jöhet a Román Munkás?* (Freely Can the Romanian Manpower Come?) Available online at: <http://www.magyarhirlap.hu/Archivumindex.php3?cikk=100000043035&next=0&archiv=1>

Since the status law has gone into effect, there is a growing provocative campaign emanating from the media, and in some cases, from the parliament. In some degree, the status law is just a symptom. The statements by officials about "revising and suspending the contracted relations" besides the statements about "the importance of improving the state relations" connected to the Act, could contribute to the worsening of a previously generally good Hungarian-Romanian state relationship. It is one of the responsibilities of the now ruling Hungarian government to resolutely represent its national political interests, and in parallel, avoid disrupting the dynamically developing progress of the relations of the last four years of the Hungarian-Romanian state.

The recommendations of the Venice Commission have been rated by Romania as a political success. They have interpreted the main finding of the report as Romania having conducted an acceptable minority policy while the Hungarian status law is against the standard norms of the European Union, and Hungary has to adjust the execution according to the recommendations of the European Union.

Paradoxically, while President Iliescu makes statements to journalists that NATO made a mistake in not inviting Romania to be part of the first round of extension, and because this decision just worsened the tensions in the East Central European region, Romanian delegations are requesting that the Hungarian Prime Minister personally support Romania's efforts to join NATO.

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IV. HUNGARY'S BILATERAL COOPERATION AND THE ROMANIAN - HUNGARIAN JOINT PEACEKEEPING BATTALION

The function of regional policy for the development of the East Central European region is quite important. Euro-Atlantic integration requires close cooperation of the aspirant countries in order to meet the tough requirements of the respective international political-economic and security institutions. As argued earlier, balanced relations between nation states are not only a requirement for successful integration in general, but even more, a preconditions for even starting deliberations. Accordingly and understandably, none of the international institutions are interested in importing potential risks alongside expansion, which then might cause serious security disputes within their sphere of influence.

This chapter examines Hungary's bilateral agreements that were concluded with neighboring countries. The second part of the chapter focuses on the Hungarian Romanian Joint Peacekeeping Battalion, and how this particular program contributes to the improvement of military-military relations, and consequently of the bilateral relations of the two states involved.

A. BILATERAL RELATIONS

The priorities of Hungary's foreign policy are successful integration into the European Union, becoming a full and valued member of the community of democratic market economies through the realization of regional policy and conducting and maintaining many-sided relations with neighboring countries. According to the Constitution, it is the responsibility of the prevailing government to help the

Hungarian minorities living abroad to keep and maintain the national identities of their homeland.⁶²

Hungary is an active member of many East Central European associations because of these priorities. It was a founding member of the Visegrad Group, of the Central European Free Trade Agreement and of the Central European Initiative Agreement.

Austria is Hungary's second largest commercial partner in the region. Hungary participates in many sub-regional cooperative agreements involving Austria. The main areas of cooperation are the Central European Initiative, the Austrian-Slovenian-Hungarian trilateral cooperation, and the Alps-Adrian Workshop. The negotiations concerning the "Eastern" enlargement of the European Union at the high political level started at the end of 1998 with the involvement and initiative of Austria's Eastern provinces.⁶³

Diplomatic relations with the Republic of Slovenia started on 15 January 1992. The balanced relations between Hungary and Slovenia are secured through a basic treaty, an agreement on the treatment of national minorities, a free trade agreement and some sixty other state- and portfolio agreements concerning various aspects of everyday life.⁶⁴ The establishment of a Slovenian-Italian-Hungarian Joint Brigade is a remarkable initiative of sub-regional cooperation in the area of defense.

Hungary recognized the independence of the Ukraine before the disintegration of the Soviet Union and

⁶² Available online at:
<http://www.mfa.gov.hu/kulugy/nyito/index.html?PLANG=E>

⁶³ Available online at: http://www.kum.hu/Magyarorsztaj/Ausztaria2000_02.htm

⁶⁴ Available online at: <http://www.kum.hu/Magyarorsztaj/Szlovenia.htm>

established diplomatic relations in December 1993. Since then regional cross-border cooperation has significantly improved. Both governments pay special attention to the development and harmonization of borderland economic-enterprises activities.⁶⁵ Since unorganized forestry in the drainage area of the river Tisza in the Ukrainian territory has regularly been causing floods in Hungary for the past five years, the most important areas of cooperation are environmental as well as nuclear disaster prevention issues, the latter due to the nuclear disaster of Chernobyl in 1986. The establishment of the "Tisza" Slovakian-Romanian-Ukrainian-Hungarian Joint Engineering Battalion is geared towards the field of disaster prevention and defense cooperation. This military unit is to achieve readiness by 31 December 2002, and a command post exercise for the battalion staff will be held in May 2003 as a part of this preparedness.⁶⁶

B. ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN PEACEKEEPING BATTALION

Despite the recent political tensions that the Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries has caused between the two countries, Hungarian-Romanian bilateral relations and the contractual relationship that basically covers every economic area of both countries are balanced and profitable.

The Former Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs affirms that "the relations between Romania and Hungary are now improving in many fields,"⁶⁷ and especially in trade

⁶⁵ Available online at: http://www.kum.hu/Magyarorsztaj/Ukrajna_m.htm

⁶⁶ Available online at: <http://www.honvedelem.hu/cikk.php?cikk=8042>

⁶⁷ Ram, Melanie H.: *Sub-regional Cooperation and European Integration: Romania's Delicate Balance* Available online at: <http://www.isanet.org/archive/ram.html>

which has dramatically increased over the past few years. He also stated, "Hungary is Romania's most important trading partner among all neighbors, which suggests a subsiding of the psychological barriers between our borders."⁶⁸ Both Romania and Hungary have recognized that the benefits of having their neighbors join the EU and NATO, and the collective endeavor towards Euro-Atlantic integration, was an important basis on which to build relations. As former Hungarian President Arpad Goncz noted, "Romania's integration into NATO and the EU is a vital issue for Hungary."⁶⁹ Hungary's Federation of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Party (FIDESZ-MPP) also stressed that "it is in Hungary's interest for NATO and EU expansion to be continued, and it is in our interest that the integration process of our neighbors - including that of Romania - be speeded up."⁷⁰

As one of the major steps towards that close cooperation, on 20 March 1998, Romania and Hungary signed a memorandum to establish a joint Romanian-Hungarian Peacekeeping Battalion.⁷¹ The creation of this unit is designed to enhance the bilateral political and military relationship of the two countries, to further the stability of the East-Central European region, and also, in accordance with the OSCE's confidence building measures, to support international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

⁶⁸ Ram, Melanie H.: *Sub-regional Cooperation and European Integration: Romania's Delicate Balance* Available online at: <http://www.isanet.org/archive/ram.html>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Memorandum Between the Governments of Romania and Hungary on the Establishment of a Joint Peacekeeping Battalion. Available online at: http://www.complex.hu/kzldat/t9800047.htm/mun_2.htm#kagy6

1. Tasks

The battalion is a high readiness unit able to deploy within 30 days. The unit's mission covers peace support operations, humanitarian assistance operations as well as defense operations. The main tasks, therefore, are: to prevent and deter any hostilities with its authentic military force; participate in peacekeeping and crisis management operations with effective force; support humanitarian and search and rescue operations; and participate in common exercises and training in order to maintain and increase interoperability.⁷²

The battalion will operate primarily in East-Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe upon the request of either the Security Council of the United Nations, NATO, the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, or any organization cooperating with the two countries involved. The area of operation can include difficult terrain with complicated weather conditions and upon special request, also other European territories, or in some cases, even terrain outside of Europe. A mutual agreement among the Hungarian and Romanian authorities is necessary for deployment. The two parties then determine the specific tasks for the battalion. In the case of peace support operations requested by an international organization, the two defense ministers of Hungary and Romania will be in charge to coordinate all activities.⁷³

⁷² Hungarian Defense Forces: *Establishment of the Joint Romanian-Hungarian Peacekeeping Battalion-Preparation, Training and Tasks*. Budapest, 24.October 2001

⁷³ Ministry of Defense of Republic of Hungary; Ministry of National Defense of Romania: *Technical Agreement for the Implementation of the "Agreement Between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on the Establishment of the Joint Peacekeeping Battalion"*.

In peacetime, the national elements of the unit will be stationed on each side's own national territory under national command. The national troops will use weapons, equipment and vehicles used in each national army. The working language of the battalion will be English with the standard procedures and documents in accordance to NATO standards.

2. Personnel

The number of troops assigned to the unit will be 500 from each party at maximum. The maximum overall strength will be 1000 personnel. The parties are equally represented in the joint command of the unit. The leading positions of the battalion are on rotation, i.e. changing yearly between Romanian and Hungarian officers. Starting on 01 May 2002, the battalion commander, the chief of staff and the commander of the joint staff company will be appointed by the Romanian side.⁷⁴ The rest of the assignments are quota slots, i.e. equally and permanently divided and occupied by officers of the two countries.

The international battalion consists of the 191st Rifle Battalion of the 19th Mechanized Brigade of Arad from Romania, and the 1st Battalion of the 62nd Mechanized Infantry Brigade of Hódmezővásárhely from Hungary.

3. Coordination

For the purpose of coordinating activities and other administrative matters of the joint battalion, the parties established a so-called "Bilateral Steering Committee", consisting of high-ranking representatives of the two parties. The committee is to coordinate and establish the conditions for training, conditions for operational

⁷⁴ Ibid.

deployment, and the use of the battalion. This committee is supported by a Joint Working Group consisting of experts and meets as required according to a previously common agreed upon agenda. The joint military receives orders through the chain of command.

The costs of establishment, maintenance and operation are shared and financed by the two parties on a proportional basis.⁷⁵

4. Training

In order to maintain tactical efficiency and interoperability with NATO forces, the training of the unit is planned and supervised by the general staffs of the two armies. In accordance with the agreements signed by the parties, thirty percent of the training should be spent on preparation for peacekeeping tasks. This is the core part of the training to which both nations shall pay special attention. In order to prepare the battalion for future tasks, the parties agreed to hold two common post and troop exercises every year.⁷⁶

The training period for the military unit started with English language training on 1 June 1999. The first common command post exercise was conducted in November 1999 in the Romanian city of Arad. The exercise proved that both sides are willing to cooperate fully. Despite the language difficulties, in relatively short time, they were able to concentrate on staff a work. Overall, the exercise proved

⁷⁵ Ministry of Defense of Republic of Hungary; Ministry of National Defense of Romania: *Technical Agreement for the Implementation of the "Agreement Between the Government of Romania and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on the Establishment of the Joint Peacekeeping Battalion"*.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

that the battalion staff is able to successfully accomplish the scheduled tasks.⁷⁷

The next exercise was also carried out in the Romanian area of Arad. During the one-week long common exercise (during November 7-13, 2000) which was the main part of the training, the battalion and company staffs practiced with one full platoon from each side.⁷⁸ It is worth noting the efforts the Romanians made in terms of making entry into Romania easy as well as the ease of transportation, the preparation of the exercise area, and all together, the hospitality shown towards the Hungarian troops.

During a NATO PfP exercise⁷⁹ dubbed "Cooperative Dragon", held in Albania between 19 June and 1 July 2000, a selected part of the joint battalion staff participated as "role-players".

In the same year in November, as part of the common training, a third exercise took place in Hungary. The exercise-flow conducted for the joint battalion was named "Opening Windows", and referred to the openness and friendly cooperation between the two armies and the two countries. The evaluation of the exercise pointed out the continuous preparedness of the battalion to accomplish its tasks, and to improve its ability to understand and solve tactical and operational problems. The report also notes that this exercise provided a stable base for similar

⁷⁷ Hungarian Defense Forces: *Informative Report on the Establishment, Training, and Future Tasks of the Joint Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping Battalion*. Budapest, 24. October 2001.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ NATO Partnership for Peace Program.

training in the future and for participation in real peacekeeping operations.⁸⁰

Starting in 2001, the battalion accomplished the annual common training laid down by the agreement of the two parties, and at the same time, different parts of the unit participated in several NATO PfP exercises which led to the generally positive international recognition of the military unit.

In the near future, the exercise "Opening Windows" is to continue between Hungary and Romania, and also, this particular military unit is also assigned to participate in upcoming NATO PfP-exercises. Also, the Romanian party is considering the possibilities of assigning this joint battalion to continue practicing with the "Tisza" Slovakian-Hungarian-Ukrainian-Romanian engineering battalion.

In short, the Hungarian-Romanian Joint Peacekeeping Battalion is a working example of an East Central European sub-regional initiative. This particular military unit through its establishment and accomplishments in international military professional circles with the historically hostile relationship between the two emergent countries proves the necessity for close cooperation. It is also a perfect example of how these countries can cooperate pretty well even in a sensitive military area. In addition, this cooperation must be paid special attention since Hungary is a NATO member country waiting to become a member of the EU while Romania is still waiting to become a NATO

⁸⁰ Hungarian Defense Forces: *Informative Report on the Establishment, Training, and Future Tasks of the Joint Hungarian-Romanian Peacekeeping Battalion*. Budapest 24. October 2001

member in the next round of NATO enlargement, and is also on the waiting list to eventually become a member of the EU.

The ability, the openness and willingness of Hungary and Romania proves the reason for the existence of close sub-regional cooperation in a geographical area where the creation of a new security architecture and the enlargement of different larger international institutions not only unites, but at the same time, divides the region.

Although the unit has never been deployed yet, but based on the commitment of the personnel, the facts that the unit consists of expert officers and non-commissioned officers, and that both of the governments are concerned about the functioning of the battalion, it is quite obvious that in case of an international request the peacekeeping battalion would fulfill all of the expectations. It is the common interest of the establishing countries to express the good working relations of the two nations through the exemplary commitment of the joint battalion.

V. CONCLUSION

The research and analysis provided in this thesis indicated the emerging importance of sub-regional cooperation. It showed the dependency of the states in the East Central European region on the newly created international security architecture in the pursuance of membership in larger international institutions.

Since regaining their full independence, the East Central European countries have sought to normalize and rebuild relations with each other in the region, the Soviet Union, its successor state, Russia in the later years, and obviously the Western world from which they had been separated for almost forty years. Seeking to rejoin the democratic world, these countries looked towards NATO and the EU as the only means capable of ensuring credible security guarantees in the changed international environment, and providing continuing and stable economic development. This road to the "return to Europe" was engendered by various bi- and multilateral cooperation plans. These contained negotiations of state treaties guaranteeing existing borders and minority rights, undertaking obligations for the further development of cooperative relations, and lastly and practically, political, economic and military cooperation.

With the changed environment, new security threats emerged. While the former totalitarian regimes suppressed the conflicts between small ethnic groups and even denied the existence of minority problems, these issues seemed to be of the central importance and causing security problems

in a region with such long historical debates over border boundaries and ethnicities. The emergence of international terrorism, smuggling, illegal immigration, and environmental issues as topics of global concern are also problems on a long list of risks and possible threats in a world perspective. Sub-regional organizations can react more readily to these threats because of their relatively small area of operations and greater interest in focusing on specific needs and fulfilling specific demands.

The enlargement of NATO and the EU seems an effective tool for providing security and prosperity in that particular geographic region. On the other hand, the accession process runs the great risk of widening the gap between the nations who might enter the "Western Club" and those left out of the process.

However, the goal of the member aspirant countries and the criteria for becoming a member of these institutions compels the nations to establish and maintain good relations with their neighboring countries. Sub-regional cooperation with the contacts that involve every level of society promotes tolerance between ethnic groups, help overcome the real or fictitious historical injustices, and consequently, promote good relations between nations and their people.

Military cooperation at the sub-regional level also has significant importance. These contacts are an essential part of security-building measures and are vital for strengthening confidence and self-expression. With close military cooperation, the East Central European countries were able to establish effective civilian control over

their armed forces, which was one of the critical points of the democratization process.

Working military cooperation also plays an effective role in creating good relations with neighboring countries. Hungary and Romania, two countries with a long and continuous history of hostilities over the treatment of minorities, have provided, with respect to the "Open Skies" agreement for example, the increased military contacts between the troops of the two countries, and the establishment of the joint Romanian-Hungarian peacekeeping battalion, a working pattern for improved military cooperation in the region.

The international peacekeeping unit was created to improve and enhance bilateral and military relationships, to further promote the stability of the East Central European region and to support international peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

Despite the political turbulence that the Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries, approved by the Hungarian parliament, has been causing, Hungarian-Romanian military cooperation has been traditionally better than in other areas. Evidence of these military relations can be found either in the actions taken by the Hungarian Ministry of Defense during the Romanian events in 1989, or can be seen in the cooperation among the national elements of the joint peacekeeping battalion. The will and preparedness of the troops to conduct common training for to commonly shoulder the burden of the future tasks of the unit proves that good relations- at least at the military to military level- do exist.

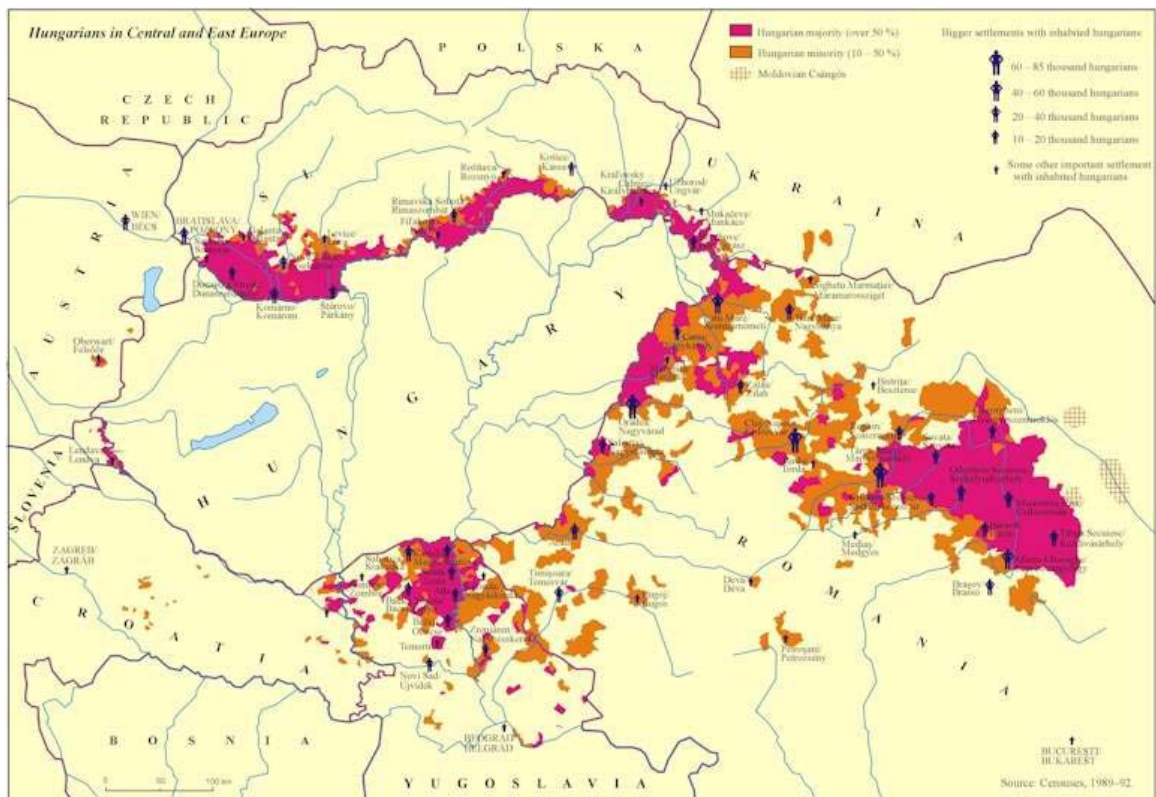


Figure 1. Hungarians in Central and Eastern Europe.
Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at:
<http://www.htmh.hu/maps/back.jpg>

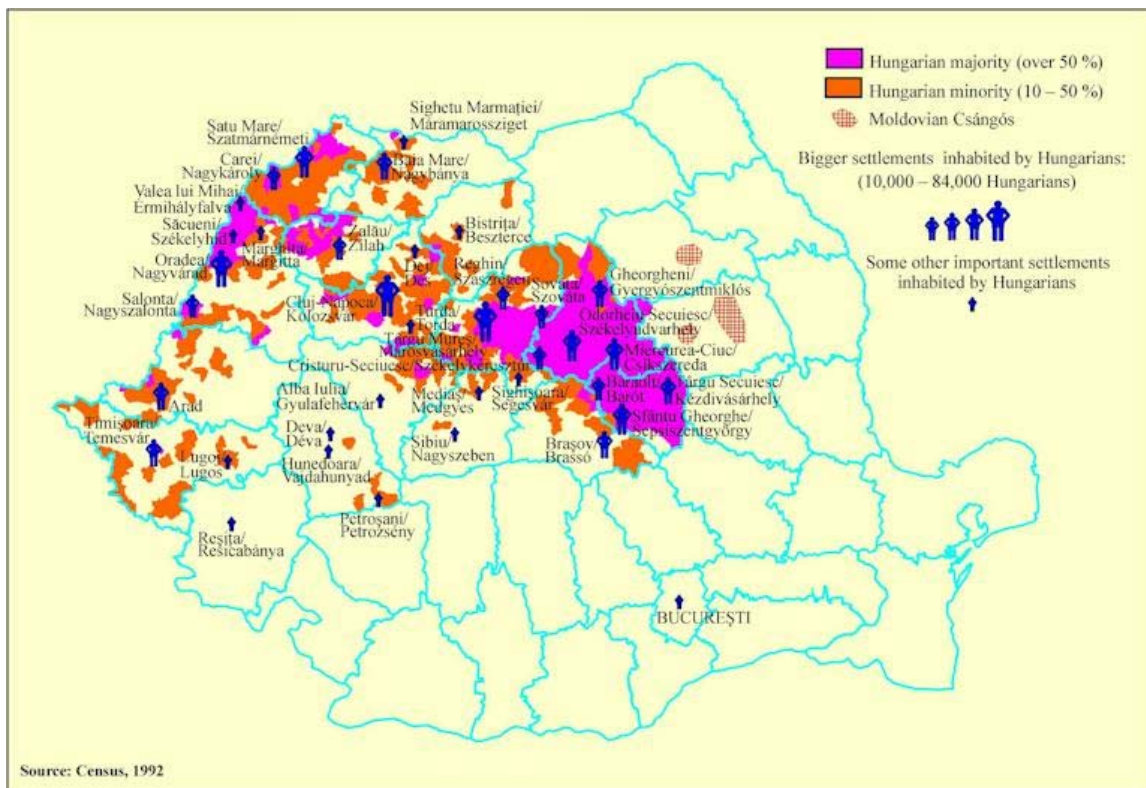


Figure 2. Hungarians in Romania.

Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at: <http://www.htmh.hu/maps/romhun1.jpg>

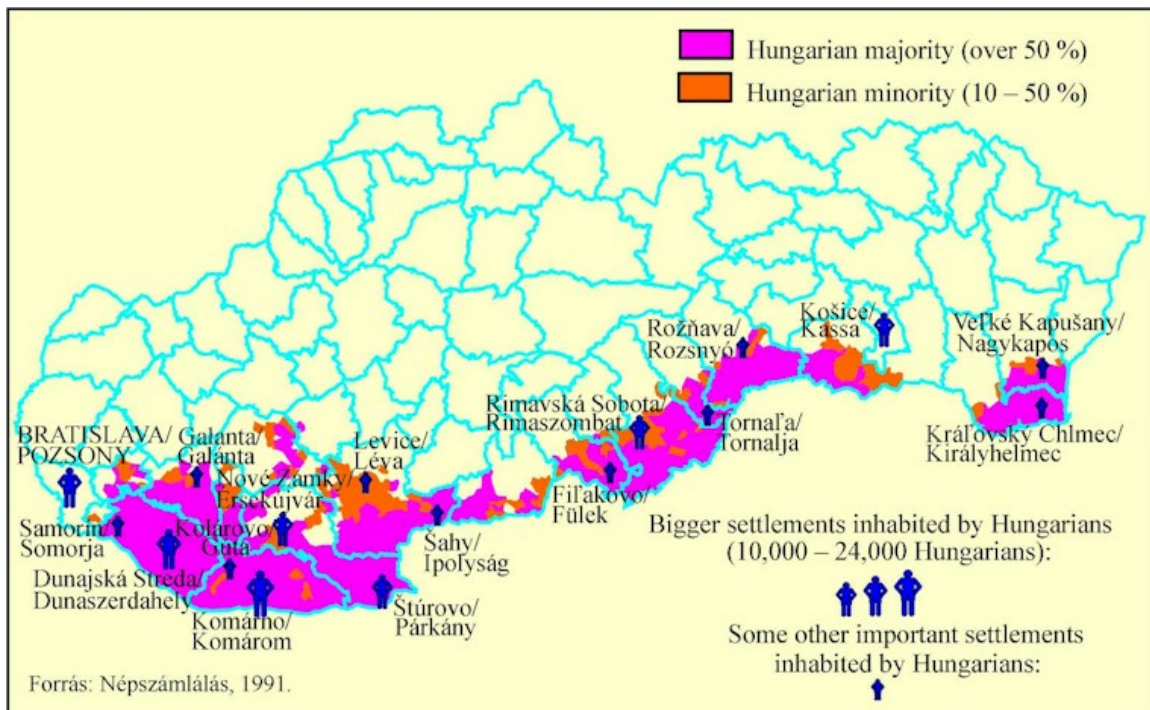


Figure 3. Hungarians in Slovakia.

Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at: <http://www.htmh.hu/maps/slohun1.jpg>

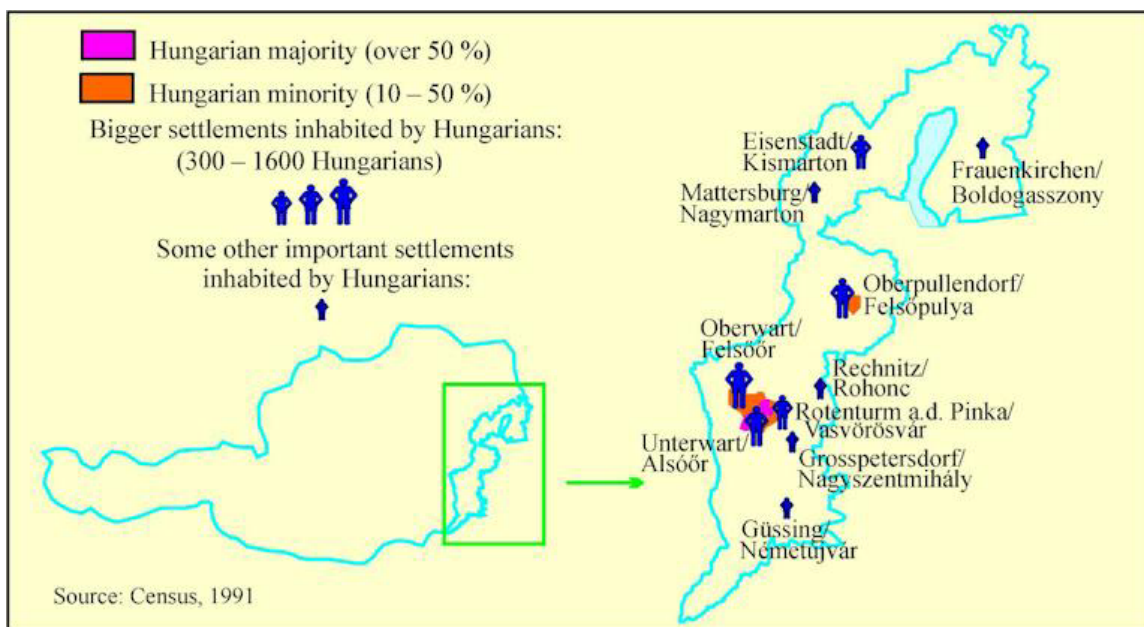


Figure 4. Hungarians in Burgenland.

Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at:
<http://www.htmh.hu/maps/burghun.jpg>

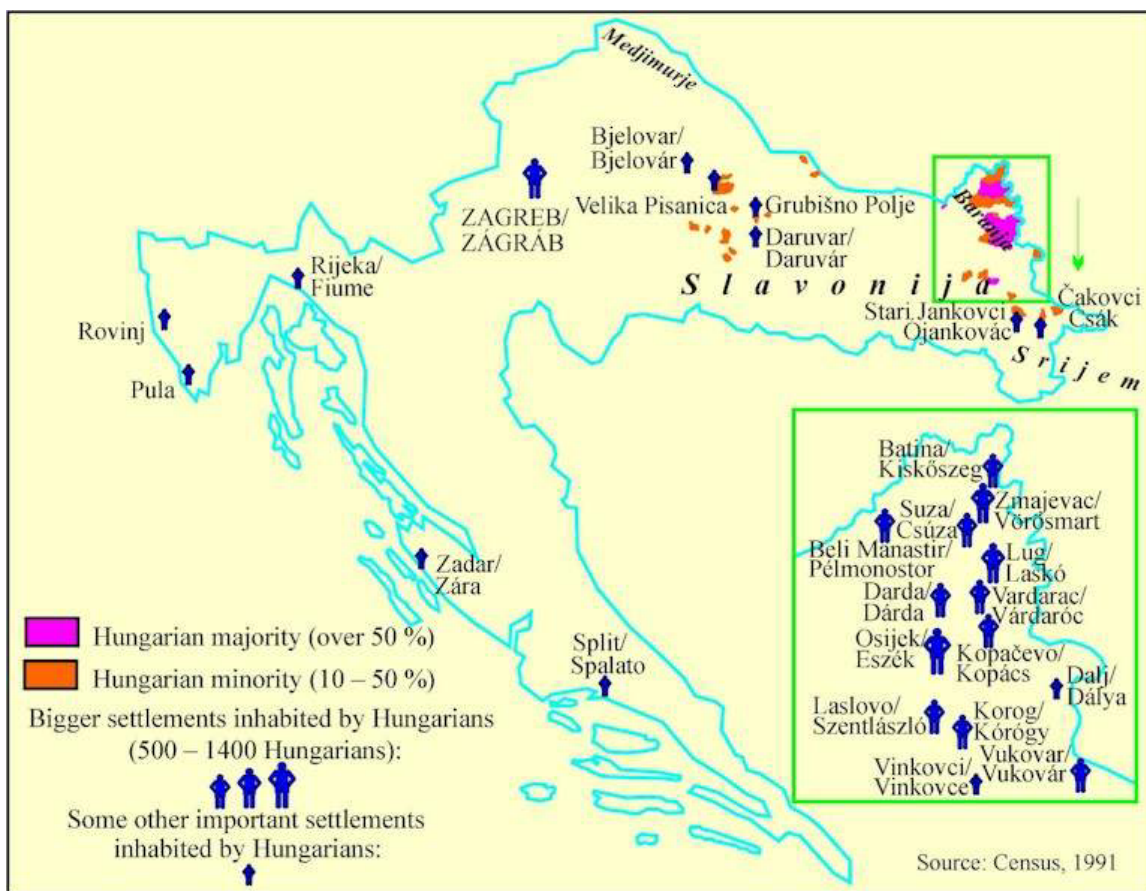


Figure 5. Hungarians in Croatia.

Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at: <http://www.htmh.hu/maps/croathu.jpg>

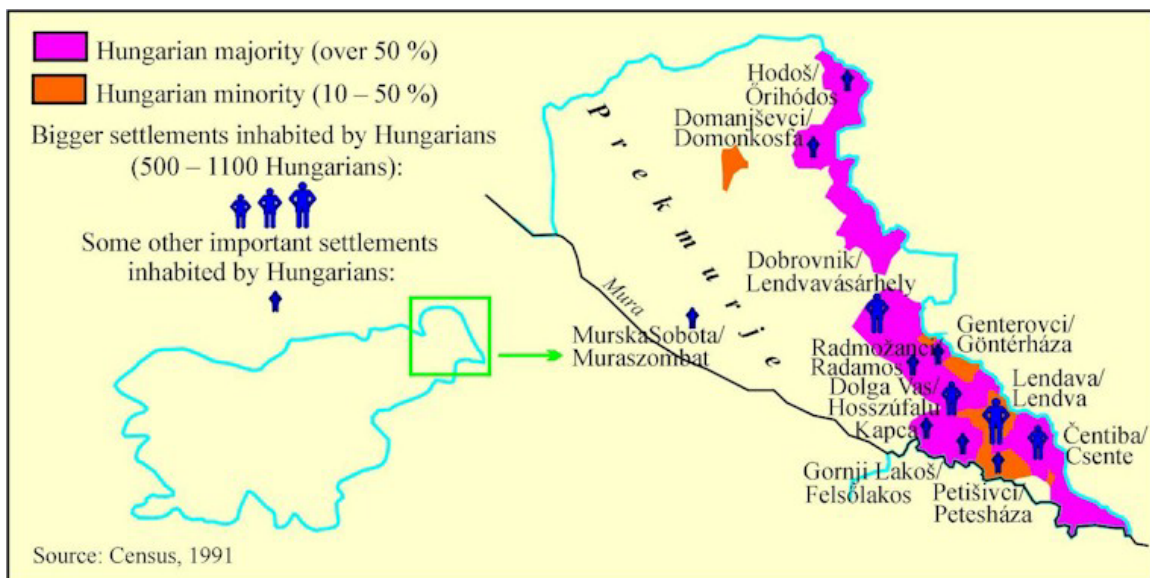


Figure 6. Hungarians in Slovenia.

Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at: <http://www.htmh.hu/maps/slvnhun.jpg>

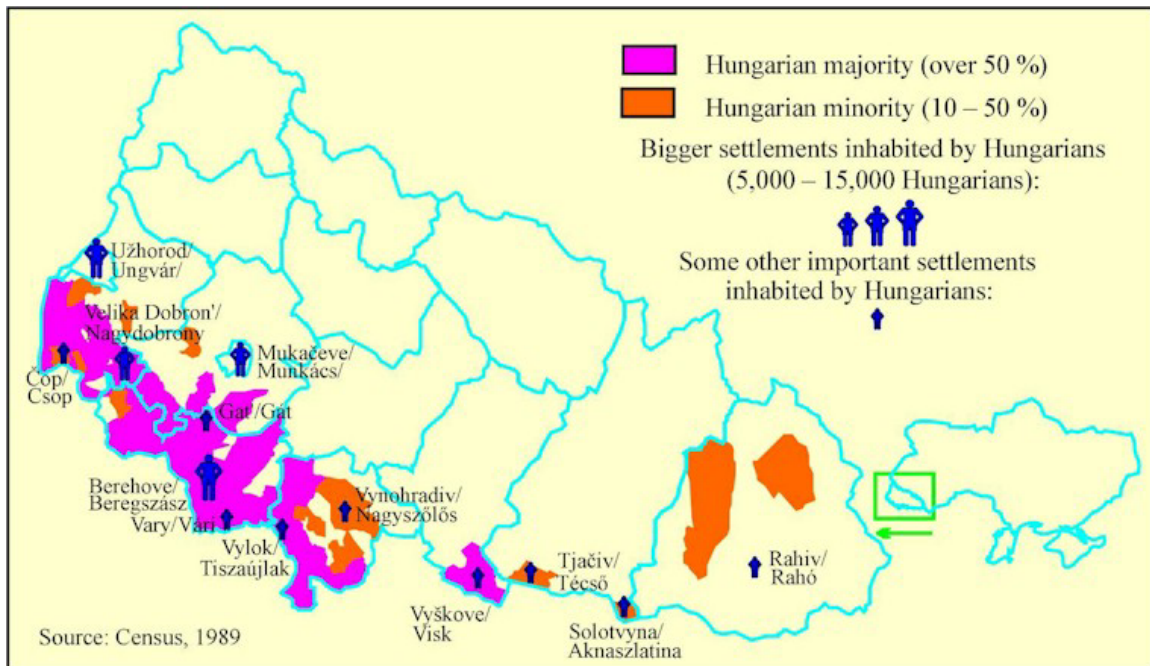


Figure 7. Hungarians in Transcarpathia.
 Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at:
<http://www.htmh.hu/maps/tcarph1.jpg>

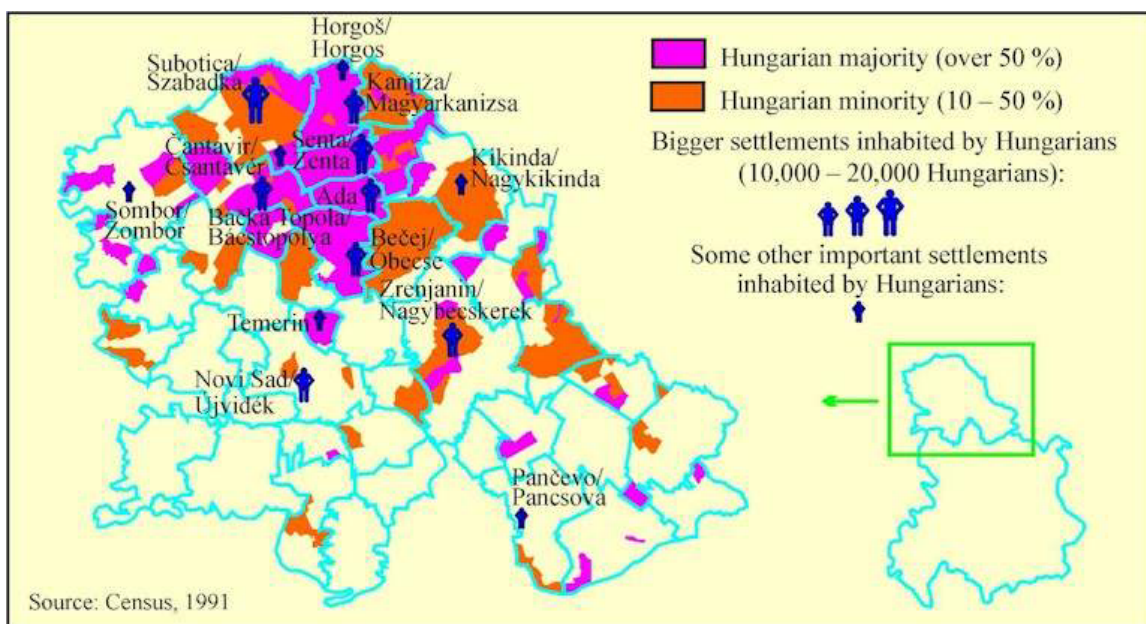


Figure 8. Hungarians in Vojvodina.

Source: HTMH, Office of Hungarians Living Abroad Available online at: <http://www.htmh.hu/maps/voivhu1.jpg>

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