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**THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVAKIA
AND THE SITUATION OF HUNGARIAN MINORITIES**

THESIS BOOKLET

Director of studies:

Dr. Ferenc A. Szabó, university professor

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Determining the subject of research

Our region, Central-Eastern Europe, is affected by new, global security challenges along with more traditional risks that threaten democracies and universal democratic values. At the same time, security risks are harder to predict. To be able to do so, challenges need to be continuously recognized and assessed in a reliable fashion, making it possible to present specific proposals to governments based on which the decisions necessary to prevent these threats can be made. Of course, national interests have to harmonize with the needs of NATO Allies.

Methodology

During the course of my research I was focusing mainly on what I saw as the most important issues. In my analysis I used an interdisciplinary approach and methodology, complete with interviews with prominent members of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia (Péter Hunčík, Ottó Csámpai, Stefan Schill etc.). Since such a comprehensive analysis had not yet been done in connection with the Slovak Republic, I completed a great amount of documentary research to serve as a basis for discussing the actual state and perspectives of the security of Hungarians in Slovakia

My **hypotheses** are as follows:

1.) Slovak leadership – similarly to the other so-called Visegrad countries – assessed the changes in the country's security and this is reflected in the political, security policy and defense policy documents. I research why Slovakia was not invited at the latest round of NATO enlargement.

2.) Though Slovakia's economic situation and its population's living standard seems to be average by European standards, it is relatively low when compared to that of neighboring Poland, Hungary or that of the Czechs – with whom the Slovaks formed a state for decades. I look into the reasons behind this.

3.) By my knowledge, there is in Slovakia a strong, ethnically organized Hungarian party with a stable constituency despite the decrease in its demographical base. I examine the minority situation in Slovakia – beyond the issue of Hungarians also that of Romas – because I believe ethnic and nationality issues have not only international political implications (for example of the Basic Treaty between Slovakia and Hungary), but affect security policy as well.

4.) Despite its relatively small size, Slovakia is important geo-politically and geographically (high mountains, East-West routes, wedged between two NATO Allies [Poland, Hungary], borders on the Danube). This probably affects Slovakian political thinking and decisions (for example strategic partnership with Russia).

Structure

The first chapter is a historical review of how the Slovakian people separated from Hungary, what role they played in Czechoslovakia, their struggles for independence. It shortly touches on the situation following the München Treaty of 1938, and Slovak behavior in World War

Two. I then discuss the Beneš decrees and the consequences. I point out why the Slovak democratic opposition was powerless in the period after 1968 and what led to governmental crises after independence had been gained. I analyze what re-awakens their strong national feelings and impatience. I shortly present the traditions of Matica slovenská and its re-emergence. In the second part I describe the situation of the Hungarian population in Felvidék taken from Hungary by the Treaty of Trianon; their initial uncertainty, their internal divisions, then their political behavior and the growing importance of their role due to the changes in international circumstances. I also deal with the problems in the period after the first Vienna decision. I present in detail the injustice suffered by the minorities in the wake of World War Two and its political-economic background. I point out that in the Husák period the situation of Hungarians did not improve; on the contrary Hungarian education and the use of the Hungarian language came under renewed attacks.

In the second chapter I discuss Slovakia's security at the turn of the millennium. First, I describe its general and military geography, which determine the country's economic, foreign policy and military opportunities. Then I analyze its population and administration. Here I also touch on the probable reasons behind the decline in number of the Hungarian minority, which is the biggest minority in Slovakia. I also discuss the drawing of administrative district borders, a sensitive issue to Slovaks as evidenced by the efforts to keep the ratio of Hungarians under the 20% necessary for the use of their language. Based on the analysis of the country's economic situation, I have explained why Mečiar is still popular and what the „Russian brother” had meant for the country. Regarding foreign and domestic policy, I show that their principles were determined after much consideration and thus little needs to be updated. Then I summarize Slovakia's status in regional and international institutions and I list the country's most important security policy documents. I analyze the elements of its security strategy in detail. Following this I thoroughly discuss the defense policy dimension; the security risks, tasks of the armed forces, standard operating procedures and the formation of independent defense forces, their status and defense industries.

I have reviewed the creation of independent security services and their activities. As part of this I examined the background of their operations, and the role of policy. I shortly present the work of the Ministry of the Interior, the Police corps and the Border Guards. In this chapter I also deal with other factors influencing domestic policy, such as the Slovakian Roma population's conditions – which is of great significance in negotiations with the EU – and crime.

In chapter three I present the situation of the Hungarian minority. I do so by detailing those factors of influence that I consider of greatest importance, their locations by examining the families, communities, schools, and churches shaping their identity. Then I dealt with recently signed documents that have the greatest effect on the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Thus I analyzed the basic treaty and the competence-law, compared the Hungarian and Slovak status laws and assessed the county municipal elections.

In chapter four I examine the political structures and the political twists and turns of the young Slovak state. Here I have shown how far the actors on the political scene are willing to go to gain and keep their power. At the same time, I have markedly described the dilemmas of the major figures among Hungarians, what, how, when should be done and with whom in order to protect the interests of their own? Should they occasionally play a governmental role, what policy should they follow in the municipalities?

Summary

Events in the aftermath of the „velvet revolution” – „hyphen-war”, the issue of language, economic reform – made it increasingly clear that the old, rigidly centralized system is intolerable for both nations. Economic restructuring begun in January 1991 finally led to separation. Czech leadership put its faith in shock-therapy while Slovaks were for gradual transformation. The decision to separate was made without the consent of the population since neither party believed it would enjoy wide support.

Following „Trianon” all measures objected to by Slovaks in the pre-1918 Hungarian policy on nationalities like methods of assimilation, were hastily implemented after the change in power. Only they used these more prudently and with greater results than the Hungarians before them. Hungarians in the neighboring countries are in a peculiar situation by European standards, since they became minorities against their will, based on an international decision. This is why they can be regarded as national communities based on their identity, numbers and other qualities. It is natural that for Hungary and for the other countries concerned this is an issue of foreign and domestic policy as well.

Having become independent – in a security policy vacuum – Slovaks were increasingly eager to define their own national, societal, state and political identity. They were of course trying to find their place in a new Europe as well as in the region and the relations with their neighbors.

In a decade of existence, the Slovak Republic created the legislative, state administration, military and national security strategy attributes of independence and is thus formally prepared for NATO and EU membership. Mečiar's security policy was but for a little flirtation with the West obviously Eastern-oriented, though not without rationality. The Russians no doubt gave the country economic advantages in return for keeping their influence, making it easier for the Slovak population the burden of transition to democracy. However, this only delayed the unavoidable measures necessary for building democracy and a Western-style market economy. Following the 1998 elections, Slovak diplomacy reversed its previous isolation, became active on the international scene and succeeded in presenting a positive view of the country. Among foreign policy priorities NATO and EU membership was placed first beyond doubt, and concrete steps were taken to overcome domestic obstacles (unobstructed functioning of democratic institutions, improving the situation of minorities, constitutional reform, and reform of the state administration based on the principle of subsidiarity.) To show its commitment to NATO, the Slovak government made great decisions: it allowed the use of its airspace for Allied aircraft participating in air strikes against Yugoslavia and its territory for the transit of military equipment and personnel. As an aspirant country it devised serious reforms of its armed forces, along with a new defense strategy, the necessary legislation and information security measures. Naturally, NATO STANAG-s are constantly adapted.

There were very important positive turns in Hungarian-Slovak bilateral relations following the elections in 1998: establishment of consulates-general, rebuilding of the bridge on the Danube between Esztergom and Párkány. At the same time, reforms are implemented only at a slow pace, thanks to struggles within the governing coalition. The force holding the „coalition” together is still the fear of Mečiar coming back to power.

The population considers the administration's domestic performance weak, above all because of the steady decline of its living standard.

Ethnic minorities generally link neighboring countries but they can also generate serious conflicts. This is why ethnic heterogeneity is a security risk in the democratic consolidation of Slovakia, a fact that the majority of Slovak political elite is reluctant to acknowledge even though the proportion of minorities is around 20% contrary to statistics.

The most profound and prolonged political conflict is between Slovaks and Hungarians represented in the greatest numbers. On the one hand, this is partly due to the reversal in the roles of „old” and „new” nation-state, different interpretations of a mythicized and falsified common history, and efforts to keep alive the false illusion of being threatened. On the other, Hungarians in Slovakia form a politically active community with a strong identity and clearly defined goals as a minority. It is in this domestic political environment that the Party of Hungarian Coalition (MKP) has to play its governmental role and achieve the goals in important areas as set out in its election program.

The Slovak-Hungarian relationship is burdened by two great unresolved issues: that of the water barrages at Bős-Nagymaros and the situation of Hungarians in Slovakia.

Statistics on the Hungarian minority are showing negative tendencies (decreasing birth rate, increasing mortality, migration due to economic-political reasons). The relentless assimilation of its diaspora, the increasing number of interethnic marriages and the newfound identity in the new political situation among Romas who have previously become “Hungarianized” also contribute to this negative balance.

One basic condition for the survival and growth of Hungarian ethnic minorities is the existence of ample economic opportunities and assisting civic development. This brought about the support of successive Hungarian governments for regional initiatives extending beyond borders. The Carpathian Euro-Region, the Alps-Adria Work Community and the Duna-Tisza-Maros Euro-Region seek to promote good neighborly relations and also to restore the traditional economic and cultural ties that have evolved over the centuries.

Possible uses for research results

I believe it is possible for experts in the fields of foreign and security policy and military strategy to make use of the results of this research. This study can serve as a basis for further scientific research of this topic, which could make it easier to assess conflicts that are difficult to predict, and to manage security risks and conflict situations. I definitely believe the results can be used in the education and training of experts both at the National Defense University and the courses of security services.

New scientific results:

1.) Based on comprehensive documentary research and the study of the literary background I analyze Slovak security policy and its specific elements, and I find that it corresponds to the country's geopolitical situation, economic and intellectual potential, foreign policy objectives and domestic capacities. I have found that Slovak security policy has identifiable constant elements regardless if the government is from the left or the right. At the same time, it has specific features due to a lack of a traditional base, the presence of panslavism and the treatment of the minority issue.

2.) I prove that for independent Slovakia it was of great importance to create its own national defense forces. At the same time, ceilings in the five categories of military equipment in the CFE treaty were observed, which meant the destruction of a significant amount of the hardware received from the federal army. I have substantiated the fact that armed forces reform is an on-going, long-term process, whose main goal is to prepare these forces for NATO-integration. This is well shown by significant Slovak participation in international missions.

3.) I show that Slovakia's general economic and security situation is better than that of the countries in the Balkans and the post-Soviet region. However, some risk factors (the situation of minorities, rate of unemployment, etc.) are present in a larger degree than in the other Visegrad countries. I have shown that after the separation Slovak economy was kept from collapsing and living standards were kept at a reasonable level thanks to the preservation and rebuilding of relations with Russia. Even though this preserved the old structures and slowed the transition to market economy, it temporarily stabilized the economic situation of the country and its citizens.

4.) I prove that the situation of Hungarians in Slovakia has been contradictory from the beginning. It is one of the unresolved factors in relations with neighboring countries - Hungary among them - and the issue currently has the potential to weaken stability and international cooperation. This is coupled with the high and rising proportion of Roma population, another issue which - along with social problems and the issue of Hungarians just mentioned - means a significant security risk, even though the Hungarian political party wishes to achieve its aims in a legitimate and democratic way.

5.) I show that the Hungarian population in Slovakia is a security policy factor because of its advantageous location, the fact that its proportion is high even when compared with that of the founding nation, and also because it is well-organized and has a strong identity. However, in the globalizing world and the Europe of the future it can play the role of intermediary in the fields of economic, political, linguistic and cultural cooperation between countries.

6.) I prove that Slovakia is geo-strategically important despite its relatively small geographical size. It is a linchpin between the North-European and South-European theaters. As a consequence it is important for both the West and Russia. Slovakia still has to live with a myriad of serious security risks like other states that gained independent statehood in the recent past, but it is on the right path to countering them since it has a chance to join the institutions of European unity. The Slovak political elite, not to mention the people responsible for security issues have done much in recent years to achieve this.

PUBLICATIONS, MANUSCRIPTS:

- 1.) Bomb Alert
Military Security Office (MOS) Professional Review 1992/M p.79-88
- 2.) Crisis management, counter-terrorism
MSO Professional Review 1994/K p.113-148
- 3.) Col. István Glemba – LtCol. Ervin Antal Szabó – LtCol József Németh:
Political extremism and the threat of terrorism in Hungary
MSO Studies for the education of national security I. 1997. p.26-34

- 4.) The effect of security policy and its institutions on MSO organization and activities
MSO Professional Review 2000/3 p.91-104
- 5.) Criminal use of explosives
MSO Professional Review 2001/1 p.63-78
- 6.) Deviance in the Hungarian Defense Forces
MSO Professional Review 2001/2 p.62-77
- 7.) The oil-business (the oil-colonels and company)
MSO Professional Review 2001/3 p.35-46
- 8.) Deviance in the Hungarian Defense Forces
ZMNE Society and Defense 2001/1 p.153-161
- 9.) The oil-business
ZMNE Society and Defense 2001/3 p.139-148
- 10.) Book presentation (Ferenc A. Szabó: the historical and security significance of migration in
light of EU-enlargement)
ZMNE Forum 2001/4 p.23-24
- 11.) The terrorist threat, the MoD and the Hungarian Defense Forces
MSO Professional Review 2002/1 p.32-38
- 12.) The security policy of the Slovak Republic
MSO Professional Review 2002/1 p.111-134
- 13.) Terrorism, fight for freedom, a peculiar way to serve justice?
MSO Professional Scientific Bulletin
2002.05.28. p.81-83
- 14.) Minorities and security
MSO Professional Review 2002/2. p.119-127

Manuscripts to be published:

- The security and geopolitical situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia at the turn of the millennium (University of Pécs)
- Organized crime (ZMNE Society and Defense)
- Security and public opinion in Europe (MSO Professional Review)
- Ferenc A. Szabó – József Németh: Slovakia's security at the turn of the millennium (HABE)
- Slovakia's foreign and security policy (MoD)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

On 21-23 November 2001 I gave a presentation at the VI. National Conference of Geography PhD Students in Pécs titled: „The security and geopolitical situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia in light of European integration”.

Autobiography

My name is József Németh and I was born in Újpest, Budapest in 9 August 1955. In 1977 I graduated from the general logistics and finance faculty at Máté Zalka Military Engineering School with a certificate in finance and economics. Based on my school record I was assigned to the staff of the mechanized infantry division at Zalaegerszeg as an officer responsible for planning and organization. Here I actively participated in presentations and other events organized by the Military History Association when I had the opportunity. Following graduation from the Police Academy training course in 1979 my next assignment was at Máté Zalka Military Engineering School as security officer. Here I was promoted and in 1985 I was reassigned to Miklós Zrínyi Staff College (ZMKA). I received special training in the Soviet Union in 1986 and the USA in 1992 and then – based on the German model – in Hungary in 1993. I began my scientific activities by summing up and publishing these experiences while I started research at the Military Security Office of the Republic of Hungary (MSO) in the fields of terrorism and organized crime. In 1989 I was given a senior security officer's post. In the mid-1980s my superiors repeatedly turned down my requests for commencing legal studies. After the transition to democracy I repeatedly expressed my wish to continue advanced studies, finally approved in 1994. I was given permission to apply to division „D” of ZMKA where I was accepted, but I was advised to pass an intermediate level language exam beforehand. Since schooling opportunities for English language education were limited I perspectively chose Italian, passing a type „C” intermediate level state exam complete with military vocabulary. Meanwhile the academy was reorganized to university and my major was canceled. In 1997 I was selected to study at the security and defense policy program at the Military Science Faculty of Miklós Zrínyi National Defense University (ZMNE). In 1999 I graduated with honors and received a diploma of certified expert in the field of security and defense policy. Previously I passed the type „C” advanced level state exam in Italian language, complete with military vocabulary. Before graduation I successfully applied to ZMNE Doctorate School, Military Science „B” PhD program, correspondence course. I completed my mandatory and elected courses based on the approved study and research program with excellent results. I am a member in the Security Policy Division of the Hungarian Association of Military Science. In 2000 I passed a type „C” basic level state exam in Russian language, complete with military vocabulary.

My aim is to achieve a PhD degree and to continue the research in the area of security policy.

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