

# POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies / Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá

URL of the journal / URL časopisu: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

**Author(s) / Autor(i):** Milan Kurucz  
**Article / Článok:** Hungary-United States Relations under Obama and Trump Administration / Vzťahy Maďarska a Spojených štátov počas administratívy Baracka Obamu a Donalda Trumpa  
**Publisher / Vydavateľ:** Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations – MBU Banská Bystrica / Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov – UMB Banská Bystrica  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2020.23.2.98-113>

**Recommended form for quotation of the article / Odporúčaná forma citácie článku:**

KURUCZ, M. 2020. Hungary-United States Relations under Obama and Trump Administration. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Vol. 23, No. 2, 2020. ISSN 1335 – 2741, pp. 98-113. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2020.23.2.98-113>

**By submitting their contribution the author(s) agreed with the publication of the article on the online page of the journal. The publisher was given the author's / authors' permission to publish and distribute the contribution both in printed and online form. Regarding the interest to publish the article or its part in online or printed form, please contact the editorial board of the journal: [politicke.vedy@umb.sk](mailto:politicke.vedy@umb.sk).**

**Poskytnutím svojho príspevku autor(i) súhlasil(i) so zverejnením článku na internetovej stránke časopisu Politické vedy. Vydavateľ získal súhlas autora / autorov s publikovaním a distribúciou príspevku v tlačenej i online verzii. V prípade záujmu publikovať článok alebo jeho časť v online i tlačenej podobe, kontaktujte redakčnú radu časopisu: [politicke.vedy@umb.sk](mailto:politicke.vedy@umb.sk).**

## HUNGARY-UNITED STATES RELATIONS UNDER OBAMA AND TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

**Milan Kurucz\***

### ABSTRACT

Changes in Hungary's foreign policy over the last decade, including its relations with the great powers, have become the subject of increased interest for researchers in the field of international relations. These changes have been examined mainly in the context of constitutional and institutional measures undermining liberal democracy taken in Hungary after 2010 and its efforts to diversify external economic and political relations. Hungary - United States relations have been marked by different approaches of the administration of Barack Obama and Donald Trump to the Hungarian government's policy. Differences of these two periods of Hungarian-American relations were examined in the article. Analyses showed that the different values and strategic priorities in the foreign policy of both presidents are especially significant. A noticeable cooling of bilateral relations during the administration of Barack Obama was the result of the implementation of the illiberal concept in the Hungarian political system. The preference for nationalism and power over democracy in Donald Trump's policy has created the preconditions for a turnaround in Hungarian-US relations. Their further development may be complicated by Hungary's maneuvering between the US and its competitors.

**Key words:** Hungary, United States, bilateral relations, democracy, foreign policy, Central Europe, Russia, China, energy

### Introduction

Hungarian-American relations underwent an inconsistent development in the past thirty years. At the end of the Cold War, Hungary (together with Poland) was perceived by the USA as a country with the fastest changes towards pluralistic political system and market economy, which was especially relevant from the viewpoint of weakening and subsequent breakdown of the Soviet Bloc.

---

\* Assoc. Prof. Milan Kurucz PhD. is an Associate Professor at the Department of International Political Relations, Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Bratislava, Dolnozemská cesta 1/b, 852 35 Bratislava, Slovak Republic, e-mail: milan.kurucz@euba.sk.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2020.23.2.98-113>

American support to such processes was also symbolically confirmed by the visit of President George H. W. Bush in June 1989. From the economic viewpoint, the inflow of US investments that strongly contributed to the development of a stagnating economy played an important role even though the direct economic aid was by far lagging behind Hungarian expectations. In the 1990s, Hungary acquired a strategic importance for the USA due to events in the then Yugoslavia and military interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, later, due to the conflict in Kosovo. Even before becoming the NATO member state, the Hungarian government rented its air base in the South-West of Hungary to the United States, which used it for its military engagement in the Western Balkans. After the end of the conflict in the area and shift of US attention, especially after attacks at New York Twin Towers, towards the Middle East and Asia, the intensity of Hungarian-American political relations weakened. The cooperation in the area of security was continuously developing, especially thanks to Hungarian participation in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The most complicated period of Hungarian-American relations started in 2010. After winning the parliamentary elections, FIDESZ led by **Viktor Orbán** carried out a whole range of substantial changes in the political system of the country. At the same time, certain significant corrections to the foreign policy were also made. The Obama administration responded to that development in a very critical manner and relations between the countries cooled down significantly. **Viktor Orbán's** government had big hopes for reversing the trend in bilateral relations when **Donald Trump** took the office of the President in 2017 and a whole range of events indicate that it is slowly happening. This process, however, does not need to be straightforward and it can be influenced by several diverging foreign policy interests of the two countries. The aim of the article is to examine differences of these two periods of Hungarian-American relations.

## **1 Undermined liberal democracy in Hungary and responses of Obama administration**

After its two-third majority win in parliamentary elections in 2010, FIDESZ started to push through a whole range of legislative acts, including adoption of a new constitution in order to make use of the acquired constitutional majority to strengthen its own power positions. These measures which undermined the separation of power, independence of media and the impartiality of the civil service led to the authoritarian turn (Rupnick, 2018, 25).

Those steps caused negative reactions from EU, OSCE, Council of Europe, as well as United States. During her visit to Budapest in the summer of 2011, the then Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** pointed out at the necessity to strengthen democratic institutions in Hungary, including the system of checks and balances. She expressed her concerns about the independence of the judicial system, freedom of speech and transparent government (Arshad, 2011). In October 2011, the then US Ambassador **Eleni Tsakoupoulos Kounalakis** handed over a demarche to **Viktor Orbán** containing American reservations to steps threatening independence of the judicial system and changes in the election act. At the end of the same year, the Secretary of the State sent a letter to the Hungarian Prime Minister, in which she expressed her regrets over the fact that the objections of the USA, as well as a whole range of international institutions, were not reflected in the text of legislation. She called upon the Prime Minister to consider consequences if the acts coming into force at the beginning of 2012 without a change (Hillary Clinton levele Orbán Viktornak, 2011).

The Hungarian government responded to the pressure of the EU and the USA concerning certain acts and the constitution in the form of partial modifications of the media act and the act on retirement of judges, however, without affecting the subject-matter of adopted legislation. Application of certain reservations of the EU then served in continuing disputes with the USA as an argument that the criticised legislation was in line with European legal regulations. In any case, the repeatedly declared American reservations concerning the state of democracy in Hungary survived until the end of the **Barak Obama** administration.

The Hungarian-American relations became especially tense in 2014, it could even be said that they reached their bottom level. The US Department of State put, on the list of persons who are not welcome in the USA, several Hungarian citizens who were state officials, including the then chairwoman of the National Tax and Customs Administration (NAV), due to their alleged participation in corruption activities (with American companies operating in Hungary that were allegedly aggrieved parties). She filed a criminal complaint against the then chargé d'affaires **André Goodfriend** for defamation and the prosecutor general office subsequently requested the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request American authorities to remove his diplomatic immunity. After **Goodfriend** took part in a demonstration against introduction of the internet tax, some politicians from FIDESZ even proposed to declare him *persona non grata*.

President **Barak Obama**, commented on the internal political situation in Hungary only once, in connection to attacks at non-governmental organisations, however, in a rather broader international context. In his speech at the Clinton Global Initiative, he pointed out at never-ending regulations and open intimidation of the civil society from Hungary to Egypt (Remarks by the President at Clinton Global Initiative, 2014).

After the ambassador **Colleen Bell** took her office in January 2015, certain indications of improvement of relations occurred and Hungarian officials appreciated activities of the American diplomat. However, in her speech at the Corvinus University, she repeated the criticism of weakening principles of democracy and referred to corruption in Hungary, which caused huge disappointment in Budapest (Dési, 2015).

The Hungarian government was trying to improve its relations with the USA, however, without any significant changes in its internal policy. It was trying to lobby in order to achieve a shift in attitudes of US Government and Congress (Field, 2015). However, these activities did not bring any clearly visible results during the Obama administration.

Orbán's policy was not only heading towards weakening of the principles of functioning of the rule of law but it even declared extension of economic and political contacts to the East. The two lines are, however, not isolated from each other, but reflect the mutual interconnectedness of changes in the internal politics and their global context. In his speech at the meeting of Hungarian ambassadors shortly after the victory in 2010 elections, **Viktor Orbán** talked about a rising new world order, in which the Western world is getting increasingly weaker. (Új világrendről beszélt Orbán Viktor, 2010).

Based on such formulated background, the Hungarian government has been trying, since 2010, to expand its economic as well as political manoeuvring room beyond the borders of the Euro-Atlantic world. In 2012, the Hungarian government adopted the strategy of external economic relations, focused on geographic diversification of the country's exports to growing Asian economies, with a special attention paid to deepening economic relations with Russia and China. That eastern policy is also referred to as preparation for a new, multipolar international order (Bernek, 2018).

FIDESZ changed its attitude towards Russia and Hungarian-Russian relations, which was extraordinarily reserved during his first government term on the verge of the millennia as well as later on. Hungarian-Russian political contacts were substantially enhanced and Orbán-Putin meetings became a

regular practice. In 2014, the bilateral treaty on the build-up of two new nuclear units in the Paks power plant was signed, including Russian loan in the amount of EUR 10 billion, which was supposed to cover 80% of the total investment (Aalto et al, 2017, 402)

Development of Hungarian-Chinese relations became an important element of the declared Eastern policy. In 2011, **Wen Jiabao**, then Prime Minister of China, made a visit to Budapest, during which, a whole range of agreements on cooperation was signed, including investment projects. In 2014, Hungary signed an agreement with China and Serbia on modernising the railway track Budapest-Belgrade, which should be used to transport Chinese goods from Greek port of Piraeus to Western Europe.

However, the issue of eastern policy was also related to looking for models of effective political system and economy such as in Singapore, China, India and Turkey. It was important motivation for taking the concept of illiberal democracy as a main characteristic of the regime created by **Viktor Orbán** and his party. Hungarian Prime Minister considered liberal democracy only one option among others, which is incapable to defend the national interest (Rupnick, 2018, 26). Of course, such looking for new, not liberal political models has its consequences in both, national politics as well as in foreign policy attitudes.

The American dissatisfaction with the course of events in Hungary cannot be separated from the situation in Eastern Europe. The military conflict between Georgia and Russia in the summer of 2008 showed that the European and Caucasian part of the post-Soviet territory was gaining in importance and also influenced Central Europe, which was, with final effect, confirmed by the conflict in the East of the Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. During the Obama administration, the region became a tertiary issue for the USA. Thanks to the Ukraine, Central Europe got back to the mental map of Washington-based politicians (Magyarics, 2015).

The development in Central Europe, including that in Hungary, acquired again importance in the broader geopolitical dimension. **Wess Mitchell**, who became the Assistance Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs in the Trump administration, called attention to this fact already back in 2014. He pointed out that as a result of the Ukraine crisis, Central Europe can take the position it deserves among geopolitically significant areas where local events have impact on the global distribution of power (Mitchell, 2014).

After 2010, Hungary was trying to pursue the policy of manoeuvring between relevant geopolitical players in order to get the maximum benefit from that “game” for itself. In changing regional as well as global conditions, with a growing intensity of competition between the powers, it could hardly be expected that efforts for multi-dimensional foreign policy will remain without any response. What was deemed by Hungarian politics as the need for bigger manoeuvring space was perceived by the USA and other NATO and EU member states as penetration of Russia and China to Central Europe with the goal to weaken internal cohesion of the EU and NATO. Experts report on NATO's new strategic concept already in 2010 identified threats to Alliance cohesion in the increasing complexity of the global political environment and the need to strengthen the solidarity of its members (NATO 2020: Assured security; Dynamic engagement, 2010, 6)

In the period from 2010 to 2016, political contacts between Hungary and the USA were gradually but significantly limited, which was expression of the dissatisfaction with the fact that Hungary failed to implement practical measures in response to US criticism and, at the same time, one of the forms of pressure to achieve changes in Hungarian internal and foreign policy. The Obama administration continued the democracy tradition of US foreign policy, linked and reinterpreted with its strategic interests (Bouchet, 2011, 573). In this context of values and interests, it assessed Hungary's internal policy and its foreign policy implications.

## **2 Changes in US-Hungary relations under Trump administration**

As Orbán's government did not manage to achieve at least minimum improvement of relations with the democratic administration during six years, the chance to change bilateral relations was only connected to the new government composition in Washington. Statements of **Donald Trump** as the Republican opponent **Hillary Clinton**, on no further use of the export of democracy as the policy that led to an inflow of immigrants from Africa and approach to migration as security threat indicated that, after his election, it would be possible to expect certain corrections of the US foreign policy that can be beneficial for Hungary. Therefore, in contradiction with generally accepted practices, **Viktor Orbán** openly supported **Donald Trump** already during the Presidential campaign.

After the victory of the Republican candidate, the Hungarian government expected a U-turn from the policy of the Democratic administration. It considered the taking the office by the new President as the visible representation of the battle between global elites and patriotic national leaders and referred to Hungary as a pre-runner in this race that was receiving increasingly more recognition thanks to its endurance (Orbán Viktor beszéde, 2017). **Viktor Orbán** found electing **Donald Trump** to be the decisive factor of formation of a sort of global nationalistic flow with Hungary being its pioneer and part of it. Restart of Hungarian-American relations was considered by Budapest also on basis of similar ideological attitudes of both administrations.

The first important step in restoring bilateral political cooperation at the high level was the meeting of Foreign Ministers of Hungary and the United States in Washington (eight years after the last preceding one), which was referred to by the Hungarian government as a great success. Negotiations showed that, in mutual relations, the USA will put emphasis on security and geopolitical issues, including energy diversity, even though the American part pointed at the importance of civil society (Secretary Pompeo's meeting with Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijjarto, 2018). Additionally, statements and first steps of **David Cornstein**, the new ambassador to Budapest signalled that, after the effort of preceding administration to minimise relations with Hungary, there is a real change in the American approach with the goal of getting Budapest involved into implementation of American strategic goals. In his interview for Bloomberg news, the ambassador mentioned that it was a US priority to strengthen Hungarian commitment towards NATO and turn it into a wall against Russian and Chinese influence. He stated that in the case of differences in opinions, it is necessary to treat allies with respect and friendship (Simon, 2018).

Already back in 2017, the Central European University (CEU) appeared as the problematic point of the agenda of bilateral relations, at least in official American statements. The Hungarian Parliament adopted the act on universities that, in fact, made further activities of the university in Hungary impossible. Paradoxically, the problem with the CEU caused more intense reactions in the EU than in American administration, which, most likely, is also connected to the massive support of **George Soros** to Presidential candidacy of **Hillary Clinton** and his criticism of **Trump's** opinion.

In December 2018, the US government made a statement expressing a disappointment that there had been no agreement signed between the

Hungarian government and the CEU enabling the university to continue in teaching programs accredited in the United States in Hungary. Nevertheless, **Trump** administration made no practical steps to support that statement (Hungary: Central European university, 2018).

The course of development of Hungarian-American relations after **Donald Trump** took the office confirmed the perception of the President as an idiosyncratic realist who “downplays democracy as a source of American soft power” (Nye, 2019, 68). The USA started to put main emphasis on the power and geopolitical aspects of its foreign policy. The National Security Strategy adopted in 2017 identifies the contest for power as the determining trend of development of international relations and refers to Russia and China as revisionist powers and main opponents of the USA that, together with Iran, North Korea and jihadist terrorist groups, are trying to weaken the leading position of the United States in the world while pushing through their influence at both regional and global level (National Security Strategy, 2017).

While during the Obama administration the Hungarian politics were in the relations with the USA facing requirements for restoration of certain fundamental liberal democracy principle, the Trump administration refers directly to risks of closer relations with Russia and China. During his official visit to Hungary in February 2019, the US Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo** warned of Putin's efforts to put a stop block between the USA and Hungary and its friends. He pointed out at the threat of Chinese influence, including security risks connected to activities of Huawei and warned that if its equipment works where critical American systems are deployed, it will make cooperation between the United States and Hungary more complicated. However, in his response, the Hungarian Foreign Minister defended cooperation with Russia and China claiming that it posed no threat to the reliability of his country as a partner to NATO and the USA (Press availability Michael R. Pompeo..., 2019). The above statements clearly indicate the obstacles Hungary will have to face in the effort to develop political relations with the USA at a substantially higher level than during President **Obama's** term. The Hungarian strategy of manoeuvring between superpowers will be constantly confronted to the current American policy focused on pushing China and Russia out of Central Europe. Even after such warnings, Hungary is not about to rethink its economic and political relations with both Eastern powers

In Budapest, reception of **Viktor Orbán** in the White House in May 2019 is considered to be a definitive confirmation of a new phase in the Hungarian-US

relations. Before bilateral meeting, **Donald Trump** did not emphasize an importance of democracy but appreciated steps of Hungary to ensure its security (Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Orbán..., 2019). Highlighting the question of security in context of migration crisis is confirmation of a fact that standpoints of both countries in this question are identical or very close. For **Viktor Orbán** is such official American attitude extremely important mainly in connection with his dispute with Brussels. On the other hand, Hungarian Prime Minister's journey to the United States was above all of regional framework and was only a part of series of visits of Visegrád representatives who had received invitation from **Donald Trump**. From a side of Washington, despite certain personal sympathies between the two politicians, it is not a signal of special relationships with Budapest. It is continuation of efforts of the USA to strengthen their presence in Central Europe, and that is why it is hard to envisage the present Washington administration would withdraw its reservations given by **Mike Pompeo** concerning relations of Hungary with China and Russia.

### **3 Defence Cooperation**

In evaluation of bilateral relations, both government puts special emphasis on long-term successful development of security and defence cooperation, in particular, participation of Hungarian units in NATO operations. Until now, it has not made any significant purchase of US military equipment. In 2001, the then Orbán's government preferred leasing of Swedish Gripen fighter planes to the purchase of American F16s in its process of modernisation of air force. An order for purchase of helicopters was recently won by a German company. Obviously, also for this reason, during the visit of Secretary **Pompeo** there was the intention to purchase American mid-range missiles for the air defence system announced there, as a certain positive sign towards the USA.

While the Hungarian government warmly welcomed preferring national interests and patriotism in the foreign policy philosophy of **Donald Trump** as a shared mind-set basis for approximation of both countries, negotiations about the Defence Cooperation Agreement showed that the principle in particular situations of bilateral relations does not need to act harmonically, especially when partners define their national interest in different ways. After one and half years of negotiations, the Hungarian part had principal reservations to certain parts of the Agreement as proposed by the USA because, in its opinion, they

would violate the country's constitution and sovereignty. The sensitive points of the disputable document for Hungary were movement of American troops in the country without the approval of the parliament, them crossing borders without border control. The preparation of the Agreement was eventually successfully completed during the **Mike Pompeo's** visit to Hungary.

The Defence Cooperation Agreement was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs **Péter Szijjártó** and Assistant Secretary of State of the USA **John Sullivan** on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NATO. The signing of the agreement was also made possible by the transfer of American military aid in the amount of 55 million USD, which is a part of the European Deterrence Initiative and that money should be used to reconstruct the military airport in Kecskemét.

Relations of Hungary and Ukraine and their negative impact on contacts of Kyiv with NATO became part of the bilateral Hungarian-American agenda. For the United States, Ukraine has been, in the long run, the object of its strategic interest and, after annexation of Crimea and break-up of the conflict in East Ukraine, its importance multiplied.

Hungary has been judging its relations to the Ukraine not only in the context of geopolitical circumstances but also (even above all) from the viewpoint of the position of the Hungarian ethnic minority in the Transcarpathian region with the population of 150,000. Already back in 1991, Hungary signed a declaration on the rights of minorities and the agreement on friendship and cooperation with the Ukraine. In those documents, both parties undertook to mutually respect their borders and rights on ethnic minorities.

Hungarians living abroad are defined in the Hungarian Constitution as part of the unified Hungarian nation and the support to Hungarian minorities and pushing through their rights is considered as inextricable part of the Hungarian national interest. Therefore, when the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the act on education that limited teaching in languages other than the Ukrainian only to the first stage of the primary school, it caused harsh criticism in Hungary (as well as in other countries whose minorities live in the Ukraine) and the request to repeal or amend the law. When Hungarian diplomatic protests failed to lead to the requested changes and the disputed provisions of the act have not been amended according to recommendation of the Venice Commission yet, Budapest blocked negotiations of the North-Atlantic Council with the Ukraine at the level of ministers; both in 2017 and in 2018 (that veto did not apply to meetings at the level of ambassadors). Hungary's attitude weakened NATO -

Ukraine cooperation and also negatively influenced the Alliance's cohesion.

The United States tried to mediate the dispute between the two countries. In January 2018, a meeting was held with attendance of Assistance Secretary of State **Wess Mitchell**, Minister **Péter Szijjártó** and Minister **Pavlo Klimkin**, however, without any tangible results. Due to the strictness of the Hungarian position, it was clear that overcoming the impasse in this respect will, to a large extent, depend on the willingness and readiness of the Ukrainian government and parliament to amend the criticised act in line with international recommendations. Just following the presidential elections in Ukraine, there has been a positive shift on this issue. This allowed the NATO-Ukraine Commission to meet in Kyiv and to issue the statement, in which Ukraine committed itself to implementing the recommendations and conclusions of the Venice Commission on the Education Act (Statement of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, 2019).

Assuming the strong interest of the USA to strengthen relations between Ukraine and NATO, it is possible to expect that American officials will continue making effort to convince both parties of the dispute to accept mutually acceptable solution.

## **4 Energy sector in Hungarian-American relations under Trump administration**

From the viewpoint of development of Hungarian-American relations, Trump administration pays extraordinary attention to the energy sector, which is connected to the general effort to weaken economic and political influence of Russia in Central Europe as the main exporter of the natural gas as well as investments to nuclear power plants. These matters already appeared in the bilateral agenda of Hungary and the USA during the Obama administration; in particular, with regard to Hungary's problematic participation in the South Stream pipeline project. By its implementation, Russia wanted to achieve mainly geopolitical goals. One of them was the exclusion of Ukraine from the transit of gas to Europe and thus putting economic pressure on this country (Vihma, Turksen, 2015, 41). After all, Russia cancelled the project following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent EU sanctions.

A new fact influencing foreign policy intentions and activities of the USA concerning the energy sector and, above all, the natural gas, is the substantial change of their position in the global market with this strategic raw material. In 2011, the USA overtook Russia in the natural gas extraction and became its

biggest producer in the world and, in 2016, 50% of the total extracted volume was made by the shale gas (Grigas, 2017, 12) That made it possible for President Trump to apply his policy of energy superpower, which also includes refusing Russian projects such as Nord Stream 2 and Turkish Stream and the political support to the export of liquefied gas to Europe (Mitrova, Boersma, 2018).

Hungary is, to large extent, dependent on imports of energy sources and, in particular, of the natural gas. It covers 80% of its consumption by imports from Russia (National energy strategy 2030, 2012). The high level of dependence of one source poses an economic and security risk. The build-up of Nord Stream 2 pipeline causes problems to the transit of gas across the Ukraine – route through which the gas is transported to Hungary. The USA is still very intensively pushing on Hungary to diversify its sources. However, there is limited room and scope of solutions to implement that in a short-term horizon and they are not in line with American expectations and interests.

Possible supplies of American liquefied gas depend on the build-up of a terminal in Rijeka, Croatia. From the Hungarian viewpoint, also the price of the liquefied gas is a difficulty as it is more expensive than the price of the natural gas from Russian deposits. Hungary cannot import gas from a second non-Russian source either because American-based company ExxonMobil has not started extraction in Black Sea deposit in Romania yet. According to the official Hungarian statement, unless the American company decides to commence the extraction works until September 2019, Budapest will be forced to initiate negotiations with Russia on long-term supplies of the gas. (Exxon's decision could influence Hungarian gas import, 2019)

However, Hungary, already back in 2017, signed an agreement with Russian Gazprom on connecting Hungary to the Turkish Stream pipeline, which was supposed to be completed by the end of 2019. It seems that the United States cannot provide Hungary, for now, with such commercial and technical solution, which will ensure supplies of the natural gas from an alternative source and thus correspond to its geopolitical interests in Central Europe.

## **Conclusion**

Hungarian-American relations, after six years of significantly limited political contacts and sometimes sharp exchange of opinions set out on a new trajectory after victory of **Donald Trump** in 2016 Presidential elections. The coming

together of the two countries was strongly based on the similar understanding of the foreign policy starting points based on unilateral preference of its own national interests at the expense of multilateral cooperation and refusal of migration. It was strongly influenced by the resignation to push through liberal democracy by means of the foreign policy, which was deemed by **Barack Obama** as an important instrument of American soft power. That also put to the side a very significant dispute between Hungary and the USA concerning the American criticism of constitutional changes in Hungary that materially weakened the system of checks and balances in the country's political system.

The development of Hungarian-American relations was, to a large and we can say decisive extent, influenced by the return of the United States to Central Europe, its perception of the region in the context of global rivalry with Russia and China as its main economic and military competitors and its effort to stop the growing influence of those powers in the area. It is the principal motivation of intensifying political contacts as well as the defence cooperation of the USA and Hungary and other countries of the region.

However, due to the geopolitical interest of the United States, Hungary has found itself facing a serious dilemma as it considers the development of relations with China and Russia an important part of its commercial and foreign policy. Effort of the **Viktor Orbán's** government to manoeuvre among superpowers in order to acquire maximum benefit will, most likely, complicate its relations with the USA. While, during the Obama administration, bilateral relations got stuck due to matters concerning liberal democracy (even though with a geopolitical background), during the Trump administration, if Hungary keeps its current foreign policy strategy, geopolitical matters can become the immediate cause of difficulties in relations between the two countries.

### References:

- AALTO, P., NYSSÖNEN, H, KOJO, M. 2017. Russian nuclear energy diplomacy in Finland and Hungary. In *Euroasian geography and economy*, Vol. 58, No 3, ISSN 1538-7216, pp. 386-417. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2017.1396905>
- ARSHAD, M. 2011. *Clinton concerned about democratic freedoms in Hungary*. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-12]. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-clinton/clinton-concerned-about-democratic-freedoms-in-hungary-idUSTRE75T2IY20110630>

- BERNEK, Á. 2018. Hazánk keleti nyitás politikája és a 21. századi geopolitikai stratégiái összefüggései. In *Külügyi Szemle*, Vol. 17, No. 2, ISSN 1587-9089, pp. 122-144
- BOUCHET, N. 2011. Barack Obama's democracy promotion at midterm. In *International journal of human rights*, Vol. 15, Issue 4, ISSN 1364 – 2987, pp. 572-588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2011.569232>
- DÉSI, A. 2015. „Útelágazáshoz ért a magyar-amerikai viszony“. [online]. Accessed on 2019-02-12]. Available at: <http://nol.hu/belfold/utelagazashoz-ert-a-magyar-amerikai-viszony-1573331>
- Exxon's decisions could influence Hungarian gas import.* 2019. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-05-20]. Available at: <https://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-and-trade/news/exxon-s-decision-could-influence-hungarian-gas-imports>
- GRIGAS, A. 2017. *A natural gas diplomacy for the new US administration.* [online]. Accessed on 2019-04-20]. Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/a-natural-gas-diplomacy-for-the-new-us-administration/>
- Hillary Clinton levele Orbán Viktornak. Itt a teljes szöveg.* 2011. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-12]. Available at: <https://parameter.sk/rovat/kulfold/2011/12/30/hillary-clinton-levele-orban-viktornak-itt-teljes-szoveg>
- Hungary: Central European University. Press Statement.* 2018. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-03-08]. Available at <https://www.state.gov/hungary-central-european-university-ceu/>
- FIELD, R, 2015. *Former US congressman Connie Mack paid \$ 5 million to lobby for Hungary* [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-16]. Available at: <https://budapestbeacon.com/former-us-congressman-connie-mack-paid-5-million-to-lobby-for-hungary/>
- MAGYARICS, T. 2015. An unsentimental look at the geopolitics of Central Europe – part 2. In *Hungarian Review*, Vol. 6, NO 3. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-28]. Available at: [http://www.hungarianreview.com/article/20150514\\_an\\_unsentimental\\_look\\_at\\_the\\_geopolitics\\_of\\_central\\_europe\\_part\\_2](http://www.hungarianreview.com/article/20150514_an_unsentimental_look_at_the_geopolitics_of_central_europe_part_2)
- MITCHELL, A. W. 2014. Central Europe – cooperation in a cold climate. In *Hungarian Review*, Vol. 5, NO 3. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-28]. Available at: [http://www.hungarianreview.com/article/20140513\\_central\\_europe\\_cooperation\\_in\\_a\\_cold\\_climate](http://www.hungarianreview.com/article/20140513_central_europe_cooperation_in_a_cold_climate)

- MITROVA, T., BOERSMA, T. 2018. *The impact of US LNG on Russian natural gas export*. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-04-20]. Available at: [https://energypolicy.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/pictures/Gazprom%20vs%20US%20LNG\\_CGEP\\_Report\\_121418\\_2.pdf](https://energypolicy.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/pictures/Gazprom%20vs%20US%20LNG_CGEP_Report_121418_2.pdf)
- National energy strategy 2030*. Ministry of National Development, Hungary. 2012. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-04-24]. Available at: [http://www.terport.hu/webfm\\_send/2658](http://www.terport.hu/webfm_send/2658)
- National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. 2017. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-03-08]. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>
- NATO 2020: Assured security; Dynamic engagement*. 2010, [online]. [Accessed on 2019-12-20]. Available at: <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/expertsreport.pdf>
- NYE, J. S. JR. 2019. The rise and fall of American hegemony from Wilson to Trump. In *International Affairs*, Vol. 95, Issue 1, ISSN 0020-5850, pp. 63-80. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiy212>
- Press availability Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Budapest, Hungary, February 11, 2019*. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-15]. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/press-availability-with-hungarian-foreign-minister-peter-szijjarto/>
- Remarks by the President at Clinton Global Initiative*. 2014. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-16]. Available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/23/remarks-president-clinton-global-initiative>
- Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Orbán of Hungary before bilateral meeting*. 2019. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-05-21] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-prime-minister-orban-hungary-bilateral-meeting/>
- RUPNICK, J. 2018. Explaining Eastern Europe crisis of liberalism. In *Journal of democracy*, Vol. 29, Issue 3, ISSN 1045 5736, pp. 24-38. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0042>
- Secretary Pompeo's meeting with Hungarian Foreign Minister Szijjarto*. 2018. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-03-06]. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/secretary-pompeos-meeting-with-hungarian-foreign-minister-szijjarto/>

- SIMON, Z. 2018. *EU's populist Icon Orban wins Trump's attention in U.S. reversal.* [online]. [Accessed on 2019-03-08]. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-15/trump-s-embrace-of-populist-rulers-expanding-to-hungary-s-orban>
- Statement of the NATO – Ukraine Commission, Kyiv 31 October 2019.* [online]. [Accessed on 2019-11-16]. Available at: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_170408.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_170408.htm)
- Új világrendről beszélt Orbán Viktor.* 2010. [online]. [Accessed on 2019-02-18]. Available at: [http://nol.hu/kulfold/uj\\_vilagrendrol\\_beszelt\\_orban\\_viktor-789901](http://nol.hu/kulfold/uj_vilagrendrol_beszelt_orban_viktor-789901)
- VIHMA, A., TURKSEN, U. 2015. The geoeconomics of the South Stream pipeline project. In *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 69, NO 1, ISSN 0022197X, pp. 34-53