

Hungary in NATO: Alliance Integration and the Revival of the National Defence Industry

Norbert Szári
Konrád Gazdag

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Norbert Szári

Norbert Szári graduated from Pázmány Péter Catholic University in 2010, majoring in History and German Studies. During his university studies he received a scholarship to the Karl Ruprecht University, Heidelberg. Between 2014 and 2018 he worked as a researcher at The Committee of National Remembrance in Budapest. Since 2022 he has been studying at the Doctoral School of Military Science at the Ludovika University of Public Service in Budapest. His interests include military science, geopolitics and security policy. His dissertation focuses on the geopolitical challenges facing Hungary and East Central Europe in the twenty-first century.

Konrád Gazdag

Konrád Gazdag is currently undertaking an internship at the Danube Institute.

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Introduction

The geopolitical realignment following the end of the Cold War fundamentally altered Central Europe's security environment¹. Breaking away from the legacy of the Warsaw Pact, Hungary turned towards Euro-Atlantic integration, one of its most significant milestones being its accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). On March 12, 1999, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland officially became members of the alliance—a historic step that not only provided security guarantees but also marked the beginning of a new era of European unity and cooperation². As last year marked the 25th anniversary of this event, it is particularly fitting to reflect on this process and evaluate the contributions of the region's states to the alliance's mission and values.

In the period leading up to accession, Hungary and its regional partners implemented ambitious political, economic, and military reforms. Through these efforts, they not only demonstrated their commitment to democratic values, a market economy, and European integration but also gradually aligned their institutional, technical, and strategic systems with NATO standards³. Thus, entry into the Euro-Atlantic community was not merely a foreign policy goal but the culmination of a profound socio-political transformation.

Over the past two decades, Hungary's NATO membership has become a cornerstone of its national security policy, while the perception of the obligations and opportunities stemming from membership has continuously evolved in response to international and domestic developments. The outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022 fundamentally reshaped Europe's security architecture, prompting a re-evaluation of Hungary's strategic significance within NATO's eastern flank. As Lieutenant General Nicola Zanelli, Deputy Commander of NATO's Allied Land Command, stated: "Hungary, due to its geographical position, plays a key role in the alliance's eastern flank."⁴ Once again, issues of collective defense have become central to security policy discussions, necessitating a thorough analysis of Hungary's role and contributions. As General Philippe Lavigne, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, recently noted: "In a world where our adversaries aim for chaos, NATO has ensured peace for 75 years."⁵

This statement encapsulates NATO's self-perception as a force for stability and security. However, it is also worth highlighting that the alliance is primarily a military organization that, over recent decades—especially in the post-Cold War era—has actively shaped the security environment through its gradual eastward expansion. This dynamic is perceived by certain international actors, particularly Russia, as

¹HILLEN, John – NOONAN, Michael P. (1998): 'The Geopolitics of NATO Enlargement', *Parameters* 28(3), 21-34, doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1896.

²Allied Air Command Public Affairs Office: 'On this day 25 years ago, Czechia, Hungary and Poland joined Nato'. *NATO Allied Aircom* (12 March 2024) https://ac.nato.int/archive/2024/CZE_HUN_POL-25-years-NATO accessed: 6.5.2025.

³CAPARINI, Helen: 'Security sector reform and NATO and EU enlargement', *SIPRI Yearbook* 2003. 237-260.

⁴KÁLMÁNFI, Tibor: 'Hungary is an important bulwark in NATO's eastern flank' *Defence.hu* (20 November 2023) <https://defence.hu/news/hungary-is-an-important-bulwark-on-nato-s-eastern-flank.html> accessed: 7.5.2025.

⁵Allied Command Transformation Public Affairs Office: 'Allied Command Transformation Celebrates 25 Years: Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland's NATO Alliance Membership', *ACT Public Affairs Office* (15 March 2025) <https://www.act.nato.int/article/25-years-of-czech-republic-hungary-poland/> accessed: 7.5.2025.

expansionism and strategic pressure, contributing to heightened security tensions in Europe⁶. While this does not undermine NATO's contribution to collective defense, it illustrates that even the concept of "peacekeeping" is subject to political interpretation.

Simultaneously, national defense capabilities and, in particular, military-industrial autonomy have gained renewed significance. In military terms, strategic autonomy cannot be separated from industrial capacities—genuine independence can only be achieved when key military technologies, such as combat vehicles, reconnaissance, and control systems, originate from domestic or allied development. However, not every capability requires full self-sufficiency; certain assets—such as logistics or technologies with civilian applications—can be sourced from the global market⁷. Thus, military-industrial development carries not only security but also economic importance—it fosters innovation, creates jobs, and strengthens national competitiveness.

One central aspect of NATO membership is the development of defense capabilities and burden-sharing. At the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, member states committed to allocating at least 2% of their GDP to defense spending by 2024—a goal that has become pivotal for Hungary as well. The manner in which these commitments are met—particularly the balance between domestic military-industrial development and foreign acquisitions—directly affects Hungary's standing and maneuverability within the alliance.

Strengthening the domestic military industry is not only a means of fulfilling NATO obligations but also a guarantee of national sovereignty and strategic autonomy. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian war highlighted the vulnerabilities of global supply chains, underscoring the importance of domestic production and supply capabilities, especially in strategic sectors⁸. Following the regime change, Hungary's military industry suffered a dramatic decline, but in the past decade, the government has set ambitious goals through the Zrínyi 2026 Defense and Force Development Program, revitalizing its military-industrial capacities⁹.

Launched in 2017, Zrínyi 2026 represents the most comprehensive reform of Hungary's defence sector since the Cold War. It introduces a multi-dimensional approach combining equipment modernization (e.g., Lynx Infantry Fighting Vehicles, Leopard 2A7+ tanks), personnel professionalization, infrastructure upgrades, and cyber capabilities. A key innovation lies in its emphasis on domestic production and strategic partnerships—especially with Germany—aimed at reducing foreign dependence and strengthening national resilience. The programme reflects Hungary's intention to build a technologically advanced and NATO-compatible force while retaining the means for independent national action.

The regional context adds further relevance to the topic, as Central European countries—Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania—are also

⁶TSYGANKOV, Andrei: 'The sources of Russia's fear of NATO', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 51 (2018), 101-111. DOI: 10.1016/j.postcomstud.2018.04.002 accessed: 6.5.2025.

⁷ZANDEE, Dick et al. 'European strategic autonomy in security and defence', *The Hague: Clingendael*(2020)

⁸NGOC, Nguyen Minh et al. 'Russia-Ukraine war and risks to global supply chains', *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering*, 7 (2022), 633-640, ISSN: 0974-5823

⁹DRAVECZKI-URY, Ádám: 'Zrínyi 2026', *Honvédelem*(16 January 2017) <https://honvedelem.hu/hirek/hazai-hirek/zrinyi-2026-2026.html> accessed: 7.5.2025.

undertaking intensive military development and modernization programs¹⁰. In this competitive environment, it is particularly important to examine the direction and effectiveness of Hungarian developments and the potential for regional cooperation.

The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive overview of the political and strategic dimensions of Hungary's NATO membership, as well as the experiences and challenges of rebuilding its domestic military industry. With this dual focus, we seek to answer the question of how defense industrial developments align with NATO obligations and how they can strengthen Hungary's maneuverability and strategic position within the Euro-Atlantic alliance system.

I. The Historical Trajectory of Hungary's NATO Membership

Following the regime change, one of Hungary's fundamental foreign and security policy objectives was to achieve Euro-Atlantic integration. The break from the Cold War alliance system, the Warsaw Pact legacy, and the strengthening of democratic institutions all encouraged a Western orientation, with one of the most important milestones being accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This decision not only provided security guarantees for a small and open country but also represented a political choice: joining the collective defense framework and the normative system of democratic governance and the rule of law.

The NATO accession process began in the mid-1990s within the Partnership for Peace program, and following political and military reforms, Hungary became a full member on March 12, 1999. This accession marked not only a foreign policy success but also the start of a profound transformation of the Hungarian Defence Forces and the defense institutional system, requiring a shift to Western-style warfare principles, compatible weapon systems, and interoperability¹¹.

The first decade of the 2000s was characterized by adaptation and increased alliance participation. Hungary actively contributed to NATO missions, serving as peacekeepers in the Balkans (SFOR, KFOR) and later in Afghanistan's ISAF operations. These missions provided practical experience and demonstrated Hungary's commitment within the alliance, aiding the modernization of its military doctrine and capabilities while presenting new challenges for policymakers¹².

The post-2010 period saw ambivalent trends. While NATO membership remained formally unquestioned, political discourse increasingly emphasized sovereignty, national interest, and a "distinctive" foreign policy¹³. Relations with the transatlantic alliance occasionally became tense, especially regarding Ukraine, where

¹⁰VARGA, Gergely: Comparative Study on the NATO and EU Relations of Central and Eastern European Nations. In Varga, Gergely (ed.), *The NATO and EU Relations of Central and Eastern European Nations*, Dialóg Campus 2020, 127-143.

¹¹SIPOSNÉ, Kecskeméthy Klára: 'Partnerség a békéért', In: Szenes, Zoltán (ed.) *NATO Partnerség 2014*, Nemzeti Közszerológálati Egyetem 2014, 21-58. ISBN 978-615-5305-81-8

¹²Országgyűlés Hivatala: 'A honvédség aktuális külföldi katonai missziói' (The Hungarian Defence Forces' Current Military Missions Abroad), *Parlament.hu* (2 October 2020) https://www.parlament.hu/documents/10181/4464848/Infojegyzet_2020_62_honvedsegi_missziok.pdf/9fe7c180-a8a9-8573-c1ed-754bca3e026a?t=1601625018866 accessed: 8.5.2025.

¹³SZÁRI, Norbert: 'Hungary and the West: Heralding the New Normal', *Danube Institute* (21 February 2025) <https://danubeinstitute.hu/hu/kutatas/hungary-and-the-west-heralding-the-new-normal> accessed: 22 February 2025

Hungary prioritized the rights of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia¹⁴. Energy policy dependence, particularly on Russia, also diverged at times from the preferences of most NATO members¹⁵.

It is important to note that NATO membership does not imply automatic alignment of interests. Periodic divergences arise from Hungary's emphasis on national sovereignty or differing foreign and economic priorities. Examples include Hungarian reservations about expanding NATO–Ukraine relations and the prolonged delay in approving Sweden's accession, attributed by Hungary to political mistrust and Swedish criticism¹⁶.

The Swedish case is particularly telling: although formally a defence matter, the delay stemmed largely from Sweden's earlier criticism of Hungary's rule-of-law and civil rights record, which Budapest interpreted as unjustified external interference. The episode illustrates how domestic political sensitivities, international perceptions, and alliance solidarity can become entangled—blurring the lines between internal governance and external strategic cooperation. Eventually, Hungary ratified Sweden's NATO accession following high-level diplomatic engagement and renewed bilateral dialogue, including a defence-industrial agreement involving the purchase of Swedish-made Gripen fighters¹⁷. The case remains a revealing example of how complex and politically charged enlargement decisions can be.

Additional tension occurred when Hungary was the sole member to block the establishment of the NATO Centre of Excellence for Resilience at the Madrid summit¹⁸, signalling Budapest's primary view of the alliance as a military rather than ideological cooperation.

Hungary's stance during the Russia-Ukraine war is characterized by cautious distance: official communication states “this is not our war,”¹⁹ with Hungary aiming primarily to maintain internal stability and peace. Nevertheless, Hungary condemned Russian aggression, supported NATO's new strategic concept, participates in alliance missions, and voted for most sanctions against Russia²⁰. This dual position – avoiding direct military involvement while fulfilling formal alliance obligations – reflects

¹⁴TÁRNOK, Balázs – FILYUK, Lyudmyla: 'Ukrainian-Hungarian Relations Throughout the Years – How to Move Forward', *International Centre for Policy Studies*, Kyiv 2020 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348357042_UkrainianHungarian_Relations_Throughout_the_Year_-_How_to_Move_Forward_International_Centre_for_Policy_Studies_Kyiv_2020 accessed: 8.5.2025.

¹⁵LAU, Stuart: 'Hungary flirts with Putin and Snubs NATO meeting', *Politico* (30 October 2024) <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-viktor-orban-flirts-vladimir-putin-snubs-nato-meeting/> accessed: 9.5.2025.

¹⁶BAYER, Lili: 'Why is Orbán blocking Sweden's Entry to Nato – and what happens next?', *Guardian* (24 January 2024) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/24/why-is-orban-blocking-swedens-entry-to-nato-and-what-happens-next> accessed: 9.5.2025.

¹⁷HIGGINS, Andrews: 'Orban Gives Green Light to Sweden's NATO Bid', *New York Times* (23 February 2024) <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/23/world/europe/sweden-hungary-nato.html> accessed: 15.6.2025.

¹⁸DESIDERO, Andrew et al. 'Hungary is being another NATO Budapest', *Politico* (28 June 2025) <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2022/06/28/hungary-is-being-another-nato-budapest-00042773> accessed: 9.5.2025.

¹⁹ORBÁN, Viktor: 'This is not our war', *Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister* (1 April 2022) <https://2015-2022.miniszterelnok.hu/this-is-not-our-war/> accessed: 10.5.2025.

²⁰LIBOREIRO, Jorge: 'Hungary drops veto and agrees to prolong EU sanctions on Russian individuals', *Euronews* (14 March 2025) <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/03/14/hungary-drops-veto-and-agrees-to-prolong-eu-sanctions-on-russian-individuals> accessed: 11.5.2025.

Hungary's balancing act between national interest representation and NATO commitment.

At the same time, Hungary is actively opposing Ukraine's accession to both NATO and the European Union, citing concerns over minority rights, regional security risks, and increasingly, economic interests. The Hungarian government, along with several regional actors such as Polish agricultural lobbies, has raised alarm over the potential impact of Ukrainian agricultural imports on domestic and regional markets. The issue reflects broader anxieties within Central and Eastern Europe about the structural implications of Ukraine's integration. Tensions further escalated in May 2025, when Ukraine accused Hungary of operating a covert intelligence network on its territory, leading to mutual diplomatic expulsions²¹. These developments highlight the fragile relationship between the two countries and add further complexity to Hungary's strategic positioning within the alliance.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine created a fundamentally new situation. Collective defense –Article 5 of the NATO treaty–regained strategic importance, and strengthening the eastern flank became a priority. In this context, Hungary's geopolitical location and the development of its logistical and defense infrastructure returned to the center of alliance planning. In 2022, NATO decided to establish a multinational battle group in Hungary as part of the enhanced forward presence on the eastern flank. This not only contributes to deterrence but also signals Hungary's active and reliable partnership in maintaining Euro-Atlantic security. Plans to upgrade the battle group to brigade size²² are underway, potentially increasing Hungary's strategic weight in the region²³. While Hungary maintains certain foreign policy particularities, it clearly participates actively in collective defense efforts, including missions, airspace protection, and training programs²⁴. Hungary's contribution manifests itself in three key operational domains:

- *NATO Peacekeeping and Reconstruction Missions* – Hungarian troops have served in Kosovo (KFOR), Afghanistan (as part of ISAF), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (SFOR), often focusing on infrastructure support and medical assistance.
- *Air Policing* – Since joining the Alliance, Hungary has participated in NATO Air Policing, notably taking the lead in the Baltic Air Policing mission in Lithuania (2015 and 2019), deploying Gripen fighters and support personnel to intercept unknown aircraft.²⁵ Hungary has also contributed to Croatia's airspace defence in recent years

²¹ LOWE, Christian – SZAKÁCS, Gergely: 'Hungary, Ukraine each expel two diplomats in espionage row', *Reuters* (9 May 2025) <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-it-uncovered-hungarian-spy-network-2025-05-09/>

²² In NATO terms, a battle group typically consists of 800 to 1,200 soldiers, whereas a brigade comprises 3,000 to 5,000 troops, depending on national standards and structure. In the Hungarian context, this upgrade would mean a more permanent and autonomous unit with expanded support, logistics, and combat capabilities—thus signalling a major increase in military commitment and regional presence.

²³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization: 'NATO's military presence in the east of the Alliance', (6 March 2025) https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm accessed: 11.5.2025.

²⁴ HORVÁTH, Sebestyén – CSENGER, Ádám: 'Hungary is a reliable NATO member and partner in peacekeeping', *Oeconomus Economic Research Foundation* (16 July 2024) <https://www.oeconomus.hu/en/oecofocus/hungary-is-a-reliable-nato-member-and-partner-in-peacekeeping/> accessed: 9.5.2025.

²⁵ Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania: 'Hungary took the the lead of NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic states conducted from Šiauliai', *kam.lt* (1 May 2019) <https://kam.lt/en/hungary->

• *Training and Exercises* – Hungarian forces regularly host and participate in NATO-led activities, including the large-scale Steadfast Defender 24 exercise held in January–May 2024 on Hungarian territory²⁶; the multinational medical exercise Vigorous Warrior & Clean Care 2024 at Bakonykúti Training Area²⁷; and U.S.–Hungarian bilateral training like Load Diffuser 17²⁸ and air-to-air/ground integration at Kecskemét and Pápa Air Bases²⁹.

These ongoing contributions illustrate Hungary's sustained commitment to NATO, demonstrating interoperability, readiness, and regional solidarity—despite political divergences at the diplomatic level.

Overall, Hungary's first quarter-century of NATO membership reveals a dual pattern: steadfast operational engagement on the one hand, and selective political alignment on the other. While Hungary has proven itself as a reliable contributor to collective defence efforts, its foreign policy particularities and strategic positioning reflect an ongoing desire to balance Euro-Atlantic commitments with the preservation of national autonomy.

The next chapter examines how this strategic ambiguity—oscillating between loyalty and leverage—can be interpreted in light of Hungary's national interests amid a shifting European security landscape.

II. The Relationship between National Interest and NATO Membership

In today's geopolitical environment, the relationship between national interest and alliance obligations is not only a matter of security policy, but also one of strategic identity. As the global balance of power continues to shift, an increasing number of states aspire not merely to be subordinate actors within their alliance systems, but rather to serve as stabilizing regional actors—so-called *keystone states*³⁰. From this perspective, Hungary does not merely seek to implement transatlantic expectations, but aims to play a balancing and mediating role at the intersection of Eastern and Western interests, thereby expanding its strategic room for manoeuvre and

[took-the-lead-of-the-nato-air-policing-mission-in-the-baltic-states-conducted-from-siauliai/?utm_source=chatgpt.com](#) accessed: 15.06.2025

²⁶ OLARIU, Eugen: Steadfast Defender 24 - Largest NATO Exercise Since the Fall of Berlin Wall, *The Conservative* (26 January 2024) https://www.theconservative.online/steadfast-defender-24-largest-nato-exercise-since-the-fall-of-berlin-wall/?utm_source=chatgpt.com accessed: 16.06.2025.

²⁷ Supreme Headquarter Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE): 'Exercise Vigorous Warrior 2024, A Multinational Medical Exercise, Wraps Up in Hungary', shape.nato.int (13 May 2024) <https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2024/exercise-vigorous-warrior-2024--a-multinational-medical-exercise--wraps-up-in-hungary> accessed: 16.06.2025.

²⁸ HOLLIKER, Beth: 'Ohio National Guard Strengthen Partnership with Allied Nations', *U.S. Army* (28 June 2017) https://www.army.mil/article/190108/ohio_national_guard_strengthens_partnership_with_allied_nations accessed 16.06.2025.

²⁹ Defence.hu: 'Hungarian Air Defence Artillerymen at NATO's Largest Air Defence Exercise' (25 March 2025) https://defence.hu/news/hungarian-airmen-at-nato-s-largest-air-defence-exercise.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com accessed: 16.06.2025.

³⁰ ROA, Carlos: 'Between East and West: The Prospect of Hungary as a Keystone State', *Hungarian Conservative* (4 April 2022) <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/between-east-and-west-the-prospect-of-hungary-as-a-keystone-state/> accessed: 10.5.2025.

geopolitical weight. In this interpretation, national interest does not conflict with the objectives of NATO membership but rather serves as one of its driving forces: alliance commitment does not exclude the building of an autonomous position—on the contrary, it can create opportunities to do so in certain contexts.

Hungarian foreign policy pragmatically supports European defence cooperation, while firmly rejecting any solutions that would entail the transfer of sovereignty. This concept of sovereignty—centered on the preservation of national decision-making space—differs significantly from the EU leadership's vision of joint action capability. Accordingly, the domestic discourse on strategic autonomy remains limited in scope and does not form part of the broader European political debate on defence integration and sovereignty-sharing.³¹

Obligations stemming from NATO membership—such as military contributions, participation in joint missions, or increasing defence spending—have become key factors in national strategic decision-making. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, member states pledged to spend at least 2% of their GDP on defence by 2024, which became a binding target for Hungary as well. Fulfilling this commitment is not merely a financial matter, but also a political signal: a tangible expression of allied solidarity and national commitment.

However, the way in which this target is achieved—especially the balance between domestic defence industrial development and foreign procurement—is directly linked to the dimension of national interest enforcement. In recent years, the idea of strategic autonomy has gained increasing prominence, aimed at strengthening sovereign defence capabilities and reducing external dependencies. This approach is not necessarily at odds with the obligations of NATO membership, but it can generate tensions in situations where the Alliance expects unified political action. For Hungary, strategic autonomy primarily means maintaining foreign policy flexibility rather than deepening joint decision-making—especially when the latter would undermine the primacy of national interests. This perspective views sovereignty not as a constraint on integration, but as its prerequisite³².

This duality—commitment to the alliance while seeking to assert national priorities—has become particularly evident in Hungary's position regarding the war in Ukraine. The Hungarian government has consistently rejected arms transfers to Ukraine, emphasizing the importance of peace and negotiated settlement³³. In addition, Budapest again blocked the convening of the NATO–Ukraine Council (NUC) at the level of defence ministers, citing the legal status of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia³⁴. This decision fits into Hungary's broader foreign policy approach, which often seeks to assert national interests by elevating bilateral disputes to the international level—even within alliance frameworks. Although such positions may be

³¹CSIKI VARGA, Tamás: 'A Reluctant Supporter. The Hungarian Perspective on European Strategic Autonomy' In: Cesnakas, Giedrius et al. (eds.), *European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security*, Routledge 2020, 182-195. DOI:[10.4324/9781003324867-13](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003324867-13)

³²Song, Lilei: 'EU Strategic Autonomy: Views and Positions of Visegrad countries', *Külügyi és Külgazdasági Intézet* (December 2022) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372141587_EU_Strategic_Autonomy_Views_and_Positions_of_Visegrad_countries accessed 11.5.2025.

³³Szűjjártó, Péter: 'FM: Hungary has refused to contribute to arms shipments to Ukraine', *About Hungary* (17 December 2024) <https://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/fm-hungary-has-refused-to-contribute-to-arms-shipments-to-ukraine> accessed: 10.5.2025.

³⁴'Hungary blocks Ukraine-NATO defence ministers summit', *Euractiv* (22 January 2018) <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/hungary-blocks-ukraine-nato-defence-ministers-summit/> accessed: 9.5.2025.

understandable from the perspective of national interest and minority protection, other alliance members frequently criticize the Hungarian stance, viewing it as a weakening of NATO unity.

Thus, the relationship between NATO membership and national interest should not be treated as a rigid dichotomy. Rather, it is a matter of dynamic balance, in which Hungary seeks to leverage the security benefits of alliance membership while maintaining elements of foreign policy independence. In this context, “sovereignty” and “strategic autonomy” are not synonymous with anti-NATO sentiment, but serve as frameworks for redefining national defence policy—especially amid current geopolitical instability. From the Hungarian perspective, strategic autonomy is not about detachment, but about enhancing European competitiveness and operational capacity, while preserving the principle of national sovereignty. This approach does not reject alliance loyalty; rather, it seeks to ensure national room for manoeuvre and pragmatic security policy within the bounds of that loyalty³⁵.

However, this approach has drawn criticism from some NATO partners and analysts, who argue that Hungary’s emphasis on sovereignty can at times undermine alliance cohesion—particularly when it results in unilateral actions or delays in consensus-building³⁶.

As highlighted by Meijer and Brooks in their analysis of European strategic autonomy, efforts to prioritize national sovereignty over integrated defence planning often lead to what they term “strategic cacophony”—a fragmentation of threat perceptions and defence priorities across member states, which ultimately weakens the alliance’s collective capacity to respond effectively to security challenges.³⁷

These critiques suggest that while national autonomy is a legitimate goal, it must be carefully balanced against the collective responsibilities and expectations of alliance membership. At the same time, proponents of Hungary’s approach argue that a nuanced assertion of sovereignty can serve as a corrective to over-centralized strategic thinking within NATO and the EU. In this view, national perspectives—particularly from smaller or geopolitically exposed member states—can enrich alliance deliberations by introducing alternative threat perceptions and policy priorities. From a broader European standpoint, Hungary’s insistence on preserving decision-making autonomy may contribute to a more pluralistic and resilient security architecture, one that accommodates diversity without undermining cohesion. As such, strategic autonomy, when exercised constructively, need not be a source of division but rather a means of reinforcing the alliance’s adaptability and long-term legitimacy.

In light of these debates, it becomes essential to examine how Hungary seeks to translate its vision of strategic autonomy into concrete policy. One of the most tangible expressions of this ambition lies in the revitalisation of the national defence industry—a sector where sovereignty, alliance compatibility, and long-term strategic interests intersect. The next chapter explores how the development of Hungary’s

³⁵PAPPIN, Gladden: ‘Hungary’s Vision of a Strong Europe’ In: Aronson, Zsófia Lillian (ed.), *Shaping the Future of Europe. Hungary’s Vision for the 2024 Presidency*, Hungarian _Institute of International Affairs 2024, 11-20. https://hiia.hu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/1_shaping_the_future_europe_p11-20_pappin.pdf accessed: 11.5.2025.

³⁶ SZALAI, Máté: ‘Explaining the Hungarian anomaly and its consequences for Central and Eastern Europe’, *The Hague Research Institute* (May 2024) <https://haqueresearch.org/explaining-the-hungarian-anomaly-and-its-consequences-for-central-and-eastern-europe/> accessed: 16.06.2025.

³⁷ MEIJER, Hugo - BROOKS, Stephen G. (2021): Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back. *International Security*, 45(4), 7–43. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00405

defence sector not only supports NATO obligations but also reinforces national resilience and geopolitical agency.

III. The Transformation and Modernization of Hungary's Defense Industry

In order to operationalise this balancing act between sovereignty and alliance loyalty, Hungary has undertaken a series of concrete defence modernisation efforts. While Hungary's approach to NATO reflects a careful balance between alliance obligations and sovereign policy-making, this balance becomes especially visible in the country's efforts to rebuild and modernise its defence industry. The following section explores how the Zrínyi 2026 programme embodies this dual strategy, aiming to meet NATO standards while enhancing national capabilities.³⁸

The political transformation of Hungary in 1989–1990 ushered in a fundamental shift in the nation's defence posture. As Hungary departed from the Warsaw Pact, it confronted the complex task of overhauling its military forces to meet Western standards and integrate fully into NATO. Legacy Soviet-era equipment, outdated doctrines, and a fragmented defence industry presented considerable obstacles. In response, the Hungarian government launched the Zrínyi 2026 Defence and Armed Forces Development Initiative, a comprehensive effort to modernise the armed forces, strengthen national defence capabilities, and reaffirm Hungary's dedication to collective security.³⁹

The collapse of the Warsaw Pact left the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) with an infrastructure unsuited to the demands of the new security environment. The military inherited obsolete hardware, relied heavily on conscription, and depended on a defence industry that was closely tied to Soviet supply chains. The absence of interoperability with NATO forces and the lack of a cohesive strategic doctrine further compounded these challenges.

In the immediate aftermath of the transition, defence budgets were significantly reduced, resulting in a deterioration of military readiness. Training regimens were insufficient, logistical frameworks outdated, and personnel morale suffered. These factors limited Hungary's capacity to participate effectively in international peacekeeping and compromised its ability to defend its own territory.⁴⁰

The Zrínyi Defence and Armed Forces Development Programme was announced in December 2016 during a background briefing by the then Minister of Defence, István Simicskó., it commenced in **January 2017** and was initially planned to span ten years.⁴¹

The initiative stands as the most ambitious reform of Hungary's armed forces since the Cold War's end. Its core objectives encompass several key areas:

³⁸ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Sikeressé a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Hábóru Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/sikeress-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

³⁹ VojsenskéRozhledy. (2023). *Program rozvoje maďarských ozbrojených sil*. <https://www.vojskerozhledy.cz/program-rozvoje-madarskych-ozbrojenych-sil>

⁴⁰ VojsenskéRozhledy. (2023). *Program rozvoje maďarských ozbrojených sil*. <https://www.vojskerozhledy.cz/program-rozvoje-madarskych-ozbrojenych-sil>

⁴¹ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Sikeressé a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Hábóru Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/sikeress-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

1. **Modernising Equipment:** Replacing obsolete Soviet-era weapons with advanced, state-of-the-art systems to improve combat performance.⁴²
2. **Revitalising the Defence Industry:** Enhancing domestic production capabilities to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers.⁴³
3. **Personnel Transformation:** Transitioning towards a professional volunteer force, expanding the reserves, and upgrading training and education.⁴⁴
4. **Infrastructure Renewal:** Upgrading military bases, logistics networks, and command and control systems.⁴⁵
5. **Financial Commitment:** Increasing defence expenditure to 2% of GDP by 2024, with at least 20% dedicated to capability development.⁴⁶

The overarching aim is to establish a modern, efficient, and NATO-compatible military capable of responding to evolving security challenges.⁴⁷

A key pillar of this transformation is the rejuvenation of Hungary's defence manufacturing sector. The Rheinmetall Hungary facility in Zalaegerszeg exemplifies this progress, producing the Lynx KF41 infantry fighting vehicle, an advanced platform that significantly bolsters Hungary's mechanised capabilities. Having achieved important production milestones in 2023, the plant anticipates delivering approximately 50 vehicles annually once operating at full capacity.⁴⁸

Beyond armoured vehicles, Hungary has also focused on enhancing its air assets. Agreements with Airbus have secured 36 rotary-wing aircraft, including H145M and H225M helicopters. These acquisitions improve both logistical mobility and tactical responsiveness, fostering a more agile and integrated force structure.⁴⁹

Understanding the vital role of personnel in defence, the initiative places considerable emphasis on reforming human resources. Transitioning to a professional volunteer force is accompanied by plans to expand and modernise the reserve component, which currently numbers around 5,500 personnel. The target is to increase this to 20,000 through targeted recruitment and enhanced training programmes.⁵⁰

To cultivate a culture of defence among younger generations, the initiative supports the establishment of the Honvédelmi Sportszövetség (Defence Sports Association) and the implementation of cadet programmes. These measures aim to

⁴² Növekedés.hu. (2024). *Milyen fejlesztések várhatóak a honvédségnél? Új fegyverek nyomában.* <https://novekedes.hu/milyen-fejlesztsek-varhatoak-a-honvedsegnel-uj-fegyverek-nyomaban>

⁴³ Háború Művészete. (2023). *Kiskunfélegyháza small-arms plant launch under Zrínyi 2026.* Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/kiskunfelegyhaza-small-arms-plant-launch>

⁴⁴ Haon.hu. (2023). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf a megújuló tüzérséghez: keresünk fiatalokat.* <https://haon.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-a-megujulo-tuzersseghez-keresunk-fiatalokat>

⁴⁵ Honvédelem.hu. (2023). *Hungarian Defence Budget 2023–2025 Report.* <https://honvedelem.hu/hungarian-defence-budget-2023-2025-report>

⁴⁶ Honvédelem.hu. (2023). *Hungarian Defence Budget 2023–2025 Report.* <https://honvedelem.hu/hungarian-defence-budget-2023-2025-report>

⁴⁷ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Siker a Zrínyi 2026 program.* Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/siker-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

⁴⁸ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Bemutatjuk a Lynx gyalogsági harcjárművet.* <https://honvedelem.hu/bemutatjuk-a-lynx-gyalogsagi-harci-jarmuvel>

⁴⁹ Honvédelem.hu. (2025). *FireBlade 2025 forgószárnyas kötelékek.* <https://honvedelem.hu/fire-blade-2025-forgoszarnyas-kotelekek>

⁵⁰ Honvédelem.hu. (2023). *Egyre több elkötelezett fiatal választja a haza szolgálatát – Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf.* <https://honvedelem.hu/egyre-tobb-elkovetett-fiatal-valasztja-a-haza-szolgalatat>

strengthen ties between the military and society, promote physical fitness, and nurture a sense of national pride and civic responsibility.⁵¹

Modern military operations demand robust infrastructure and efficient logistics. Accordingly, the initiative includes comprehensive upgrades to military bases, storage facilities, and transport networks. For example, the creation of a Central Warehouse within the Hungarian Defence Forces' Material Supply Base streamlines logistics and improves supply chain management.⁵²

Recognising the increasing significance of cyber threats, investments have also been directed towards enhancing cyber defence capabilities. Developing a dedicated cyber defence system aims to protect command and control networks against potential intrusions and disruptions.⁵³

Hungary's dedication to international security is evident in its active engagement in NATO operations and peacekeeping missions. The reforms improve the country's capacity to contribute meaningfully to these efforts by enhancing interoperability with allied forces and ensuring compliance with NATO standards.⁵⁴

Hungary has taken on greater responsibilities within NATO, such as assuming command of the Tactical Reserve Battalion (TACRES BN) during the KFOR mission in Kosovo. Such roles reinforce Hungary's reputation as a reliable and proactive member of the alliance.⁵⁵

In summary, the Zrínyi 2026 Defence and Armed Forces Development Initiative presents a strategic and holistic approach to modernising Hungary's military. By addressing equipment upgrades, personnel reform, infrastructure enhancement, and international collaboration, it seeks to transform the Hungarian Defence Forces into a capable, efficient, and NATO-compatible force. With sustained investment and a clear strategic vision, Hungary is positioned to strengthen its national defence, play a significant role in international security, and reaffirm its commitment to collective defence. The success of this initiative will not only enhance Hungary's military capabilities but also serve as a benchmark for comprehensive defence reform across the region.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf – Miniszter bemutatkozása*. <https://honvedelem.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-miniszter-bemutakozasa>

⁵² Honvédelem.hu. (2023). *Hungarian Defence Budget 2023–2025 Report*. <https://honvedelem.hu/hungarian-defence-budget-2023-2025-report>

⁵³ Növekedés.hu. (2024). *Milyen fejlesztések várhatóak a honvédségnél? Új fegyverek nyomában*. <https://novekedes.hu/milyen-fejlesztések-varhatoak-a-honvedsegnel-uj-fegyverek-nyomaban>

⁵⁴ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Siker a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/siker-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

⁵⁵ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Siker a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/siker-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

⁵⁶ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Siker a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/siker-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

IV. Challenges and Opportunities

Although the Zrínyi 2026 programme signifies a major step toward military self-sufficiency and alliance integration, Hungary's evolving role in NATO continues to face structural, political, and industrial challenges. The next section critically examines these dynamics, focusing on the compatibility between national ambitions and collective defence responsibilities.⁵⁷

Since 2023, Hungary has met the NATO mandated minimum defence spending requirement, allocating 2% of its GDP to defence expenditures. This measure is of both symbolic and practical significance: on the one hand, it affirms Hungary's commitment to the Alliance; on the other, it provides the financial basis for the genuine development of military capabilities. According to the current Minister of Defence, Kristóf Szalay Bobrovniczky, this commitment signals that Hungary is not only an active and reliable NATO member, but also dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of its citizens.⁵⁸

Fulfilling this obligation enables the Hungarian Defence Forces to enhance their interoperability, participate in joint military exercises, and engage more actively in the decision-making mechanisms of the Alliance.⁵⁹

A central objective of the Zrínyi 2026 Defence and Military Development Programme is the strengthening of Hungary's defence industrial base, serving both national sovereignty and NATO compatibility. The domestic manufacture of Rheinmetall Lynx infantry fighting vehicles in Zalaegerszeg not only contributes to the modernisation of the Hungarian Defence Forces but also holds potential for future exports of Hungarian made military products. This development entails the transfer of advanced technology, the creation of domestic employment opportunities, and a degree of industrial self-sufficiency, while also deepening strategic industrial relations between Hungary and the German defence sector.⁶⁰

In the longer term, bolstering Hungary's defence industrial capacity will not only meet internal operational demands but will also allow for the supply of equipment to other NATO member states, thereby enhancing Hungary's strategic weight within the Alliance.⁶¹

Hungary is actively involved in strengthening NATO's eastern flank, which is a commitment of both symbolic and operational import. By 2024, the Multinational Division Headquarters Centre, based in Székesfehérvár, had achieved full operational capability, thereby integrating Hungarian military infrastructure into the Alliance's collective defence architecture. This command facility is significant not only at a leadership and coordination level, but also as a platform for regional military integration.⁶²

⁵⁷ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Sikeres a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/sikeres-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

⁵⁸ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf – Miniszter bemutatkozása*. <https://honvedelem.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-miniszter-bemutakozasa>

⁵⁹ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *A katona maga az alapképesség*. <https://honvedelem.hu/a-katona-maga-az-alapkepessseg>

⁶⁰ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Bemutatjuk a Lynx gyalogsági harcjárművet*. <https://honvedelem.hu/bemutatjuk-a-lynx-gyalogsagi-harci-jarmuvel>

⁶¹ Növekedés.hu. (2024). *Milyen fejlesztések várhatóak a honvédségnél? Új fegyverek nyomában*. <https://novekedes.hu/milyen-fejlesztések-varhatoak-a-honvedsegnel-uj-fegyverek-nyomaban>

⁶² VojenskéRozhledy. (2023). *Program rozvoje maďarských ozbrojených sil*. <https://www.vojenskerozhledy.cz/program-rozvoje-madarskych-ozbrojenych-sil>

Additionally, the Hungarian Defence Forces participate regularly in international exercises, such as Adaptive Hussars 23, during which NATO procedures are rehearsed and cooperation with allied forces is reinforced. These exercises are particularly important for enhancing joint responsiveness and standardising crisis management capabilities.⁶³

Strategic discourse often portrays a dichotomy between national strategic autonomy and alliance loyalty. However, Hungary's approach demonstrates that the two are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. The development of national military and industrial capabilities strengthens Hungary's role within NATO, while ensuring that the nation retains the means to act independently when required.⁶⁴

Defence policy studies published by the Ludovika University Press consistently highlight that national autonomy does not equate to isolationism. Rather, it denotes capacity building—developing capabilities that align with the logic of collective defence, yet are prioritised based on national interest.⁶⁵

Since 2023, Hungary has met and exceeded NATO's mandated defence spending requirement of allocating at least 2% of GDP to defence. That year, the defence budget reached **HUF 1 560 billion** (approximately **USD 4.5 billion**), equating to **2.4% of GDP**, a significant increase from 1.7% in 2022. In 2024, this commitment continued with a total allocation of approximately **HUF 1 800 billion**, representing **2.1% of GDP**, and further rising to **HUF 1 752.3 billion** in 2025, sustaining Hungary's alignment with NATO expectations.⁶⁶

This financial commitment is both symbolic and practical: it confirms Hungary's reliability as a NATO partner while providing the structural support for military modernisation. As Minister of Defence Kristóf Szalay Bobrovniczky has stated, this spending signifies Hungary's determination to safeguard its citizens while fulfilling its Alliance obligations. The defence budget is carefully structured, with 47% allocated to land forces, 26% to air defence, 14% to infrastructure, and 13% to operational and other sectors.⁶⁷

Fulfilling this financial obligation enables the Hungarian Defence Forces to enhance their interoperability, participate in joint NATO exercises, and engage more meaningfully in decision making mechanisms within the Alliance. One of the clearest expressions of this commitment is the Zrínyi 2026 Defence and Military Development Programme, launched in 2017, which will invest between HUF 3 500 to 3 600 billion by its conclusion in 2026.⁶⁸

A core objective of Zrínyi 2026 is the revitalisation of Hungary's defence industrial base, ensuring both national sovereignty and NATO compatibility. A flagship initiative includes the domestic manufacture of 218 Rheinmetall Lynx infantry fighting vehicles in Zalaegerszeg, supported by a robust industrial partnership with Germany.

⁶³ Honvédelem.hu. (2025). *FireBlade 2025 forgószárnyas kötelékek*. <https://honvedelem.hu/fire-blade-2025-forgoszarnyas-kotelekek>

⁶⁴ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf – Miniszter bemutatkozása*. <https://honvedelem.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-miniszter-bemutakozasa>

⁶⁵ Haon.hu. (2023). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf a megújuló tűzérseghez: keresünk fiatalokat*. <https://haon.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-a-megujulo-tuzerseghez-keresunk-fiatalokat>

⁶⁶ Honvédelem.hu. (2023). *Hungarian Defence Budget 2023–2025 Report*. <https://honvedelem.hu/hungarian-defence-budget-2023-2025-report>

⁶⁷ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf – Miniszter bemutatkozása*. <https://honvedelem.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-miniszter-bemutakozasa>

⁶⁸ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Siker a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/siker-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

Other key procurements include 44 Leopard 2A7+ tanks, 24 PzH 2000 howitzers, 20 H145M and 16 H225M helicopters, and NASAMS air defence systems.⁶⁹

This development effort not only upgrades the Hungarian Defence Forces but also facilitates technology transfer, domestic job creation, and enhanced industrial self sufficiency. The programme positions Hungary as a potential exporter of defence products, extending its influence within NATO's supply chain. These industrial efforts also reflect Hungary's deepening strategic ties with European defence sectors, particularly Germany's.⁷⁰

Looking forward, increased defence industrial capacity will meet both internal operational demands and enable exports to other NATO countries, thereby strengthening Hungary's strategic weight and autonomy within the Alliance. In parallel, the government has announced plans to increase the size of the national reserve force from 5,300 to 20,000 personnel, supplementing an active-duty force of around 30 000 soldiers.⁷¹

Hungary also contributes actively to NATO's eastern flank. By 2024, the Multinational Division Headquarters Centre in Székesfehérvár reached full operational capability, integrating national military infrastructure into NATO's collective defence architecture. This facility enhances command and coordination capabilities while also serving as a platform for regional military integration.⁷²

Furthermore, Hungary's participation in joint international exercises, such as Adaptive Hussars 23, reinforces NATO procedures and strengthens alliance cohesion. These drills are essential for improving joint responsiveness and standardising crisis management capabilities, which are central pillars of NATO's operational effectiveness.⁷³

Strategic discourse often presents a dichotomy between national strategic autonomy and alliance loyalty. However, Hungary's defence strategy demonstrates that these aims are not contradictory but rather mutually reinforcing. Investments in national capabilities, guided by national interests, also bolster NATO's collective strength. The Zrínyi 2026 programme exemplifies this dual approach, developing a sovereign defence structure aligned with alliance frameworks.⁷⁴

Academic analyses from Ludovika University Press consistently reinforce that autonomy should not be equated with isolationism. Rather, autonomy implies sustainable capacity building, where national and allied security interests are advanced simultaneously. The modernisation of Hungary's defence sector aligns with the principles of collective defence while enhancing the country's ability to act independently when required.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Háború Művészete. (2023). *Kiskunfélegyháza small-arms plant launch under Zrínyi 2026*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/kiskunfelegyhaza-small-arms-plant-launch>

⁷⁰ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Bemutatjuk a Lynx gyalogsági harcjárművet*. <https://honvedelem.hu/bemutatjuk-a-lynx-gyalogsagi-harci-jarmuvel>

⁷¹ Haon.hu. (2023). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf a megújuló tűzérséghez: keresünk fiatalokat*. <https://haon.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-a-megujulo-tuzersseghez-keresunk-fiatalokat>

⁷² Vojsenské Rozhledy. (2023). *Program rozvoje maďarských ozbrojených sil*. <https://www.vojenskerozhledy.cz/program-rozvoje-madarskych-ozbrojenych-sil>

⁷³ Honvédelem.hu. (2025). *FireBlade 2025 forgószárnyas kötelékek*. <https://honvedelem.hu/fire-blade-2025-forgoszarnyas-kotelekek>

⁷⁴ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf – Miniszter bemutatkozása*. <https://honvedelem.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-miniszter-bemutakozasa>

⁷⁵ Haon.hu. (2023). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf a megújuló tűzérséghez: keresünk fiatalokat*. <https://haon.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-a-megujulo-tuzersseghez-keresunk-fiatalokat>

Conclusion

Hungary's defence policy exemplifies a strategic balancing act between alliance loyalty and national sovereignty, underscoring a deliberate and calculated approach to modern security challenges. Over the past quarter-century, Hungary has moved from post-Cold War uncertainty to become a proactive, though not uncritical, contributor to NATO's evolving mission. This transformation reflects a dual-track strategy: fulfilling its obligations as a NATO member while reinforcing its capacity for autonomous action through targeted national investments.⁷⁶

At the heart of this approach lies the Zrínyi 2026 Defence and Armed Forces Development Programme, which illustrates how defence modernisation can function simultaneously as a practical response to alliance expectations and as a symbolic affirmation of national sovereignty. By significantly increasing its defence budget—surpassing HUF 1,750 billion annually—and prioritising domestic industrial revitalisation, Hungary demonstrates that alliance integration and strategic autonomy are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing.⁷⁷

This dual strategy enhances Hungary's credibility and reliability within the Alliance while advancing its national interests through self-reliant military capabilities. Through integrated regional partnerships, industrial renewal, and comprehensive defence reform, Hungary positions itself not merely as a participant in collective defence, but as a sovereign and proactive contributor to European and transatlantic security architecture. This synthesis of alliance fidelity and independent capability forms the cornerstone of Hungary's long-term defence vision.⁷⁸

Looking ahead, sustaining this strategic balance will require adaptability, institutional coherence, and political resolve. As NATO confronts new threats and broadens its strategic scope, Hungary's calibrated model—anchored in both loyalty and agency—may offer a relevant path for other mid-sized powers navigating the contested space between multilateral obligation and national self-determination.⁷⁹

The key question that remains is this: Can Hungary continue to walk the tightrope between strategic autonomy and alliance solidarity, or will the pressures of an increasingly polarised security environment force a definitive choice?

⁷⁶ PM Benkő, Tibor. (2023, November 20). *Sikeressé a Zrínyi 2026 program*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/sikeress-a-zrinyi-2026-program>

⁷⁷ Háború Művészete. (2023). *Kiskunfélegyháza small-arms plant launch under Zrínyi 2026*. Háború Művészete. <https://www.haborumuveszete.hu/kiskunfelegyhaza-small-arms-plant-launch>

⁷⁸ Honvédelem.hu. (2024). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf – Miniszter bemutatkozása*. <https://honvedelem.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-miniszter-bemutakozasa>

⁷⁹ Haon.hu. (2023). *Szalay-Bobrovniczky Kristóf a megújuló tűzérséghez: keresünk fiatalokat*. <https://haon.hu/szalay-bobrovniczky-kristof-a-megujulo-tuzersseghez-keresunk-fiatalokat>