

EAST CENTRAL EUROPE WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL WORLD ORDER
FROM EAST TO WEST - THE CHANGING
GEOPOLITICS OF HUNGARY



WHAT IS GEOPOLITICS?

- Geographical position:
- Absolute: Country's location on the globe
- Relative: Position in relation to other countries
- Geopolitical position: a country's place in international relations and politics
- Changes in geopolitical position influenced by global, continental, regional and domestic developments

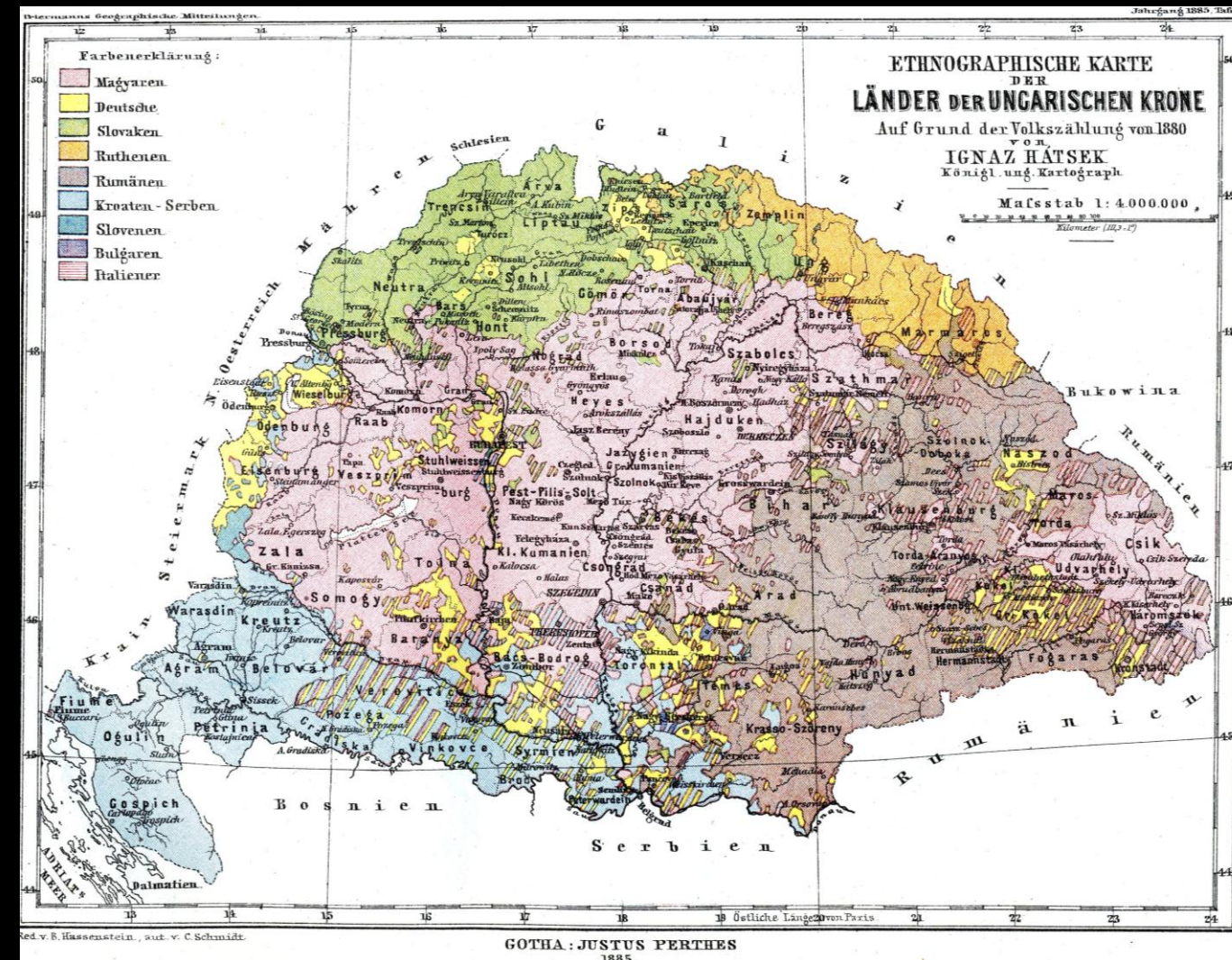
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Hungary is a landlocked, agricultural country in Central Europe with two rivers that facilitate trade
- As a result it attracted invaders
- Ottoman occupation in 16-17th c.
- Later Habsburgs —> Austro-Hungarian empire from the 19th c.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 2

- Modern borders created after WWI - Hungary lost 70% of its territory, 60% of population
- This led to ethnic and territorial disputes that are still unresolved today
- Changed regional status



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 3

- After WWII Hungary became a Soviet satellite
- Regained sovereignty in 1990
- Increased regional power —> creation of V4 alliance (includes Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia)
- Western orientation - NATO, EU

NATO INTEGRATION

- Accession talks started in 1997
- Referendum in November 1997. Participation: 49,24%
- 85% supported joining
- Hungary joined March 12, 1999



EU INTEGRATION

- Accession process started in 1998 in Luxembourg and lasted till 2002
- Referendum in 2003: participation 45,62%
- 83% for joining the EU
- Hungary joined in May 1, 2004



CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL POSITION

- Hungary is an export-oriented economy (mainly auto industry)
- Main trade partner: EU, net receiver of EU cohesion funds
- Critical of some areas of EU policy (migration, further integration), not a member of the Eurozone
- Close ties with the V4 countries



WHAT'S BEHIND THE EU CONFLICT?

- “What is clear about Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic is that their publics chose not to harmonize with Europe, in the same way and for the same reasons that the United Kingdom chose not to remain in the EU. The process of harmonization is based on a homogenized sense of what it is to be European. Applied rigorously – on matters from nomenclature of cheeses, to how courts ought to be organized, to how many immigrants should be admitted – harmonization undermines national self determination and national identity. ...”

WHATS BEHIND THE EU CONFLICT 2

- “... Given variations that are normal among democracies, Eastern Europe would assert its own right to idiosyncrasy; no one should be surprised when Hungarians elect a government that could not be elected in Luxembourg, because Luxembourg’s history is not the same as Hungary’s. But in the land of harmony, an act of disharmony is a threat to the system.” George Friedman

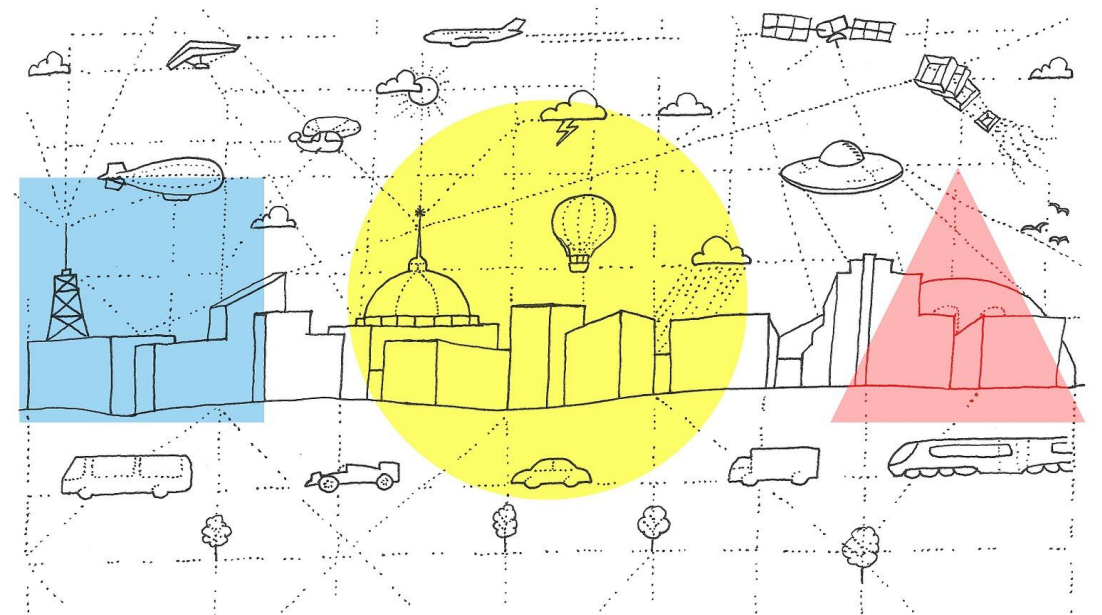
GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS

- Hungary has had a Western orientation since the end of the Cold War
- Also aims to have good ties with Russia (most of its natural gas comes from there)
- Eastern opening —> gateway of Europe to Asia?
- Relations with Turkey important because of migration



GOVERNMENT POLICY

- Pragmatic foreign policy, based on interests
- Geostrategic position is given, cannot be changed so it must be made use of
- Hungary is in the “Berlin-Moscow-Istambul triangle” (Viktor Orbán)



IN A NUTSHELL...

- “After five centuries of being under the influence of bigger powers, Hungary’s main geopolitical goal is to achieve as much autonomy as possible and to keep its options open, especially during times of competition between greater powers.” (Stratfor)