Hungary's Pragmatic Diplomacy in the Age of Détente: The Case of the African Opening between 1956 and 1970

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Abstract: *Following the change of the political systems that swept across the former Soviet Bloc region toward the end of the 1980s, it was obvious for the ex-satellite states that they would direct the major (re)orientation in their foreign policies towards the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Since the 2010s, every country of the ex-Communist Bloc, including the Russian Federation itself, has fostered pragmatic foreign policies with African regions and states. To be able to understand present-day Hungary's recently enhanced engagements with the African continent, as well as making sense of its governmental 'Africa Strategy' of April 2019, this paper proposes to offer a general and historical analysis of changing geopolitical landscapes and foreign policies – towards Africa in the Age of Détente, between 1956 and 1970.*

Keywords: ***Hungary's foreign policy, détente, Africa, Soviet diplomacy, Cold War***

I. Introduction

A large number of scholars have undertaken the task of analysing the era of Hungarian foreign politics between 1945 and 1989. And yet, among the adaptations and approaches, up to this day the attention directed towards African countries in the period of Hungarian foreign policy détente – especially in the era following the 1960s – has been lacking or appeared with an insignificant emphasis (Tarrósy 2018).

This paper aims to offer an in-depth historiographical analysis of an African centred foreign policy of the volume in Hungary during the 1960s and

1970s. First, we draw a broad picture about the context of limitations before the 1960s, then we will demonstrate how Hungary led the way in improving trade, economic and diplomatic relations with numerous partners across Africa. Second, Hungary's special place and status in the Soviet Bloc before and after Stalin's death, and the country's attempts to break out of the status quo of international isolation, are presented. Third, we provide a further discussion at length about the Kádár-led government's achievements in creating a new pragmatic, well-thought-out foreign policy in Africa (Solymári – Tarrósy 2022). Finally, with rich Hungarian archival sources, we point out the most important cases of the different pioneering Hungarian Africa-related diplomatic efforts.

II. Theoretical Assumptions and Methodological Considerations

The paper investigates Hungarian foreign policy in the period of the Cold War (Békés 2022: 150) with the help of a complex theoretical framework including political realism with a focus on the realities of power politics as the ultimate goal in the international system (Carr 1939). Also, structural realism is offering here the ground not only to shed light on the foreign policies of states, but also on the international system as such (Waltz 1995). In connection with this paper, structural realism has a particular relevance, as John Mearsheimer found, since with no regard to the international affairs, nations should pursue their own and ideological interests (Mearsheimer 2019). Ideological cooperation, in line with the Soviet foreign policy, during the détente, the time of late Cold War, was strongly associated with cooperation and national parochialism as pragmatic 'state' interest (O'Riordan, 2022: 308). It seems also useful that Nye's (2011) power theory, which encapsulates a broad(er) definition of power for states not only as an instrument of survival, but also 'the ability to alter others' behaviour to produce preferred outcomes' (Nye 2011: 10). For Hungary's consolidation efforts after the 1956 revolution (especially from 1962, after the 'Hungarian Question'), for instance, can be better understood from all these angles, and the aim of this paper from a foreign policy perspective is to specify the context to be able to 'tell us who gets what, how, where, and when' (Ibid: 7) revealing the intentions of the different actors and their power relations.

In this paper problem-oriented historical analysis helped to understand, with particular regard to John Lukacs's approach, what opportunities the historical actor (the acting agent) was facing, what it has chosen and why. In addition, the research presented in this work draws upon Gilpin's state-centric position, underscoring that: 'states must be continually attentive to changes in power relations and the consequences for their own national interests of shifts in the international balance of power' (Gilpin 2001: 19). This will be especially significant in light of the setup of the bipolar world and Hungary's re-imagined national interests again after the events of 1956.

The paper uses a number of methodological approaches, amongst which historiographical research draws the initial major framework. This is coupled with a two-year archival work, which covers formerly secret or previously unresearched foreign policy documents, governmental reports or minutes from the National Archives of Hungary and from the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Desk research and a critical review of connecting literature are complemented by several pieces of the printed press of the age. The paper derives from a doctoral dissertation research, which centres around the opening of the Hungarian diplomacy towards Africa in the age of Cold War.

III. Lack of Diplomatic Sources on Africa before 1945

This paper reveals the traces of the 'African connection' in Hungarian foreign policy. We began to take a quick look for evidence about African relations in Hungarian foreign policy chronologically starting from 1918 when the modern, independent Hungarian foreign service was born, and the first laws regarding it were adopted. We mainly worked with primary and archival sources and used the announcements, minutes and notes of the respective Hungarian ministries of foreign affairs. The Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry (the so-called Common Foreign Ministry of Austria-Hungary) did not have an official journal (except the *Yearbook of the Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry*, published annually from 1911 to 1917, which typically contained protocolary and consulate information). In the years following World War I and the disintegration of the Monarchy, one month after the Treaty of Trianon entered into force, a decree was passed on 26 August 1921 about that, and like other newly established ministries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to issue an official journal. Only from 1921, therefore, was the institutional system for the internal flow of information (bulletins, daily reports and instructions on archiving these) established. In 1939, the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published papers and documents relating to the foreign relations of Hungary (*Pièces et documents relatifs aux rapports internationaux de la Hongrie*, in retrospect and reflecting on the Trianon peace treaty), these contained all the foreign correspondence of the period between 1919 and 1921 in a monograph. In 1921, the Decree no. 9925/1-192 established the *Foreign Affairs Journal*, which contained 'the decrees issued by the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate authorities, and other relevant information for the public', announcements, and news about appointments and recalls. Information for the journal was provided by both the local departments and foreign missions. The journal's last issue, the second issue of Volume 24, was published on 11 April 1944. In 1929, the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched its *World Factbook*, which contained factual, rather catalogue-like information about each state. In addition to these sources, we also mined the *Foreign Yearbook*, which had only two issues in 1941 and 1942.

The official foreign journal, which was relaunched in 1968 as the *Hungarian Foreign Policy Yearbook*, contained the country's international relations and foreign policy activities monographically. The last printed version of this journal came out in 2010, and between 2011 and 2013, three more electronic issues were published. After that, however, this gap-filling, summative source material ceased to exist. Another primary source for this research was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' internal, non-public collection of documents (minutes and notes) on all aspects of the relations between Hungary and foreign countries, as well as on the internal situations and international relations of foreign countries, which have been partially published in edited form, but their segments concerning Africa are only available in the Hungarian National Archives.

In the 1920s, the first mentions about Africa were typically of only a consular nature: information on the extent of the African consular jurisdictions in the Hungarian Royal Embassies, Consulates General, and Honorary Consulates in Europe, and notifications on visa fees. Its significance lie in the fact that Hungarian travellers, researchers and explorers had vital African connections and regularly visited some areas of the continent. Diplomatic documents and emissary reports on Africa that were produced in the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1936 and 1945 focused on the preliminaries and developments of World War II with a few specific exceptions such as aspects of the Hungarian-Egyptian relations which we will mention later (Ádám 1962: 78). It is impossible to paint a complete picture based on these documents, because during Hungary's German occupation on 19 March 1944 some of the documents and registers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were destroyed or carried into the West. Many things, including some of the Hungarian National Archives' records, were destroyed during Budapest's bombing in April 1944. Therefore, many 'blank spots' exist in the remaining documents. Although important sources of contemporary history remain extant, they are unfortunately insignificant regarding the Hungarian foreign policy's opening to Africa.

IV. Striving for an Independent Hungarian Foreign Policy until 1945

First, we give a brief overview of the modern history of Hungarian foreign policy focusing on how Hungarian diplomacy sought and shaped its independence, with an eye on the context in which Hungarian-African relations are embedded. The significance of this background consists in its support of our premise that for a long time, Hungarian foreign policy remained in a completely dependent situation, and in such conditions, forming the country's independent Africa-policy had no possible chance to be realised. As a result, for an extensive period the Hungarian foreign apparatus could not even dream about exhibiting an independent latitude. The first traces of Hungarian diplomatic and political connections with Africa go back as late as the 1950s. Although Hungarian travellers

also played vital parts in reporting on interior Africa as an addition to other relevant international expeditions' coverages, official diplomatic connections came to life quite late.[1] Opening political channels with Africa seemed to be lagging behind these expeditions, but it would be a mistake to think that this was due to political indifference. A country's Africa policy is affected among other reasons by a major requisite: whether or not an independent foreign policy exists, one that provides the incumbent government with the capacity to freely set up priorities and work out strategies. From a historical perspective, looking at Hungarian foreign policy from the 18th–19th century to the present day, we can see that this room for policymaking was granted for only short periods of time. In fact, Hungary has typically been in dependent, subordinate, vulnerable positions since the end of the reign of Matthias Corvinus (1490) until the first free parliamentary elections in 1990.

Hungarian foreign policy generally lacked independence since before the time during which the concept of the modern states was born (i.e. the Westphalian sovereignty concept) up until recently. A continuous loss of positions, political and economic weight described this 500-year period. Hungary could not pursue its own foreign policy, except for some short periods during the two revolutions and – to some extent – during the age of the Dual Monarchy of Austria and Hungary (1867–1918). Limitations and no room for manoeuvring described Hungarian foreign policy that was determined by a perpetual struggle for more independence for a very long time. After the Ottoman occupation, Hungary became a part of the Habsburg Empire (1711). This great power of the time considered Hungary as a legally separate but conquered state. Although it was not fully incorporated into the Empire (since it possessed certain political freedoms), it did not have an independent foreign policy (Herczegh 1987: 197–205). Even though the Hungarian Parliament insisted on having Hungarians among the top-ranking officers of Habsburg foreign services, all they could achieve was that Hungarians could become envoys (albeit important ones) of the Austrian Emperor (Horváth 1941: 391).

In 1848, the Habsburg Empire teetered on the verge of collapse. The Hungarian reformists strived for independence, while others wanted to remain within a supranational framework. Although there were numerous talented Hungarian diplomats as a result of foreign studies and positions in the preceding years, such as Pál Esterházy or Antal Apponyi, the Hungarian ruling elite did not have a clear and uniform vision about the country's foreign policy. After dethroning the Habsburgs, complete Hungarian independence became the focal point of

1 Among others, *Sámuel Teleki* (1845–1916) was a Hungarian explorer who led the first expedition to Northern Kenya. He was the first European to see Lake Rudolf (Lake Turkana). *Kálmán Kittenberger* was also a Hungarian traveller, natural historian, biologist and collector. He made six travels to Africa. *István Czimmermann* and *László Menyhárth* were Hungarian Jesuit Missionaries in East Africa in the Zambezi area. All these were pioneer travellers and Africanists.

Hungarian politics (with Kázmér Batthyány, Hungary's first minister of foreign affairs, playing a leading role), which they planned to stabilise through bilateral relations. However, despite some promising results, the Hungarian War of Independence failed, and the Hungarian reformist elite (with Lajos Kossuth as a critical figure) was forced to join the diplomatic theatre as exiles from abroad. The hope of an independent country vanished once again.

After losing the war against Prussia, Austria had to come to terms with Hungary: the Compromise of 1867 established the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, in which the two sides practised certain state functions through common ministries. During this so-called dualist era, internal and fiscal policies were independent, but the Monarchy had a unified foreign policy. In 1867, the Imperial and Royal Ministry of Foreign affairs was established, led by a common foreign minister. Between 1867 and 1918, the Monarchy had eleven common foreign ministers, out of which three were ethnic Hungarians (Győri Szabó 2011: 16–21). According to the quota of the 1867 Compromise, initially 26 percent (later 32 percent) of the foreign service's staff had to be Hungarian citizens.

The Monarchy was dissolved in 1918 and Hungary gained full sovereignty. The independent Hungarian foreign service was established, which 'shall see to all foreign affairs of the country independently', according to Act V of 1918 (Hungarian Law-Lex 1918. V). The era of Hungary's modern, independent foreign policy began at that time. Following World War I and the Paris Peace Conference, Hungarian foreign policy's attention revolved around the country's new borders: Hungary lost most of its territories, so the national focus was on the revision of the peace treaty. Other goals of foreign policy could not gain momentum. By 1930, however, Hungarian diplomacy, which was on its own, reorganised foreign affairs administration (a new ministry of foreign affairs was established) and foreign affairs training. A vast network of embassies was established across the continent, but now with representations outside Europe, too. On the African continent, an embassy in Egypt was established as the first substantial territorial achievement. In the interwar period, the country became isolated, and its international relations diminished to a minimum. As in the nineteenth century, it could only send envoys but could not establish embassies. The search for allies was done through secret diplomacy: the great powers and neutral states did not take the risk of discrediting themselves in the international space openly with a state from the losing side. Thus, the room for manoeuvring in foreign affairs had narrowed again. To alleviate this isolation, Hungary joined the League of Nations in 1922, which allowed for more dynamics in its foreign relations. However, despite all stabilisation and neutralisation efforts, Hungary was drifting towards World War II (after the Great Depression) and eventually entered into the war in 1941. Then, the post-war coalition period put Hungarian foreign policy on a fixed path again: the country's administration

was overseen by the Allied Control Council (ACC), and the Soviet leadership of the ACC decided on foreign affairs and new diplomatic relations. Hungary lost its independence yet again.

V. Foreign Policy Mindset in the Soviet Bloc

In order to properly understand the place and significance of the opening towards Africa (and in general, towards the so-called Third World) in the Post World War II Hungarian diplomacy, it is necessary to know the status quo that had formed in Eastern-Central Europe, as well as the political and foreign political way of thinking in the Eastern Bloc. This short historic segment aims at clarifying the peculiar geopolitical structure and political manner of operation during this period. In the following, we present an overview of those key events after 1945, and specifically, the post-1956 foreign politics from a Hungarian perspective, which led Hungarian diplomacy in Africa's direction.

In the bipolar world that had emerged through the dominance of the United States and the Soviet Union, the two superpowers of the age, a sphere of influence arose in which Hungary was reduced to a part of the thus established Soviet sphere, a quasi-Soviet member republic. As Yordanov also noticed 'The Soviet Union's presence attracted the watchful eye of the local regime and its Western representatives' (Yordanov 2016: 224). A sovereign Hungarian policy defined along independent interests and goals was not possible; our foreign policy was in all cases determined by belonging to Moscow and the Soviet sphere of influence. In this peculiar 'bloc policy', goals of national economy, culture and politics could only appear on a very limited plane, the goals professed by the new organisations of cooperation that had formed after 1945 (such as the Cominform, the Comecon, and later the Warsaw Pact) and set by Moscow, took precedence.

Between 1945 and 1955 during the Communist takeover, the country's foreign policy became fundamentally transformed. By the end of 1948, Hungary, like the entire region, became part of the Soviet sphere of influence, sinking to the level of a Soviet satellite. At the inaugural meeting of the Cominform (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties) in 1947, Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov outlined the dual worldview of the new power: an aggressive, warmongering imperialist bloc vs. a peaceful, democratic, socialist bloc (Délmagyarország 1953: 1–2). Hungary was Sovietised at a stormy pace: the parliamentary system as well as the multi-party system ceased to exist, a one-party-based dictatorship was established, and the diplomatic space was clearly closed. Stalin became the ultimate leader of foreign policy, controlling each satellite country's state-party secretary generals through the foreign affairs department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

By that time, Hungary's foreign political latitude had been completely narrowed down: Mátyás Rákosi, general secretary of the Hungarian Communist

Party, and later chairman of the Council of Ministers, Hungary's de facto leader between 1947 and 1956, subjected it to Moscow's will and intentions in every aspect. As Békési states it, 'From the documents researchable at present, a markedly initiative-taking Rákosi-profile emerges, just as if it were attempting to live up to the earlier slogan, "Rákosi is Stalin's best Hungarian apprentice"' (Békés 2021: 17). In Hungary, Mátyás Rákosi, secretary-general, later chairman of the Council of Ministers in the People's Republic of Hungary, and Ernő Gerő managed 'Hungarian foreign policy'. Rákosi, Gerő, as well as the foreign ministers Károly Kiss and later János Boldóczki, set out to perfectly implement the directives of Soviet foreign policy: 'The Soviet Union, supported by the entire Socialist Bloc, reaps successes of world-historic significance with the national liberation movement. Where the last remnants of former colonial empires collapse, the new Asia is rising. The national liberation movement's African march of triumph continues' (Khrushchev 1963: 43). In this aspect, Rákosi was considered a proactive politician: as a result of his scholarship-funded study tours in his younger years, he spoke several languages, English included, with which he stood out from among the region's Communist leaders. He wished to be an accurate executor of Zhdanov's two-camp policy as a response to the Truman Doctrine, which divided the world in two: with the imperialist forces, led by the United States, on the one side, and the promoters of peace directed by Moscow, on the other side. 'We will go all out for continuing to successfully fight for protecting peace, to strengthen the front of those who build Socialism, to thwart the imperialists' plans, so we can solidly maintain the line of the peace front, which the Hungarian Working People's Party, and the Hungarian national democracy, is dedicated to defend', as Rákosi put it (Rákosi 1951: 214). Hungarian foreign politics and the diplomatic leadership also lined up accordingly: no sovereign foreign service, no proper diplomacy, mainly the execution of the orders assigned from Moscow. The system and network of Stalinism provided the international framework of reference in terms of foreign affairs: the Hungarian-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (1948) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), and later the so-called 'collective defence treaty' of European socialist countries, that is: the Warsaw Pact (1955). The events of the Cold War narrowed down the diplomatic leeway for Hungary even more: the possibility of travelling abroad was eliminated or reduced to a minimum (it was difficult or impossible to obtain a passport enabling travel to the West), sending letters was also limited; the country's foreign relations became hostile and conflicted with countries beyond the Iron Curtain.

Embassies and diplomatic missions in the West only had formal functions, if any. Nonetheless, certain foreign economic relations intensified by the 1950s: Hungarian foreign policy, which among the 'third world countries' turned primarily towards the Middle East, China, South America and Japan, sought

new partners and bilateral agreements. The period can be considered a new opening, one of the most significant diplomatic steps of which was Hungary recognising (among the first few countries) the People's Republic of China and reopening its embassy in Beijing in 1949. However, as Stalin refused to recognise the newly independent former colonial countries, Africa's opening could not yet begin.

VI. From Stalinism to Self-Management

In the closed and secluded politics of the Soviet Bloc's countries during the 1950s, it was Stalin's death in March 1953 that we consider as the beginning of détente – even though, as Békés states, the newest researches indicate that this détente had started earlier, in order to invigorate the economies depleted as a result of military and defence-related expenses, and replenish the vast shortage (Békés 2019: 76–99). One of the outstanding examples for a self-management effort took place in Yugoslavia, but this effort affected all the other countries of the bloc, with a varying dynamic. Milovan Djilas, a trendsetting Communist ideologue and later critic phrased this as follows in his work *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class*: 'I discovered many new ideas and, most interesting of all, ideas about a future society in which the immediate producers, through free association, would themselves make the decisions regarding production and distribution – would, in effect, run their own lives and their own future' (Djilas 1991: 95). In accordance with the bloc's countries, Hungary proceeded with a more open and initiative-taking foreign policy from 1953 (Békés 2022: 150). This policy, however, did not give rise to ground-breaking results, notwithstanding the significant historic fact that in December 1955, our country became a UN member. The programme of new, vital policy-making that was launched upon Soviet initiative was 'formalised' in 1954 in Berlin, during the Four-Power Conference of foreign ministers, and then in the course of the Geneva Convention on the subsequent Korean and Indochinese Wars, which can be considered as an important part in the policy of the Cold War. 'The doctrine of active foreign politics that was announced in the spring of 1954 – simultaneously with launching the Four-power Conference of Foreign Ministers in Berlin – was directly aimed at enhancing the Allies' international presentability. From this time on, Moscow encouraged its allies to use their enhanced international authority – (to be) acquired by means of the Soviets' help – as effectively as possible to strengthen the Eastern Bloc's authority and influence in international politics' (Békés 2019: 91). In this period, the Eastern and Western Bloc's countries began establishing contacts with one another, one after the other, including the United States and the UN. Nikita Khrushchev, as first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and later president of the Ministerial Council, opened up towards the Third World, diverging from Stalinist foreign politics, expanding and strengthening the

Non-Aligned Movement of non-committed countries. During the 1955 Bandung Conference, Dasa Sila ('Principles of Peaceful Coexistence') was announced; this foreign policy progressed along both a pragmatic and an ideological course (Tarrósy 2006). As Khrushchev put it in his writing 'On Peaceful Coexistence', published in the October 1959 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "The principle of peaceful coexistence demands... that the countries' political and economic relations must be put on a basis of complete equality and mutual advantage.... We have always held, and continue to hold, that the establishment of a new social system in one or another country is the internal affair of the peoples" (Khrushchev, 1960: 340–460). In Hungary, for a period of time, the revolution that broke out in 1956 interrupted this dynamising process of opening outwards. As a result of the revolution's bloody suppression, our country with its Sovietised leadership fell into a 'diplomatic quarantine', a massive isolation in international space. On an American initiative, the UN started discussing the circumstances of Soviet military intervention, referred to as the 'Hungarian Question'; in this period, bilateral Hungarian relations were reduced to a minimum. The 'diplomatic embargo' – which lasted until December 1962 – began to thaw as a result of the agreement between János Kádár, general secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and chairman of the Council of Ministers, de facto leader of Hungary, and the United States. By the 1960s, the earlier severe exit restrictions loosened, and it became possible to travel within the Socialist Bloc without a visa. Kádár took the initiative to seek breakout points and new relations; Moscow supported this foreign policy attitude rather than just tolerating it. Continuing the political arc of détente, stimulating economic relations and gradually strengthening Hungary's legitimacy and role in international space, he built vital relations with 'pro-Soviet as well as non-aligned countries of the Third World' (Romsics 2003: 512).

VII. Roots of the Hungarian-African Relations in the Socialist Era Between 1945 and 1960

After 1945, Hungarian politics compliantly followed the Soviet leadership's respective goals, intentions and worldview, which remained a point of orientation for the Hungarian party leadership. They proved to be some of the best apprentices of the Moscow leadership, not only regarding leader personalities but also in terms of their applied politics. The respective leadership's foreign political character spanned the field from hostile seclusion to initiative-taking, dynamic opening. When the situation called for it, this politics could conform pragmatically – as Mátyás Szűrös, Hungarian ambassador in Moscow, later temporary president of the Republic (as the Parliament's then president) phrased it: 'Our country... does not have at its disposal sufficient means to substantially influence these changes; therefore, first of all, it has to flexibly adapt to the changes...

Flexible adaptation presupposes a continuous analysis and activity, as well as conscious foreign political actions' (Szűrös 1989: 40).

Thus, the post-1962 political leadership sought a free diplomatic latitude in the world in a more pluralistic, more open way. However, in Europe, regarding Western countries, Hungary only had a limited opportunity for this. Since Hungary was one of the first to recognise the People's Republic of China, reopening its embassy in Beijing in 1949, it seemed logical to make one of our 'breakout attempts' in that direction. The Chinese leadership also sympathised with our Kádár-led government along its quest for a new path: in 1953, the two governments entered a bilateral agreement on technological and scientific cooperation. In 1956, China sent an aid transport to Budapest; export exchange and knowledge transfer flowed continuously (Vámos 2017: 47–45). Then in 1958, negotiations were launched regarding entering a Chinese-Hungarian friendship and cooperation contract (HNA 1. 1958/3301). From 1960, however, China and the Soviet Union stood in an open conflict with one another, and upon Soviet pressure, the Hungarian leadership was also compelled to turn the cold shoulder to Beijing. Then, after the cultural revolution broke out in 1966, bilateral relations fell back to the minimum and remained there until 1978. Hungary had to face into a new direction.

Hungary's openness towards 'developing countries' grew out of the class--based politics of this period, that is: the Soviet ideological endeavour which wished to support "the battle of national liberation movements against both old and new colonisation, imperialist oppression and aggression" (Horváth – Kecskés – Mitrovits 2021). Hungary struggled for realising the peaceful coexistence of countries with various different social systems, enhancing our cooperation with the independent countries of Asia and Africa (Puja 1980: 62). The Hungarian political leadership followed this intellectual and ideological orientation as an eminent Soviet member state, at the same time striving to fill it with content as a country seeking its independent leeway (Marsai 2020). The United Arab Republic seemed to be an obvious partner in this aspect: following the establishment of diplomatic relations with them in 1928 (as the first African country), with a consulate-level Hungarian representation from 1947, and an ambassadorial level from 1957. As early as 1957, led by Károly Szarka, deputy of foreign affairs minister (Hungarian UN-ambassador in 1972), a government delegation travelled to the United Arab Republic to acquire support for the 'Hungarian Question', at that time still on the political agenda (Békés – Kecskés 2006). The 1958 issue of the daily newspaper Népszava (meaning 'People's Word') went as far as reporting 'dynamically improving friendly relations' on the occasion of Gamal Abdel Nasser's Budapest visit (Népszava 1958: 86). Egyptian relations were vital; in the Hungarian press, questions pertaining to 'developing country' issues became recurring themes; newspapers such as Szabad Nép, later Népszabadság, Pesti Hírlap, Esti Hírlap, Az Est and others reported weekly

on home-related as well as foreign policy questions involving the Arab World. Relations between the two countries were re-established (similarly to the pre-1945 status quo). Among the Western diplomats, the French consul stationed in Budapest wrote about a 'constant visit of the East' and a 'trade offensive' in his report (Nagy 2017: 47).

Recognising the Republic of Sudan upon its gaining independence on 1 January 1956 became another relatively significant African-related event. András Hegedűs, president of the Ministerial Council of the Hungarian People's Republic, laid down in a decree on 30 December 1955, upon the proposal of the Africanist-diplomat Endre Sík (an earlier Hungarian ambassador in Washington and president of the Foreign Affairs Academy) (Magyar Közlöny 1956). Following the establishment of bilateral relations and reciprocated visits, at this time, the Sudanese-Hungarian relations did not yield outstanding results as yet; so much the more similar to Hungarian diplomacy, the new Sudanese government was still seeking its position in international space, building up its own foreign relations. Thus, this act might rather be considered symbolic, its significance being that Hungarian diplomacy became more respectable by the 1960s: by 1955, the Hungarian leadership of foreign affairs had established diplomatic relations with 36 states in the Middle East, South-America and the African continent, and by 1958 this number rose to 39 (Győri Szabó 2011: 266).

IX. From Agenda to Action?

Even though this period's African references could be regarded as significant diplomatic results, they were not yet widely extended. These breakout attempts occurred first of all in the direction of old partners that could be considered strategic allies, while we still couldn't talk about an ambassadorial level in many locations on the African continent. And yet, we can witness an undoubtedly tangible process of rediscovering African relations, of Hungarian foreign affairs engaging in initiative-taking foreign politics. Furthermore, this was a determining period also in terms of significant foreign administration, professionalising and modernising diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gained respectability and underwent vital organisational changes. According to János Sáringer's compendium, between 1945 and 1950, the foreign affairs office underwent reorganisation in varying degrees on five occasions (Sáringer 2015: 11–55); this office initially functioned in the buildings located at 15 Szabadság Square and 2 Géza Street, then moved to the palace building at 47 Bem rakpart in Budapest (or Illés Mónus rakpart by its former name), where it can be found up to the present day. In the following, referring to this study, we will do a brief overview of these changes. The organisational structure of the foreign relations administration followed the post-World-War-II Hungarian values and priorities, and we can say that in the period after 1945, it did not yet possess any territorial

or geographical divisions. The most significant, 'modernised' reorganisation occurred in 1950–1951, under Gyula Kállai's foreign ministership. One of the most important changes also bearing a significance related to our subject was that the territorial main departments were formed into which the individual countries were grouped. Two such main bureaus were formed: the Territorial Main Department A/I. and the Territorial Department B/II., divided into further sub-departments. Egypt and the Arab countries belonged to the latter. At this time, we couldn't yet talk about further African countries or an administrative focus encompassing the whole territory. It is a very telling fact that in the same period, in 1954, the new Ministry of Foreign Trade was established, under the leadership of László Háy, doctor and economist, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the intent of which was to stimulate foreign trade developments, export turnover and last but not least, university and college scholarships. The new ministry coordinated the implementation of directives functioning in the planned economy as the peculiarity of that era.

Hungary's African-focused foreign relations in the 1950s were primarily linked to its UN-membership that the country had gained in 1955: based on the ministerial council's documents, it followed the introduction of international agreements, contributing to the issues that the UN placed on its agenda. As we have stated, with the exception of certain strategic-level cases or unique relations stemming from historic tradition, bilateral relations with African countries that could be considered as an organisational level only began in the early 1960s. The first and maybe most important step of this process was the Ministerial Council decree No. 3212/960, in 1960, regarding the 'recognition of African states' (HNA 2. 1960). The ministerial council act that that the foreign affairs ministry put forward under the leadership of Endre Sík decreed concurrently on the subject of 'recognising the Dahomey Republic, the Niger Republic, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, the Republic of Chad, the Central-African Republic, the Republic of French Congo and the Gabon Republic' – that is, about the Brazzaville group that gained independence from among the French colonies. The act on establishing a Hungarian embassy in the Republic of Guinea tells a lot about the diplomatic significance of African relations and the viewpoint of Hungarian foreign affairs: "The majority of Socialist countries overtook our homeland in establishing relations to Black-African countries. The Soviet Union is in the vanguard in building relations, and simultaneously with recognising these countries, expresses its willingness to establish diplomatic relations and set up foreign representations.... Czechoslovakia operates foreign representations in eight African countries; it intends to establish diplomatic relations and set up foreign representations in a further ten countries" (HNA 3., 1960). In the very same year, the decision was made to recognise Nigeria, as well (HNA 4. 1960).

Besides the Socialist Bloc's ideological politics, the interest in Africa originated from the historic 'African-European' alignment, pragmatically acknowledged

by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – namely that within the course of one or two years, seventeen former colonial territories gained their independence (annus mirabilis). The diplomatic interest remained mutual: the freshly liberated African countries not only received the cooperation intentions directed towards them but also sought relations with the bloc's countries. "Among the liberated African countries, the Republic of Guinea practised the most consistently anti-imperialist politics, and since the first days of gaining its independence, it has been and is seeking relations with the Socialist bloc's countries" (HNA 3. 1960). As Fage and Tordoff wrote: "In the independent countries, there was a rapid shift from pluralism to the centralisation of power (power was usually concentrated in the hands of a single party) and a kind of Socialist approach. However, only eight African countries have officially announced a Socialist government programme. By the 1970s, only a handful of African leaders identified with orthodox Marxist views. Instead, most of them adapted Marxism and other ideas to the African conditions. The "Socialist umbrella" in Africa was so broad that even the Kenyan and Senegalese leaders who pursued capitalist-type policies could fit in under it" (Fage et al. 2002: 423). A kind of unique 'African socialism' (Léopold Sédar Senghor) was born, fusing anti-Communism, pragmatic cooperation with the West, and the conscious incorporation of private capital. Even though politicians who truly believed in Socialism existed (such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Abdou Diouf or Henry S. Meebelo), the majority saw it rather as a kind of progressive tool in the bloc's ideological political arsenal, capable of breaking sharply away from the colonialist past. 'Africa must be ruled by whites, developed by Indians and worked by blacks' (Meebelo 1986: 3). The African proletariat sprang from this 'Johnstonian' philosophy ('white aristocrats, yellow middle class and black proletariat'), seeking its path towards becoming independent. Thus, walking an independent, pragmatic, 'non-capitalist' path, infused with thoroughly sized-up economic goals was much rather the idea that constituted the African Left's motivation.

X. 'Hungarian Africa Agenda' 1962

In the early 1960s Hungary recognised, one after the other, the freshly gained independence of African states that sympathised with the Socialist bloc's countries, elevating these relations to an ambassadorial level: Ethiopian consulate in 1959, embassy in 1964, Ghana in 1961, Algeria, Benin, Republic of Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Tanzania in 1962, Kenya in 1964, Mauritania and Uganda in 1965, and Ivory Coast in 1968 (Biczó 2010: 385–397). The next turning point occurred in 1962. János Péter, minister of foreign affairs, put forward a 12-page proposal titled 'Political, economic, and cultural tasks of the Hungarian People's Republic in Black Africa' to the ministerial council under János Kádár's leadership, which

was accepted in decree No. 3177/1962 (HNA 5. 1962). This can be considered as the African relations appearing in the contemporary policies, an African agenda and strategy. In the following, we will quote from this document.

Regarding its structure, this detailed and policy-type document starts with an introduction divided into countries. As the introduction explains, 'by 1962, the colonial system's disintegration process resulted in 29 states gaining their independence'. The text introduces the individual territories in a geopolitical grouping, merging Ghana, Guinea and Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Sierra Leone and Togo, arranging the former French West-African colonial territories, Ruanda, Burundi, Kenya, Angola and Northern Rhodesia in a group, and the South-African Republic as well as Congo individually. It also dwells on territories that cannot be or can only be partially considered as strategic target countries: regarding Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, it remarks that 'they endeavour to receive support from Socialist countries but their dependence on imperialist countries is still too great. Feudal-type social relations and the imperialists' strong economic positions put a brake on developing their relations with Socialist countries', which tells a lot about the era's bloc perspective. The document also marks the continent's most important target areas, simultaneously expressing the idea that at this time, Hungary was unable to establish political and economic relations: such as with Nigeria (following the document, the relation was established within a short time), Congo (which reached the ambassadorial level in 1973), and Tanganyika (with relations being established in 1962). The document aptly reveals that 'Socialist countries – first of all the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the People's Republic of China and Poland – place a great emphasis on improving their Black African relations and on studying all issues of the still dependent territories.' The second half of the programme document focuses on the countries that cooperated the most closely with the Hungarian People's Republic at that time: Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Sudan and Ethiopia. The document describes in detail the economic and cultural relations that were established with the individual countries, highlighting the scholarships offered to university students.

The university scholarships offered to certain African countries constituted an important tool of foreign policy. Their effect remains considerable up to this day and lives on in the programme called Stipendium Hungaricum. Students who attended Hungarian universities or colleges in this period have by now frequently become successful business or political actors in their countries, with their student years in Hungary having become part of their identity. The 1962 document also dwells on this subject. As the text puts it, 'we struggle with the scholarship holders' placement. The decree that in 1964, we were required to provide accommodation for 300 foreign scholarship holders will considerably improve the present situation, but until then, we should keep in mind that the conditions and quality of providing for the students have to be satisfactory....

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs should inquire into providing aid via educators speaking languages and who are up to the task.'

The Ministerial Council accepted the proposal and decreed that 'we have to gradually enhance our participation in aiding "Black African countries", so that they can achieve, defend and strengthen their political and economic independence, and their society can develop in a progressive direction', as well as setting the goal of a Hungarian delegation's visit in 1962 and 1963 to Guinea, Mali, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria and Tanganyika. The decree also dealt with other bilateral economic and cultural programmes. As we can follow from the Ministerial Council's documents, they made the decision about the individual tours with reference to decree No. 3177/1962, as detailed above. So we can state that the Africa-policy of the next few years meant the systematic implementation of this programme.

XI. Africa Visits Between 1962 and 1970

Regarding Africa, the era of Hungarian foreign policy until 1970 can be summarised briefly as the implementation of the '1962 Agenda'. African delegations arriving in Budapest trailed one another, from which stood out the recurring visits of Haile Selassie, Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Gamal Abdel Nasser or even Julius Nyerere. As for the Hungarian part, the first delegations to visit Africa, more specifically the Sub-Saharan region, were led by Gyula Kállai, vice-president of the Revolutionary Worker-Farmer Government, then Pál Losonczi, president of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic, involving in bilateral economic, cultural, educational and sport-related agreements. Out of these tours, the following stand out:

- The West-African government delegation led by Gyula Kállai in 1962
- The North-African delegation led by Kállai in 1963
- The Algerian delegation led by Kállai in 1964
- The East-African delegation led by Kállai in 1966
- The round-tour delegation led by Pál Losonczi in 1970
- The visit to Algeria and Guinea, led by Losonczi in 1971
- The West-African delegation led by Losonczi in 1973
- The visit of the Libyan and Somalian delegation led by Losonczi in 1975.

It is an important detail that the Hungarian government implemented these tours independently. The MALÉV Hungarian Airlines, which existed in those days, made this possible. The Il-18 type aeroplane, bought from the Soviet Union in 1960 and put in operation that same year, already had the sufficient range (4800 and later 6500 km). Initially it only managed to reach the North-African states; later, however, flights to the more southern territories could also be achieved with independent technical capacities. Thus, it is not an accident that

the first time the HA-MOH, registration mark: Il-18 crossed the equator on the Budapest–Addis-Ababa–Nairobi route occurred on a government flight on 11 February 1966 (Zainkó 1993: 13). This circumstance also contributed to entering aeronautical agreements becoming an important element of the bilateral agreement packages signed with African countries.

In the following, we provide a brief overview of the significance and political historic notations regarding Gyula Kállai's 1962 and 1966 tours.

On the occasion of its 1962 tour to Africa, the government delegation led by Gyula Kállai visited seven countries: the Republic of Guinea, Mali, the Republic of Dahomey, the Republic of Ghana, as well as engaging in high level negotiations and signing contracts in Nigeria, the Algerian Democratic People's Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco. Following the delegation's return, the participants compiled a detailed proposal package for the Ministerial Council, which the government approved in its decree dated 29 August 1963, at the same time deciding on executing it (HNA 6. 3321–3380/1963, 3334/1963). Among the most important elements of this package, the following were listed on the Hungarian part:

- The proposal to create bilateral economic joint ventures and credit agreements
- Training professionals speaking the languages of African countries
- Offering 137 available scholarship slots for the 1963/64 school year (Today: regarding the Stipendium Hungaricum, this programme still exists, and remains outstandingly successful)
- Establishing an English language study group at the University of Medical Sciences at Pécs (Today: the Africa Research Centre, which operates within the framework of the Pécs University of Sciences, is one of the most active research institutes of African studies in Hungary)
- Launching a major named International Studies at the Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences, and receiving scholarship holders (Today: the Institute of International, Political and Regional Studies, which operates within the framework of the Corvinus University of Budapest, is one of the best venues for teaching Hungarian relations)
- Establishing an African studies department at the Faculty of Arts at the Loránd Eötvös University of Sciences (ELTE) (Today: the African history studies that operate at the ELTE Department of Modern and Contemporary World History constitute a determining location of African studies in Hungary)
- Preparations for establishing the Africa Scientific Institute, elaborating a research programme involving the Afro-Asian research group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Today: the Africa Sub-committee operating within the framework of Scientific Sections IX. of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences accomplish a vital job up to this day)

The package also contained other sub-fields and smaller-scale items. Because of their significance, however, we highlighted the above because of their influence on African studies in Hungary, and in the general sense, on the international relations studies in Hungary that lasts up to this day (as we mentioned in the brackets above).

In the course of his 1966 tour to Africa, Gyula Kállai visited the United Arab Republic, the Ethiopian Empire and the United Republic of Tanzania. In the UAR, he negotiated with Prime Minister Zakaria Mohieddin, then with President Gamal Abdel Nasser, with Haile Selassie in Addis Ababa and with Julius K. Nyerere in Tanzania. This tour picked up the thread of numerous, previously launched processes, such as increasing the number of available scholarship slots and economic joint committees, and the scope of cultural activities. From the perspective of our present subject, however, the almost 50-page long report that was completed regarding the tour, and constitutes one of the period's important documents (HNA 7. 1966) drawing from first-hand experiences, is perhaps even more significant. We do not have the opportunity here to give a detailed analysis of this document. From a Hungarian governmental point of view, its role is defined by the government's unwavering dedication for African relations. 'We have to continue our political activity in the newly liberated countries, strengthening our relations with the countries actively taking a stance against imperialism. Through strengthening high-level relations and making them more frequent, with mutual orientation, forwarding the experiences of our constructive work, we have to enhance cooperation between Socialist countries and developing countries' – as the report accepted in a decree by the Council phrased it. 'We have to further advance our economic relations, supported by the previously established and created foundations, seeking new forms of cooperation, weighing in the changes in the above-mentioned countries' internal affairs, as well as the mutual interests'. One of the document's important character traits is to assign (very close) execution deadlines to the decrees arranged into groups based on individual countries, which further strengthened the policy character and activity level of the 1962 agenda, and the subsequent agendas built on it.

After 1970, the Hungarian political top leaders completed numerous trips, while the bilateral relations progressed and commitments deepened. By the end of the decade, we established ambassadorial-level diplomatic relations, which bore an outstanding strategic significance in Hungarian foreign politics.

XIII. Conclusion

In our paper, we offered the birth of our country's foreign relation system with African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. This 'southern orientation', along with the results and experiences springing from it, not only exerted a fruitful influence on the entire Hungarian foreign affairs apparatus but also, as a result

of the period's geopolitical situation, it fundamentally determined Hungarian foreign affairs. Both external and internal causes contributed to this: Moscow's foreign political détente during the period of the Cold War, Soviet-Chinese relations growing cold, and the opening attempts (apart from the Middle East and South America) on the part of Sub-Saharan African countries gaining their independence one after the other – as well as the efforts of a few well-prepared professionals in the Hungarian foreign affairs leadership who had a vision. All these together resulted in the Soviet leadership tolerating the opening attempts on the part of Hungarian foreign affairs seeking their own path, which, in turn, found their partners in the friendly African countries gaining their independence at the same time. Even though it was the ideology determined by Moscow and originating from Soviet Bloc politics that had laid the foundations for all this, on the whole, the Hungarian political leadership pragmatically exploited the opportunity, successfully entering the geopolitical space that presented itself. The fact that numerous scientific and foreign political elements born during that period still function up to this day also testifies to this. In this work, we wish to point out, following some historic overview, that Hungary – as a country deprived of its sovereignty for a long age – achieved its independence in terms of foreign relations precisely while building up African relations and framing its diplomatic apparatus in individual countries within the Sub-Saharan region as well as within the Arab world.

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