

Memorial Meeting held on the occasion of the foundation anniversary of the Hungarian
Atlantic Council
October 5, 2012
E. Sylvester Vizi
President of the Hungarian Atlantic Council

Excellences! Her Excellency Ambassador Eleni Tsakopoulos
Kounalakis! Ladies and Gentlemen!

We are very lucky to have with us so many distinguished
guests, 27 ambassadors of NATO members accredited in
Budapest, friends of the Hungarian Atlantic Council, and
friends of America.

It was 20 years ago, on the initiative of Dr József Antall, that
the Hungarian Atlantic Council (HAC, Magyar Atlanti Tanács,
MAT) was founded in 1992 as a not-for-profit NGO (the
founding members of the HAC were Iván Bába, Ákos Péter
Bod, György Csóti, Csaba Ferencz, Tamás Katona, Tibor Kiss,
Gyula Kodolányi, Ferenc Mádl, György Osváth, Gábor Perjés,
Ágnes Szent-Iványi, Csaba Varga, and Márta Varga). The
original mission of the HAC was to promote Hungary's NATO
accession and to promote the most broad-based acceptance
possible of Euro-Atlantic principles and values in Hungarian
society.

After the change in the political system, the *sine qua non* of the
democratic transformation system was the renegotiation and
reorganisation of the ties of the ancient regime. Early on, the
Antall government recognised that the assistance of the United

States was necessary for this.

Our intention to leave was announced by József Antall in Moscow at the meeting of the Political Negotiation Body of the Warsaw Pact on June 7, 1990.

After dissolving the Warsaw Pact on July 1, 1991 as initiated by Hungary, the Hungarian government started negotiations with the NATO countries about the conditions of accession to NATO.

[NATO](#) invited three Central European Countries, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, on July 8, [1997](#) to join the Organisation. The Parliament announced a referendum for the decision on the issue that was to be held on November 16, 1997.

Yes: 85.33%

This was the highest percentage of votes in favour that has ever been achieved in a referendum in Europe.

Material and human (intellectual) capital is highly appreciated in the world. However, **social capital** has received relatively little attention. Social capital includes **confidence** accumulated in human communities, the willingness to cooperate, and social cohesion.

Social capital determines how the citizen relates to his

government, the actions his government takes with respect to other governments, or, to cite a concrete example, how a Hungarian citizen relates to the involvement of the United States, NATO, and Hungary in Afghanistan (The well-being of nations: the role of human and social capital, OECD).

A relationship based on trust has been created between the United States and Hungary in connection with the crisis in the region of the former Yugoslavia. Hungary's international role has gained higher value.

The challenges of the XXIst century are different from the ones we experienced during the years of the Cold War.

New threats:

Intercontinental ballistic missile attacks; cyber attacks; terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their carriers; energy security; threats to the infrastructure of the energy industry. The current threats include ethnic and religious opposition, competition for natural resources, massive migration and organised crime.

Our co-operation activities

Organised by the MAT and the Hungarian Institute of Foreign Affairs, the conference of the Atlantic Councils of

the "Vishegrad 4" was held in April 2010. It concluded with the joint communiqué of the presidents of "Jagello 2000" – the Czech Euro-Atlantic Council, the Hungarian Atlantic Council, the Polish Euro-Atlantic Society and the Slovak Atlantic Committee.

Before the Warsaw Summit on **Eastern Partnership** and with the participation of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, MAT-MIAT** organised an **international conference** with renowned speakers about the presence of the organisation and its future tasks and challenges. At the conference, with Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. János Martonyi, as Patron General, H. E. **Roman Kowalski, Poland's ambassador extraordinaire and plenipotentiary**, delivered a presentation. After welcoming words from Prof. Dr. **Szilveszter E. Vizi**, the **conference was opened with the keynote address of Péter Sztáray, political director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. Hungary's Ambassador at Large, Gábor Bródi, coordinator of the neighbourhood politics of the EU, contributed as the moderator to raise the professional standards of the conference. Experts, instructors, and researchers on the theme made this professional day memorable and successful with their high-level lectures.

The national campaign of the HAC in 2010 began with the presentations of military attaches, such as Col. Evan Roelofs (USA) and Paul O’Friel as well as Mr. Karl Lamers's lecture at the ZM University titled "NATO's New Strategic Concept taking shape and Hungary", with substantial support from the Society for the Dissemination of Knowledge of Natural Sciences (TIT), Friendship Circles of Defense Forces and Society (HTBK) and the Hungarian Youth Atlantic Council (MIAT).

We went on a road show until the end of the year, visiting 14 communities in the country (with special thanks to Mr. Hautzinger, vice-president of the HAC).

Another example must be mentioned: organised by Executive Vice-President Anna Felkai, we had a "sold out" event in Szombathely in 2011 (an audience of more than 400, with celebrities such as Minister of Defense Csaba Hende Csaba, State Secretary Lajos Fodor and the commander of the Hungarian contingent just back from Afghanistan and Péter Sztáray, political director of the MFA). The media, both printed and electronic, covered the event in Western Hungary with publications and airing for days.

The MIAT is unbelievably successful. It is always among the winners in international competitions (a key role played by the organisations in the countryside and the training of the second line). The youth organisation of the ATA (Atlantic Treaty Association) has a Hungarian Secretary General.

Secret of our success:

We have always communicated from the perspective of the citizen. This means, in our understanding, that the Council represents the people of Hungary.

So far, all of the Hungarian governments have been sincere supporters of the Euro-Atlantic ideal.

I would like to thank you, Madam Ambassador Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis, for your personal help, and I appreciate your sincere intention and dedication to disseminate the ideology of Atlanticism and to establish a real friendship between Hungarian and American people. It was especially important for me; I have been working for years in the States, and I am very grateful to your country and personally to your Madam Ambassador and also to the former American Ambassadors.

We have had help from Mr. Karl Lamers, the President of NATO Parliament in Brussels and from the Hungarian government, primarily from János Martonyi (MoFA) and Csaba Hende (MoD) and the senior leaders of their respective ministries (Lajos Fodor, Péter Siklósi, Péter Sztáray, Gábor Bródi, etc.).

With the help of the vice-presidents and members of the Hungarian Atlantic Council, to whom I hereby express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation, we have harmonised the Atlantic and the national ideals, the Euro-Atlantic and national interests, the joint representation of which had major significance in creating consensus, in the past as well as now. May I quote Secretary General Rasmussen's very timely and topical words:

“NATO was a family in which members assisted each other and would continue to do so.”

Accordingly, the task for HAC is to demonstrate and reinforce the trans-Atlantic relationship, the commitment through which we can safeguard our joint security, our shared values, in view of NATO's global security interests, which are the interests of a greater family consisting of NATO's member states. We must convince the people that these are, at the same time, our national interests. This is our mission, and we have been working towards this mission for the past 20 years.