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UDC: 355.1(439)  
355.02(439)

Type of work: **OSP**

Received: **9. 5. 2023.** ✓

Accepted: **1. 6. 2023.** ✓

# REFORMING THE HUNGARIAN DEFENSE FORCE<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The modernization of the Hungarian Defense Forces started in the mid-2010s after two decades of neglect and underfinancing. The paper maps, explains and assesses the internal drivers of defense modernization within the framework of the Zrínyi Homeland Defense and Armed Forces Development Program, relying on primary open sources on military strategy, planning and budgeting, as well as secondary sources on the implementation of defense modernization, including procurements and the development of the defense industry. As German–Hungarian defense cooperation has become a central element of modernization, now expanding from procurement to joint formations and joint production, a brief case study assessment in the end highlights what is at the core of long-term modernization, where synergies of force development, arms modernization, defense industrial production and international military tasks mutually strengthen each other.

**Keywords:** HUNGARY, STRATEGY, MILITARY, DEFENSE INDUSTRY, NATO, REFORM.

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<sup>1</sup> The current paper is based on parts of a manuscript by the author on Hungarian defense modernization and defense spending (in Hungarian) to be published in: Tamás Csiki Varga, Alex Etl & Péter Tálas (eds.): The defense policy of Hungary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ludovika University Press: 2023.

## The drivers of military modernization for Hungary

After two decades of neglect and underfinancing that was made possible through exploiting a relatively secure environment in Central Europe, Hungary only embarked upon a comprehensive modernization of its defense forces in the second half of the 2010s with the Zrínyi Homeland Defense and Armed Forces Development Program. The program was originally a 10-year long-term defense modernization plan, but now extends to the 2030s in line with the NATO Defense Planning Process, emphasizing the development of national capabilities, including through multinational cooperation, where possible. The underlying factors that on the one hand enabled, and on the other hand forced this decision to modernize can be summarized as the following.

First, the security environment of Hungary – and of Europe in a broader sense – has shown a deteriorating trend since 2008, as part of which first non-military challenges, and then military threats also appeared in the security perception of Hungarian society and the political elite. The 2008 Russo–Georgian war, followed by the global economic crisis, the subsequent events of the Arab Spring (2010) and the resulting crises and civil wars that are still with us today (Syria and Libya), the rise of ISIS in the Middle East (2014) and its terrorist attacks in Europe (2015–2016), migration pressure (2015), then the coronavirus epidemic (2019–2020), the new Armenian–Azerbaijani war (2020), and finally the escalating Russo–Ukrainian war in 2022 which caused an energy and economic crisis have all threatened European stability.

Second, despite such external pressures, joint European action to address crises has not become more effective or stronger due to the different position of the member states, while the increasing popularity of the “Europe of strong nation-states” model also limits the scope for joint action. In the military field, since 2014 (the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine) and even further in 2022, following renewed Russian aggression in Ukraine, NATO showed more political unity and strengthened its reaction. Although the reinforcement of collective defense and deterrence capabilities in Europe – particularly on the Eastern Flank – became the prime task of allies, we must keep in mind that the foundation of collective defense is the national military capabilities of member states, which can only be strengthened over the medium term. It is no coincidence that one of the cornerstones of recent years’ Hungarian reforms was to ensure that national armed force developments be aligned with allied defense planning in accordance with capabilities earmarked for NATO collective defense, such as a medium brigade by 2023 and a heavy brigade by 2028.

Third, since the 1990s, despite joining NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004, the Hungarian Defense Forces (HDF) have been moving on an almost unbroken trajectory of reducing their personnel, military equipment and military capabilities

in general. System-level modernization was last carried out in the early 1980s, but since has only been episodic (T72 tanks, MiG-29 aircraft, Mistral MANPADs). In the period since the 1989 change of regime, it has only been possible to keep up with military/technological development on a case-by-case basis, for one weapon system at a time (for example, leasing the multi-purpose JAS 39 Gripen aircraft in 2001). Meanwhile, the extension of the lifecycle of military assets (helicopters, transport aircraft) or the clear loss of capabilities (artillery, tanks) was typical. All of this made the comprehensive modernization of the HDF inevitable by the 2010s.

Fourth, since 2015 the necessary economic background (dynamic and predictable growth of the national defense budget) has also been available for national defense reform and modernization.

Fifth, during the planning phase of the Zrínyi Program, there was a solid governmental and political conviction and commitment to realize a comprehensive military development program. In a broader sense, this fits into the development of the national defense system and can be described with the concept of “strong state – strong military”. This commitment has been sustained despite the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus epidemic and the economic crisis looming since 2022.

Sixth, the development of the armed forces offered an opportunity for procurements connected with the development of the Hungarian defense industry, in major areas (armored vehicles, aircraft, radar technology) as a new investment in international (German, Turkish, French) cooperation and with the perspective of innovation, while in other fields (small arms, explosives) with the extension of national military industrial production.

Last, but not least, the development of the Hungarian military fits into regional trends: although with time differences, modernization has been taking place in all Central and Eastern European armed forces, and even in several cases, coupled with the expansion of the armed forces and including the strengthening of territorial defense capabilities. This means the development of heavy military equipment (armored vehicles, artillery) and the (territorial defense) reserve forces, which are also priorities in Hungary. It is needless to mention that these capability development processes have greatly been intensified due to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

This paper seeks to map, explain and assess the internal drivers of defense modernization, relying on primary open sources on military strategy, planning and budgeting, as well as secondary sources on the implementation of defense modernization, including procurements and the development of the defense industry.

## ***Strategic objectives***

The strategic objectives defining the framework for national defense and the pillars of force development, such as the characteristics of the development programs, can be mapped in a comprehensive sense from the 2020 National

Security Strategy (NSS), the 2021 National Military Strategy (NMS) and some policy statements and scholarly articles. In the broad interpretation of national defense, the goal in the period up to 2030 is to make national defense capable of protecting against military threats and hybrid challenges, as well as performing civilian crisis management tasks, embedded in society, or in other words, enjoying popular support (NSS 2020, Para. 126). To this end:

The Hungarian Defense Forces must have well-equipped and well-trained forces, as well as flexible, effectively applicable, deployable, and sustainable capabilities that are interoperable to the necessary extent, striving to improve quality indicators in addition to quantitative ones. In addition to its traditional national defense and international crisis management tasks, it must be equally capable of contributing to the management of crisis situations caused by mass immigration or a terrorist threat situation, to play a role in countering hybrid attacks, and to contribute to the management of natural or industrial disasters. The armed forces must be developed in such a way that they are able to wage effects in the operational space relevant to our country: on land, in the air and in cyberspace. (NSS 2020, Para. 135)

Therefore, the Hungarian military development plans did not aim to create a specialized, but rather a – relatively – broad force spectrum for the HDF. The means of implementation were included in the Zrínyi Program, such as the strengthening of military cyber defense capabilities (NSS 2020, Para. 159) and the development of the defense industry (NSS 2020, Para. 2, 5–6, 28–29, 105, 128, 136).

In accordance with the NSS, the National Military Strategy not only outlines the government's thinking behind the Zrínyi Program and the views of the leadership of the Hungarian Defense Forces on modern warfare, but also summarizes the driving forces of the developments between 2016 and 2021 and sets the agenda for the 2020s. The strategy organizes the tasks of the Hungarian Defense Forces into two comprehensive groups: the national and the international dimensions. The national dimension contains nine comprehensive tasks and several sub-tasks, such as: defense, deterrence, disaster management, national capability for cooperation, resilience, homeland defense (voluntary reserve system – territorial defense –, protection of critical infrastructure, ensuring the logistical background of operations, support to maintaining public order), developing societal (military/civilian) relations (developing the society's awareness to defense, providing patriotic education, transferring the basic knowledge required to fulfill citizens' obligations for homeland defense, recruitment), preparing the national economy for conflicts, representative tasks. The international dimension, meanwhile, includes six comprehensive tasks, with a number of sub-tasks, such as: collective defense within NATO, crisis management within the NATO crisis response system and within the framework of allied missions, Host Nation Support, supporting the mutual assistance tasks of the European Union (in accordance with Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty), undertaking tasks according to the EU solidarity clause (Article 222 of the Lisbon Treaty), strengthening interoperability, participation in multinational (regional) forms of cooperation, including strengthening Hungary's role of initiating such cooperation frameworks.

The defense industry pillar, the development of which has been a government priority since the beginning of the program, strengthens the cooperation related to military technology procurement even further – as addressed in the NMS and the Defense Industrial Strategy (2021, not public). This pillar can also be retrospectively mapped as several elements seem probable and feasible based on the already known official announcements. Thus, Hungarian military industry investments are built around six clusters: 1) combat vehicles; 2) aviation technology (light aircraft, helicopters and drones); 3) radar technology and sensors; 4) small arms and light weapons; 5) production of gunpowder, ammunition and explosives; 6) command, control, communication and cyber.

The NMS also determined the capability requirements and focal points of force development to meet these requirements when it defined the backbone of the Hungarian Defense Forces as a three-brigade land force structure. (This should be expanded to four brigades in 2023.) With regards to the specific modernization priorities, such as capability requirements for military equipment, we can identify guidelines based on the work of Ferenc Márkus and Balázs Szloszjár (Márkus, 2013; Szloszjár, 2017). According to these, systems-based development should cover the equipment and weapons of infantrymen and platoons, infantry fighting vehicles, as well as tanks in the case of heavy brigade, command, control, information, surveillance and reconnaissance systems, IT and cyber defense systems for the battalions that form the basis of the brigades, self-propelled artillery and troops' air defense, devices capable of providing both direct and indirect fire support, force protection, CBRN defense, as well as maintenance assets and logistics vehicles in an integrated way. In 2017, Szloszjár also added that

it is advisable to acquire certain military equipment of high importance – individual military equipment of the soldier, infantry fighting vehicles, motor vehicles – preferably from domestically developed or domestically produced products (purchase of licenses, production based on cooperation). (Szloszjár, 2017: 27.)

As we will see below, these insights have indeed taken shape in the procurements already made, and further developments will most likely follow. Based on the information made public and our experience so far, force development can be summarized and assessed along a few general principles and characteristics:

- Its goal is to create a modernly equipped, high-mobility and fast-reaction all-armed force capable of rapid and effective intervention, even in several locations, with information and decision-making superiority, relying on professional, contracted and voluntary reserve staff, to carry out operations, within national and allied frameworks.
- As a result, in the 2030s the Hungarian Defense Forces will be able to guarantee the security and sovereignty of Hungary, on the one hand, through credible deterrence based on its national capabilities, and on the other hand, within the framework of allied collective defense (enjoying its security guarantees and contributing to its strengthening), as well as in international peace support operations, thus contributing to the stability of the international system.
- A systemic approach is applied in planning from the individual fighter to the brigade level, and in terms of the ability to cooperate between branches, specialized teams,

and weapons systems in both the human and technological dimensions.

- Capability-based force planning takes place.
- Where possible, the procurement of “product families” is preferred in the case of weapon systems.
- Lifecycle planning takes place in terms of costs and operational maintenance.
- A process-based approach is applied and the integrated implementation of procurement, production, maintenance, research, development and innovation with the expansion and development of the domestic military industrial base takes place.
- The establishment and maintenance of the national production and supply base in some highly important military industrial segments is considered as a national economic development measure.
- Acquiring and combining “incoming” (new, even still under development) state-of-the-art and future technologies into new products (such as the Lynx IFV and Gidrán MRAP) has become a practice to develop next-generation military technology with the eventual option of international sales of the new products.
- The “networked” development of the defense industry in the region is a fundamental goal (through German, Czech, Austrian, Hungarian, Turkish cooperations and acquisitions).
- Strengthening regional cooperation within Hungarian initiatives (such as HQ MND-C and R-SOCC<sup>2</sup>) is a goal.
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## ***The phases and deliverables of the Zrínyi Program***

The most significant Hungarian military development program of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was formally launched in 2017 (hence the original designation “Zrínyi-2026” used during the first years of the program). Its second phase will certainly cover the 2026–2032 period – matching NATO’s current defense planning cycle –, but will also look forward to 2036, the end of the next ten-year national planning cycle. Based on the events of recent years and the announced medium- and long-term development plans, these two large phases can be further divided into five smaller stages following the planning logic of “program budgeting” (planning – programming – financing) as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- *First phase* (2016–2026):
- Planning and preparation: 2016–2018
- First stage of implementation: 2018–2023 (medium brigade)
- Second stage of implementation: 2023–2026
- *Second phase*: 2026–2032+

2 HQ MND-C: Headquarters Multinational Division – Central; R-SOCC: Regional Special Operations Component Command.

3 This division of the program is solely the subjective opinion of the author based on the functional interpretation of the program, not announced formalized stages.

- Third stage of implementation: 2026–2028 (heavy brigade)
- Long-term developments (2028–2032+)

Within the first phase, the planning and preparatory work of the program took place between 2016–2018, the basis of which was certainly a comprehensive assessment of Hungary's security environment, an analysis of military threats and challenges requiring a partly military/national defense response. Since a national security and/or military strategy was not formally adopted by the government until 2020/2021, the initial government/national defense assessment is not publicly known. But the two strategic documents highlight in retrospect the clear ideas and goals of defense modernization. These not only established the cornerstones of the Zrínyi Program, but also defined the tasks of the economic, societal and technological subsystems of national defense for the following years in the broader spectrum of military development. We can assess that the NSS and NMS subsequently formally "codified" strategic tasks already under realization.

The specific plans for the development of the HDF were mainly carried out in close cooperation of the HDF Command (including the Chief of the Army Planning Group), the National Armaments Directorate of the Ministry of Defense, the Military National Security Service, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, in an elaboration process that was completely closed to external observers. In the period until roughly 2018, the first military technology procurement and defense industrial development decisions were undertaken, the first agreements were concluded, and then, following the early agreements, deliveries also began. These steps – as we will see below – had been supported by a dynamically expanding defense budget.

The first stage of the implementation of the Zrínyi Program both in terms of procurements and defense industrial investments can be placed roughly between 2018 and 2023, the planning endpoint being the achievement of the operational capability of the medium brigade earmarked to NATO collective defense by 2023. Providing the forces for the brigade structure, strengthening national defense capabilities and interoperability with allies, the military modernization that serves these purposes and the integration of new assets into the force structure are the main tasks until then. In this phase, the procurement and delivery of military equipment began in several capability development projects of the air force (for example, H145M helicopters, Zlin training aircraft), in the case of heavy equipment of the ground forces (Leopard-2A4 training tanks, PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzers) and through the modernization of personal equipment (small and light arms). In this period, kick-starting an Airbus factory in Gyula producing helicopter propulsion parts, the assembly and production lines of handguns in Kiskunfélegyháza, the Lynx IFV factory in Zalaegerszeg and the production lines of Gidrán MRAPs in Kaposvár took place. This five-year period lays the foundation for the expansion of military industry production and the partial integration of German and Hungarian military land forces industries. The Hungarian military industry portfolio was expanded to



include two foreign military industry companies (Hirtenberger Defense Systems, Aero Vodochody) as well.

The second stage of implementation falls between 2023 and 2026, when the remaining batch of the major military equipment that was previously contracted for and not purchased off-the-shelf will be manufactured and delivered. Examples include Embraer KC-390 military transport aircraft, L-39NG aircraft, Airbus H225M helicopters for the air force, Leopard2-A7+ tanks and Lynx IFVs for the ground forces, etc. In the light of the currently visible planning, the Hungarian defense budget meets the NATO expectation from the beginning of the period, namely it reaches the level of 2% of GDP already in 2023. The end of this phase can be considered the creation of the heavy brigade offered to NATO and the achievement of its operational capability in 2028. Following the arrival of the military equipment, international cooperation will also intensify – primarily with Germany in the 2023 rotation of the NATO Reaction Forces and through the creation of the German-led EU Battle Group in 2025. These larger formations may enable the Hungarian units, mostly rearmed with German technology, to increase their interoperability and, in the medium term, even their ability to integrate at the subunit level with the Bundeswehr. In the meantime, according to the plans, production will begin at all new military industrial companies – in addition to those mentioned above, for example at the ammunition and explosives factories in Várpalota – first to meet the needs of the Hungarian Defense Forces, and then hopefully also for export purposes. Research and development activities will begin in several technological areas – mainly in the field of combat vehicles, their defense systems and drone technology – so that the upgraded military equipment would become an even more attractive product on the international arms market.

The second comprehensive phase of the Zrínyi Program, as well as the third stage of its implementation, will begin in 2026. The process aimed at establishing the heavy brigade and achieving its operational capability will continue until 2028 with the delivery of previously ordered military equipment, and through the training of the personnel and conducting military exercises. The year 2026 can be the cut-off point not only because this was the endpoint of the original ten-year planning, but also because the national defense leadership must make another strategic decision about the continuation in 2026 at the latest, when the current Gripen leasing contract expires. Considering the already contracted Gripen software modernization and the extraordinary need for resources for a potential replacement type (especially F-35) in addition to already running programs, the retention and further modernization of Gripen equipment seems more likely now.

Finally, after 2028, long-term developments and – depending on resources and the requirements of the security environment – even further quantitative expansions may take place for the equipment types already in service. The second half of the decade will be a period of “fine-tuning” for the operation of modern equipment and systems, cooperation between units in national and international frameworks and the deepening of interoperability, with regards to possible first operational roles. By



the end of this period, defense industry production should be running smoothly, and the first innovation results should be apparent, while allied cooperation increases research and development in the field of emerging and disruptive technologies, at least autonomous systems, cyber defense and in the application of artificial intelligence. Finally, filling the expanded force structure and the related training tasks are the biggest human resources challenges facing the Hungarian Defense Forces until the end of the 2020s.

## ***Providing the necessary resources: Defense spending trends***

By the time the strategic drivers triggered the planning of comprehensive defense modernization in the 2010s, the HDF had to face the grim effects of residual funding for two decades: lost capabilities (artillery, armored vehicles) and the calculable obsolescence of some large weapon systems at the end of their lifecycles (essentially all Soviet/Russian manufactured helicopters). As Figure 1 shows, nominal defense spending remained practically flat between 2004 and 2015, with the 2008/2009 financial crisis taking a heavy toll.

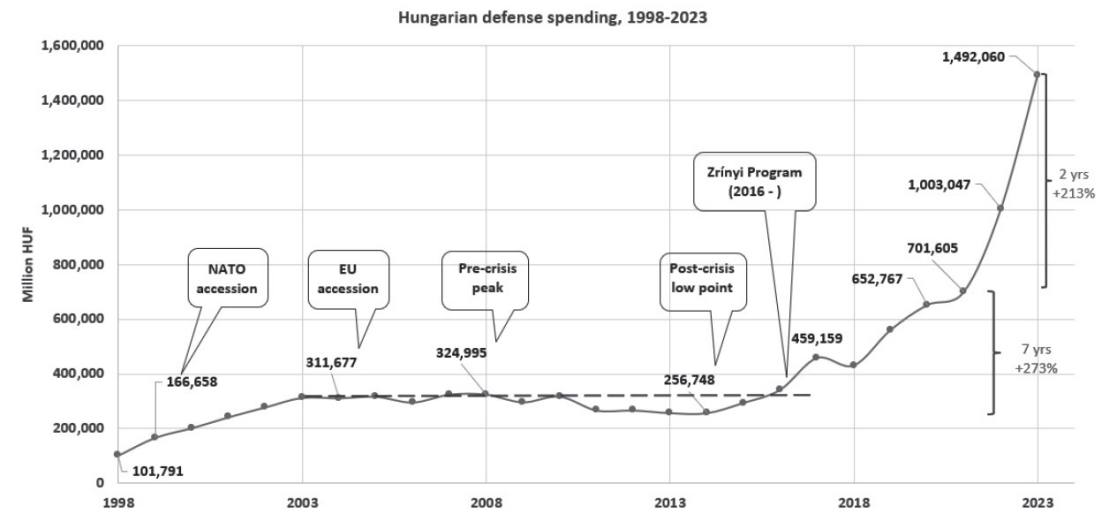


Figure 1: *Hungarian defense spending trends: main drivers and obstacles, 1998–2023<sup>4</sup>*  
(Source: author)

4 The source of data are national Budget Acts and Accounting Bills.

In 2014, the Hungarian defense budget was HUF 54.5 billion (or 0.83% of GDP), 17.5% lower than in 2004, the year of EU accession. In the trend outlined above, 2014/2015 was the turning point, which, in addition to the change in Hungarian security perception and the improvement of the economic situation, was also reinforced by the incentive that at the Newport NATO summit all member states made a political commitment that in the next ten years they would increase their defense spending in the direction of the 2% of GDP expected by the alliance. The Hungarian budget jumped in 2015 with an initial annual increase of 14.74%, and to maintain the momentum of the process, a government decision extended the planned period of growth until 2026, by which time the new goal was to reach 1.79%, calculated with an annual GDP growth of 0.1% (Csiki Varga – Lázár 2021: 3). Again, the target date of 2026 was no accident – it represented the defense planning horizon of the Zrínyi Program, which had already been under planning at that time. Finally, the significant resource requirement of the Zrínyi Program was to be covered by Government Decree No. 1283/2017, bringing forward the target date of reaching the 2% defense spending level in relation to GDP to 2024. Moreover, the government set the goal of maintaining this level from 2025 onwards.

In accordance with these goals, a significant increase in resources was allocated in 2016 (16.29%) and 2017 (34%). The solid political commitment to strengthening defense capabilities was also proven by the fact that, even in 2020–2021, when the coronavirus epidemic caused an economic shutdown and another extreme recession, the increase in defense spending continued unabated. It is worth keeping in mind that the large-scale modernization programs and investments already underway in 2020 could only have been stopped with great loss and damage, especially because the purchases were also connected with targeted industrial development in six clusters, and economic damage and loss of trust from partners would have also resulted in the probable loss of restarting, so we consider this decision to be rational even under the given dire circumstances.

The increasing trend of Hungarian defense spending has therefore remained dynamic: in the seven years between its lowest point (2014) and 2020, it nominally almost tripled, and based on the 2021–2023 budget laws, another 213% increase is expected in just two years. The increase in resources is absolutely justified: the comprehensive modernization of military technology, the related development of the defense industry and innovation, and the planned expansion of the contract and reserve personnel, while raising salary levels to remain a competitive employer, require an extraordinary abundance of resources.

The national defense portfolio of the 2023 budget, announced on July 28, 2022, allocated 1,642 billion forints to the Ministry of Defense to cover national defense, including the financing of military modernization programs, as well as sport as a new element of the Ministry's policy portfolio. Thus, the sports portfolio takes HUF 149.940 billion out of the gross sum, so the value of the actual 2023 defense budget will be HUF 1,492.06 billion based on current plans. This still represents a year-on-year increase of 48.75% compared to 2022 (Csiki Varga, 2023: 8–9). The growth

will therefore remain with us in the coming years, to a great deal as a constraint arising from sealed purchases (insofar as we wish to finance the contracts already concluded), and it will also be fueled by the forced extra financing needs of personnel expenses.

## ***A focal point: German-Hungarian defense industrial cooperation***

In line with the previously outlined strategic goals and planning guidelines, the German–Hungarian defense cooperation projects that are at the core of Zrínyi Program in many respects, clearly highlight the synergies and intersections of force development, arms modernization, defense industrial production and international military. As we have assessed earlier:

When looking forward in a broad sense, it is very likely that in the foreseeable future the HDF will be the most interoperable partner of the Bundeswehr in the Central and Eastern European region, which will make Hungary an indispensable partner for Germany, if Berlin seriously aims to scale up its efforts with regards to European defense cooperation. Conversely, Hungarian defense policy will inevitably rely and depend on Germany for decades to come. Although this partnership – just as in the case of bilateral economic relations – will always remain asymmetrical (due to the basic characteristics of the two countries' relationship) and more vital from a Hungarian perspective, it still means that German–Hungarian defense policies will be deeply intertwined. (Etl – Csiki Varga, 2021: 67)

Depending on how deep and elaborate a cooperation framework is – what we call pooling and sharing of capabilities –, it can range from simple joint operations through the ever more complex tasks of creating joint formations to in-depth military industrial cooperation, even to the joint production, research, and development of military technologies. In Hungary's case, Germany has become the best example: the “level” of creating joint formations (previous embodied in the 2014 creation of the V4 EU Battlegroup with Central European allies) will be reached within the German-led EU Battlegroup (2024) and the NATO Response Force (2025). The most profound joint activity, the joint production, research, and development of the defense technology, is founded upon the activities of Rheinmetall, Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW), and the established German–Hungarian joint ventures.

Such ventures with an international background and Hungarian companies should play a role in the development of combat vehicles, with the inevitable role of Rheinmetall in many areas. Rheinmetall Hungary will manufacture Lynx combat vehicles in Zalaegerszeg, and the nearby ZalaZone off-road vehicle test track will be able to support the testing. The value of the investment related to the establishment of the Lynx factory was already estimated at HUF 70 billion in 2022. “The investment, including suppliers, will create more than half a thousand jobs”, said László Palkovics in 2020 about the project's role in stimulating the economy (Trautmann, 2020).

Other development opportunities for the Lynx include the adaptation of the Israeli Rafael company's Trophy active defense system to combat vehicles, and the further development of the turret weapon.

It is also possible to forecast the adaptation of Rheinmetall's next-generation 35-millimeter anti-aircraft machine gun system, the Oerlikon Skyranger, to Hungarian combat vehicles, which is a combination of a 30-millimeter automatic machine gun, guided missiles and a high-energy (20 KW) laser. Another large group of combat vehicles will be the Gidrás produced in Kaposvár in cooperation with Turkish company Ejder Yalcin and Rheinmetall. A joint German–Hungarian development program with Rheinmetall and KMW for a next generation automated 8x8 hybrid-drive IFV, based on the German Boxer, may also be started in Kaposvár. If manufacturing goes ahead, this new vehicle could even be the successor of BTR-80s for the second half of the 2030s. The University of Óbuda also conducts related military industry research in Kaposvár. The development of autonomous operation would also rely on the possibilities of the ZalaZone track in Zalaegerszeg, and Rheinmetall's Mission Master XT, for example, could be the “technological model” (Huszák, 2021).

## Conclusions

In 2023, the goals and modernization programs of the Zrínyi Homeland Defense and Armed Forces Development Program are reaching the end of the first implementation stage. With sustained political commitment and currently abundant financing, the conclusions we can draw for this first stage are rather optimistic: the comprehensiveness of the program is well reflected in the across-the-board procurements and the defense industrial projects kick-started in these first few years, with a good chance of continuing according to the plan. Fielding the medium and heavy brigades earmarked for NATO in the next five years and ensuring high interoperability within joint formations with the German Bundeswehr will be the next milestones for assessing results.



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# РЕФОРМА МАЂАРСКИХ ОДБРАМБЕНИХ СНАГА

**Апстракт:** Модернизација мађарских одбрамбених снага започела је средином 2010-их након две деценије занемаривања и недовољног финансирања. У раду се мапирају, објашњавају и процењују унутрашњи покретачи модернизације одбране у оквиру Програма развоја домовинске одбране и оружаних снага „Зрињски“, ослањајући се на примарне отворене изворе о војној стратегији, планирању и буџетирању, као и на секундарне изворе о имплементацији модернизације одбране, укључујући набавке и развој одбрамбене индустрије. Како је немачко-мађарска одбрамбена сарадња постала централни елемент модернизације, која се сада шири од набавке до заједничких формација и заједничке производње, кратка процена студије случаја на крају наглашава шта је у сржи дугорочне модернизације, где синергије развоја снага, модернизација наоружања, одбрамбена индустријска производња и међународни војни задаци међусобно јачају.

**Кључне речи:** МАЂАРСКА, СТРАТЕГИЈА, ВОЈСКА, ОДБРАМБЕНА ИНДУСТРИЈА, НАТО, РЕФОРМА.