

FOREWORD

FORCE MODERNIZATION CHALLENGES

NATO is approaching its 70th anniversary and as it is the case in such moments, we tend to stop and think, pondering what we have accomplished in the past and what the future holds.

Although we can be proud that Hungary is a member of the most enduring military Alliance, we also have to realize that the international defence community seems to struggle with how to organize, strategize, and act effectively in increasingly complex and emergent contexts, where the previous distinctions between war and peace are blurred beyond comprehension, and great-power competition is also on the rise.

‘Black swan’ events continue to shatter any illusion of stability or extension of normalcy and the Hungarian Defence Forces, as part of the Alliance, appear increasingly unable to deal with these problems using traditional planning and organizing methodologies alone.

This new and increasingly complex context requires new and noble approaches from policymakers, and military personnel alike. Even though the Zrínyi 2026 program provides sufficient resources to acquire and develop new and modern equipment, one thing is sure: during the force modernization process we will encounter a myriad challenges we have not experienced previously, and we will need better foresight supported by modern technology, agile processes, and a different leadership mind-set to solve these wicked problems.

In the *Hungarian Defence Review*, we fully realize these challenges and use the academic freedom, combined with military expertise to suggest response options to the changes in the hope that these ideas will be acted upon and the result will be new approaches to look for solutions.

The Hungarian Defence Forces has come to realize that the current force modernization is nothing short of a digital transformation and the force which was designed and optimized for traditional challenges, has to fulfil its obligation to defend the integrity and sovereignty of the country, but at the same time we have to build new capabilities as well to be effective on today’s VUCA battlefield.

Adaptation is certainly not new to the HDF, which has a long history, and has undergone several focus shifts before. Yet the tempo have changed the game recently, and driven by a new strategic focus, we have embarked on a very ambitious journey of organizational transformation of an unprecedented pace.

We are moving ahead at a pace rapid for a large and bureaucratic organization, however, adaptation and transformation has never been an easy process. Preparing for the future is increasingly difficult. There are no blueprints, rules or best practices anymore, and frequently an organization’s successful tools from yesterday actually work against it in discovering tomorrow’s challenges.

The centrepiece of this approach is a better equipped, responsive, and readily deployable defence force, which also possesses offset capabilities as well as traditional means to fight in various aspects of the modern battlefield. Thus, the Hungarian Defence Forces has to think and act like a network as well, and this requires institutional adaptation beyond what had previously been sufficient.

The Ministry of Defence has built an excellent relationship with the Ministry of Innovation and Technology as well as other organizations including both academia and industry, and we are leveraging these opportunities to develop new and novel approaches to secure our sustained competitive advantage.

It is clear, that the time for action is now, and we believe that the intellectual capital of the *Hungarian Defence Review* authors is a contribution to our national security.

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