

## **THE DOCTRINE OF "ECONOMIC INFANTRY": A GEOECONOMIC CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS OF INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSOURCING AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY – THE CASE OF SLOVAKIA**

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**Abstract:** This paper analyzes the sophisticated mechanisms of geoeconomic penetration within the European Union, focusing on the strategic confrontation between Hungary and Slovakia. Building upon the author's framework regarding geoeconomic positioning in Central Europe (Šarić, 2018), this research introduces the concept of state-backed corporate expansion, tripartite doctrine encompassing energy dominance (MOL Group), financial leverage (OTP Bank), and the socio-economic mobilization of ethnic minorities as instruments of state power. Utilizing a hybrid methodology that combines PEST and SWOT diagnostics with Pearson's correlation coefficient, the paper quantifies the relationship between Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in critical infrastructure and the gradual erosion of national logistical autonomy. The findings indicate a high positive correlation ( $r > 0.87$ ) between the outsourcing of strategic energy and transport services and the emergence of what the author defines as "Infrastructural Siege" and "Financial Occupation."

**Key words:** Geoeconomics, Economic Infantry, National Sovereignty, Infrastructure Outsourcing, Pearson Correlation, MOL, OTP, Slovakia

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, geoeconomics has evolved beyond simple economic cooperation, becoming a strategic instrument of statecraft (Blackwill & Harris, 2016) used to achieve national interests through economic means rather than military force. This shift represents what (Luttwak, 1990) famously described as the "logic of conflict in the grammar of commerce," where trade and investment patterns reflect geopolitical objectives.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the author has previously identified specific geoeconomic dynamics between Croatia and Hungary (Šarić, 2018),

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emphasizing that positioning within the European Union requires a profound understanding of asymmetric economic interdependence. In subsequent studies, the focus expanded to the energy sector as a key lever of power (Šarić, 2023), while a case study of Italy (Šarić, 2024) demonstrated how nation-states utilize geoeconomic tools to strengthen their regional positions. Particularly significant is the analysis of Hungarian port construction in Italy (Šarić, 2025a), which serves as an empirical example of strategic control over logistics hubs outside national borders.

This doctrine—which the author conceptually defines as "Economic Infantry" (referring to state-backed national champions acting as primary vehicles for outward strategic investment) - has been addressed in the context of strategic vulnerabilities in the Republic of Croatia (Šarić, 2025b) and Romania (Šarić, 2025c). However, it reaches its most complex form in the case of Slovakia. In this context, the outsourcing of logistics and energy services transcends standard business logic, evolving into a systematic reconfiguration of economic sovereignty.

The author's research is based on longitudinal observations initiated in 2010, during the transformation of Hungarian foreign policy from a reactive posture to a proactive geoeconomic strategy. While this assertive approach is strongly associated with the administration of Viktor Orbán, it is crucial to detect the continuity tracing back to the government of Ferenc Gyurcsány. It was during that period that the strategic positioning of Hungarian "national champions" (e.g., MOL, OTP) began in Central and Eastern European markets—a process subsequently accelerated and institutionalized after 2010.

This transition from "silent penetration" to an assertive geoeconomic strategy was scientifically articulated by the author in 2018 (Šarić, 2018), suggesting that Hungary's regional approach seeks to establish a high degree of economic influence over neighboring strategic assets. Today, after fifteen years of this doctrine's maturation, it manifests as a synchronized geoeconomic framework utilizing energy, finance, and infrastructure as integrated tools for regional influence. This paper aims to empirically examine these dynamics by analyzing correlation coefficients between capital entry and control over strategic sectors, testing the hypothesis of systematic geoeconomic expansion in Central Europe.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodological framework of this paper employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative environmental scanning with quantitative relational analysis. This hybrid model is designed to deconstruct complex geoeconomic processes that often transcend standard market transactions, focusing on the intersection of corporate expansion and state strategic objectives.

### **Analytical Framework: Environmental and Strategic Mapping**

The first phase of the research utilizes PEST analysis (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) not merely as a managerial tool, but as a systemic environmental scanning method to identify the macro-determinants of the geoeconomic landscape. Building upon previous applications of PEST in strategic planning (Šarić, 2017), this framework categorizes the levers used in the projection of economic influence from Hungary toward Slovakia.

The second phase involves a SWOT analysis, which serves as a diagnostic instrument for mapping the structural vulnerabilities of the host state. In this context, the SWOT matrix is utilized to identify "strategic gaps" in national economic sectors. Following the model developed by the author

(Šarić, 2021), these gaps are analyzed as entry points for foreign strategic actors (e.g., MOL, OTP), facilitating what is conceptually termed as "strategic infrastructural integration."

#### **Quantitative Analysis: Relational Testing via Pearson's Correlation**

To supplement the qualitative findings, the study applies Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between key geoeconomic variables over a ten-year period (2015–2025).

The analysis tests the relationship between:

- Geoeconomic Input (Independent Variable X): Indicators of capital inflow, including Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), state-backed foundation subsidies (e.g., BGA), and credit exposure through national banking champions (OTP).
- Sectoral Impact (Dependent Variable Y): Indicators of domestic market share in critical infrastructure, changes in strategic land ownership, and the degree of cross-border logistical integration.

The correlation is calculated using the standard formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum(y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Recognizing the limitations of simple correlation, this study treats values above 0.70 as strong statistical indicators of a synchronized geoeconomic pattern. To address the distinction between correlation and causality, the results are interpreted alongside qualitative process-tracing, allowing for a more robust identification of strategic intent behind the observed economic trends. This approach ensures that the findings provide an empirically grounded basis for analyzing regional geoeconomic shifts. Given the specific nature of geoeconomic data and the ten-year observation window ( $n=11$ ), Pearson's  $r$  is used as an exploratory tool to identify trends, rather than a definitive proof of causality. The results are contextualized with qualitative analysis to ensure robustness.

### **HUNGARIAN GEOECONOMIC STRATEGY AND THE SLOVAK CONTEXT**

The contemporary Hungarian geoeconomic strategy in 2026 transcends traditional market logic, integrating corporate expansion into a broader national framework that impacts regional economic sovereignty. Such a framework aligns with the conceptualization of regional powers using geoeconomic tools to establish hierarchical relations or strategic dominance (Wigell, 2016). As analyzed in the author's previous research (Šarić, 2025), this strategy reflects a model of asymmetric regional interdependence, where strategic sectors serve as levers for geopolitical influence.

#### **Energy as a Strategic Instrument: The Role of MOL and MET Group**

A defining characteristic of Hungarian geoeconomics is the alignment of corporate interests with national strategic objectives. Prime Minister Orbán underscored this connection by stating: "If anyone questions the integrity of MOL employees, we will always respond. However, if anyone forms an alliance with MOL, they will form a strong alliance with the Hungarian people" (Šarić, 2023). This narrative suggests that "national champions" like MOL Group and MET Group are not merely commercial entities but strategic instruments of foreign policy. Through significant control over refinery capacities and cross-border energy trade (ChemXplore, 2026), these actors establish a high degree of energy-sector influence within the Slovak market.

### Interplay of Identity Politics and Economic Influence

Slovak Hungarian relations are characterized by a complex interplay between identity disputes and economic penetration. Legislative tensions, such as those surrounding the State Language Act (Act No. 270/1995 Coll.) and the 2010 Hungarian Citizenship Act (Venice Commission, 2011), function as catalysts for establishing socio-economic cohesion. The instrumentalization of national minority issues through state-funded foundations, primarily Bethlen Gábor Alap (BGA Zrt.), allows for a targeted entry into the Slovak economic space. In this context, Hungary acts not only as a foreign investor but as a strategic institutional actor, utilizing financial support models to strengthen its regional footprint - a process conceptually defined by the author as "strategic financial integration."

The historical continuity of these tensions - from the border incidents of 2008 near Komárno and Dunajská Streda to high-level diplomatic friction - has often preceded or accompanied geoeconomic expansion. The shift from Robert Fico's initial characterization of extraterritorial citizenship as a "security threat" (Slovak Spectator, 2010) toward a more pragmatic coexistence highlights the role of energy dependence in shaping political relations. This transition indicates that the Hungarian energy and logistics sectors have become pillars of regional stability, transforming what was once open conflict into a system of institutionalized economic influence.

The doctrinal framework of Hungarian geoeconomics is further elucidated by public policy articulations, most notably during the 2023 Tusk speech (Orbán, 2023a). By redefining sovereignty through the lens of resource control and equating corporate integrity (MOL) with national integrity (Orbán, 2023b), the Hungarian leadership confirms that energy and logistics assets in Slovakia (as well as in Italy and Romania) are viewed as integrated components of state power rather than isolated market assets.

### PEST ANALYSIS: Hungarian Geoeconomic Influence in Slovakia

To identify the macro-environmental determinants of Hungarian geoeconomic influence, this study utilizes a PEST framework. This allows for a systematic categorization of how political and economic levers are integrated with social and technological factors to project influence over the Slovak market. The following PEST matrix (Table 1) serves as a diagnostic framework for organizing observed empirical data across the energy, financial, and strategic minority support sectors.

**Table 1.** PEST Analysis of Hungarian Geoeconomic Instruments in Slovakia.

Source: Author's elaboration based on MOL Group (2024), NBS (2024), and BGA Zrt. (2024).

Factor	MOL Group (Energy Sector)	OTP Bank (Financial Sector)	Strategic Minority Support (BGA)
<b>Political (P)</b>	Utilization of Slovnaft as a key asset for national energy security; lobbying for EU sanctions exemptions on Russian oil.	Coordination of investment incentives between Budapest and Bratislava; OTP acts as a vehicle for bilateral financial diplomacy.	Legislative support for the Hungarian minority; political conditioning of regional stability through minority rights and citizenship acts.
<b>Economic (E)</b>	<b>Strategic Asset Control:</b> Dominance over the Slovnaft refinery and pipeline influencing regional	<b>Capital Distribution:</b> Preferential financing for Hungarian-linked SMEs; increasing Hungarian FDI	<b>Targeted Capital Transfers:</b> Massive funding via Bethlen Gábor Alap (BGA) for land acquisition and real estate in strategic corridors.

	logistics and transport through targeted credit costs.		through targeted credit exposure.
<b>Social (S)</b>	<b>Employment Leverage:</b> Slovnaft's status as a major employer makes energy logistics a factor in maintaining social peace.	<b>Community Building:</b> Strengthening the Hungarian-speaking middle class through localized banking and business networks.	<b>Demographic Preservation:</b> Economic sustainability of the minority through land ownership and identity-based subsidies.
	<b>Technical Standards:</b> Dependence on Hungarian-controlled processing technology and digital logistics chains in the energy sector.	<b>Financial Platforms:</b> Integration of Slovak clients into Hungarian digital banking and Fintech ecosystems.	<b>Industrial Modernization:</b> Technological binding of the Slovak agricultural sector to Hungarian suppliers via machinery subsidies.
<b>Technological (T)</b>			

By categorizing these factors, we establish the qualitative basis for the subsequent quantitative correlation analysis. This structure ensures that the statistical testing is grounded in the specific political and economic realities of the Slovak-Hungarian geoeconomic relationship, moving beyond a final proof of intent toward a rigorous empirical assessment.

### STRATEGIC DIAGNOSIS: SLOVAKIA'S GEOECONOMIC POSITIONING

To analyze the structural vulnerabilities of the Slovak economy in the face of assertive regional investment strategies, this study employs a SWOT analysis. This matrix identifies the internal and external factors that define Slovakia's capacity to maintain economic sovereignty within the Central European geoeconomic framework.

**Table 2.** SWOT Analysis of Slovakia's Geoeconomic Vulnerabilities

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
1. <b>Institutional Protection:</b> EU and Eurozone membership provides a stable regulatory and monetary framework, limiting external currency manipulation.	1. <b>Energy Vulnerability:</b> Significant reliance on the Slovnaft refinery and gas transit routes influenced by Hungarian strategic capital.
2. <b>Industrial Diversification:</b> A robust automotive sector (VW, Kia, Stellantis) serves as a macroeconomic counterweight to sectoral concentration.	2. <b>Regional Disparities:</b> Economic neglect of southern Slovak regions creates entry points for targeted cross-border financial influence.
3. <b>Security Framework:</b> NATO membership provides a stable geopolitical environment that limits non-market forms of strategic pressure.	3. <b>Political Fragmentation:</b> Internal institutional instability can be utilized as leverage through minority-based political representation.
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
1. <b>Regional Integration:</b> The Three Seas Initiative offers alternative North-South logistical connections, potentially reducing transit dependence.	1. <b>Strategic Logistics Dominance:</b> Concentrated control over energy supply chains via MOL/Slovnaft, impacting national transport autonomy.
2. <b>Supply Diversification:</b> Expansion of interconnectors (e.g., Poland) and LNG terminal access to weaken centralized energy hubs.	2. <b>Financial Market Concentration:</b> Potential dominance of the banking sector by regional champions (OTP), creating credit dependency for local SMEs.
3. <b>EU Cohesion Policy:</b> Strategic use of development funds for regional revitalization to mitigate the influence of external "guardian" funding models.	3. <b>Strategic Asset Acquisition:</b> Risk of localized loss of control over agricultural land and real estate through targeted foundation subsidies.

The identified threats in the SWOT matrix serve as the basis for the operationalization of variables in the subsequent quantitative analysis. By testing the correlation between these identified vulnerabilities and capital inflows, the study moves from qualitative observation to empirical testing of geoeconomic patterns.

### **SECTORAL ANALYSIS: ENERGY AND FUEL LOGISTICS (MOL/SLOVNAFT)**

To further deconstruct the specific mechanisms of geoeconomic influence, this study analyzes the energy sector, which serves as the primary lever for regional strategic positioning. The following SWOT matrix evaluates the position of the Slovak energy market through the lens of MOL/Slovnaft’s operations.

**Table 3.** Sectoral SWOT Analysis: Energy and Fuel Logistics

#### **STRENGTHS**

1. **Operational Efficiency:** Slovnaft remains one of Europe’s most modern refineries with a high conversion rate and integrated supply chains.
2. **Strategic Network:** An integrated system of pipelines and storage facilities ensures a stable, albeit centralized, supply for the domestic market.
3. **Retail Market Dominance:** An extensive network of filling stations provides direct influence over end-consumer costs and national transport logistics.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. **Infrastructural Modernization:** Adapting for the non-Russian crude via the Adria Pipeline (JANAF), strengthening energy connectivity with Croatia and the Mediterranean.
2. **Energy Transition:** Leveraging EU funds for green hydrogen and decarbonization to diversify the refinery’s strategic role beyond fossil fuels.
3. **Diversification Initiatives:** Synergies with the Three Seas Initiative to connect with LNG terminals, potentially reducing vertical dependence on a single regional hub.

#### **WEAKNESSES**

1. **Technological Lock-in:** High optimization for Russian Export Blend (REB) crude, creating a structural pretext for maintaining specific energy corridors.
2. **Managerial Centralization:** Strategic investment and logistics pricing decisions are primarily aligned with the parent company’s regional objectives in Budapest.
3. **Transit Path Dependency:** A historical focus on East-West routes, which reinforces the role of the Hungarian energy hub in Slovak supply routes.

#### **THREATS**

1. **Logistics Market Concentration:** The potential to utilize Slovnaft’s infrastructure to limit the entry of regional competitors into the Slovak market.
2. **Strategic Leverage:** The risk of utilizing energy supply and logistics pricing as a tool for achieving broader diplomatic or political concessions.
3. **Transborder Influence Projection:** Utilizing Slovak territory as a strategic corridor for extending energy influence toward Czechia and Austria ("**Geoeconomic Corridor**").

The qualitative indicators identified in the PEST and SWOT matrices suggest a high degree of integration between Hungarian corporate expansion and state strategic objectives. To verify these observations, the following section applies Pearson’s correlation analysis to test the empirical strength of these relationships between 2015 and 2025.

### **SECTORAL ANALYSIS: FINANCE AND BANKING (OTP AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUNDS)**

To complement the energy sector analysis, this section examines the financial lever of Hungarian geoeconomic influence. The banking sector, led by regional champions such as OTP, acts as a primary vehicle for capital distribution and strategic investment, particularly in southern Slovakia.

**Table 4.** Sectoral SWOT Analysis: Finance and Banking**STRENGTHS**

1. **Capital Liquidity:** High capacity for rapid capital injection into strategic regional projects and SMEs.
2. **Regional Specialization:** Deep market penetration in southern Slovakia, where domestic financial institutions may have a less specialized presence.
3. **Institutional Integration:** Direct operational links between the banking sector and state-backed funds (e.g., Bethlen Gábor Alap) for targeted regional support.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

1. **Cross-Border Infrastructure:** Financing of integrated projects that strengthen logistical and economic connectivity between southern Slovakia and Hungary.
2. **Digital Financial Integration:** Utilizing Fintech and digital banking platforms to streamline capital flows toward strategically identified sectors.
3. **Strategic Financing Roles:** Positioning as a key financial intermediary for Three Seas Initiative projects, potentially marginalizing domestic state banking influence.

**WEAKNESSES**

1. **Extra-Eurozone Decision Making:** While Slovakia operates within the Eurozone, strategic capital allocation is influenced by the monetary and political framework in Budapest.
2. **Sectoral Concentration:** A focus on specific regional and identity-based economic interests may limit the broader resilience of the investment portfolio.
3. **Institutional Perception:** The potential perception of financial actors as extensions of state policy, which may limit expansion among the broader national population.

**THREATS**

1. **Economic Enclavization:** The risk of creating a closed economic ecosystem where regional SMEs become exclusively dependent on external capital, weakening national economic integration.
2. **Capital Repatriation Risk:** The potential for significant profit extraction or capital reallocation to support the parent company's domestic fiscal requirements.
3. **Divergent Economic Autonomy:** The risk of creating an autonomous economic zone through selective lending that operates independently of the Slovak government's economic impulses.

**SECTORAL ANALYSIS: STRATEGIC MINORITY INVESTMENTS AND LAND TENURE**

The final layer of the geoeconomic framework involves the integration of minority policy with strategic asset acquisition. This section analyzes how institutional support for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia functions as a mechanism for regional economic cohesion and long-term asset management.

**Table 5.** Sectoral SWOT Analysis: Strategic Minority Investments**STRENGTHS**

1. **Social Capital and Networking:** Strong local networks and institutionalized political leadership acting in synchronization with regional strategic objectives.
2. **Historical Continuity:** Strong historical and emotional attachment to land in Southern Slovakia facilitates the implementation of long-term asset preservation strategies.
3. **Structured Financial Support:** Foundations such as **Bethlen Gábor Alap (BGA)** ensure a consistent flow of capital for targeted regional and ethnic projects.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

1. **Leveraging EU Cooperation:** Utilizing Interreg and other cross-border programs to provide legitimate financing for regional infrastructure and minority interests.
2. **Regional Logistical Development:** Transforming Southern Slovakia into a key transit use of regional business networks to prioritize

**WEAKNESSES**

1. **Demographic Challenges:** Emigration and assimilation trends affect the long-term sustainability of the regional economic base, necessitating increased external support.
2. **Institutional Dependency:** A significant portion of the regional economy has become reliant on external state-backed subsidies, creating vulnerability to budgetary shifts.
3. **Regulatory Oversight:** Increased monitoring by national security and financial services regarding foreign funding models may impact the pace of strategic investments.

**THREATS**

1. **Concentrated Asset Acquisition:** Massive acquisition of agricultural land and real estate through specialized funds, creating a localized economic belt.
2. **Strategic Policy Divergence:** The potential

zone that primarily serves integrated regional trade and energy routes. cross-border projects. interests over national strategic

3. **Digital Economic Integration:** Connecting regional entrepreneurs through digital platforms that enhance economic cohesion independently of national institutions. 3. **Escalation of Identity Tensions:** Disputes over language and citizenship acts could trigger economic friction, potentially impacting logistical stability in southern regions.

### DISCUSSION: FROM ECONOMIC COOPERATION TO STRATEGIC INTERDEPENDENCE

The interpretation of the variables suggests that Hungary does not utilize isolated channels of influence, but rather a synchronized system of geoeconomic levers. To analyze the strategic interactions between the two states, we can apply a Game Theory model - specifically a "Sovereignty-Interdependence Game" - to map the strategic choices of Hungary (as the Strategic Investor) and Slovakia (as the Host State).

**Table 6.** Strategic Interaction Model: The Sovereignty-Interdependence Game

Slovakia/ Hungary	Strategy A: <b>Assertive FDI (Integration)</b>	Strategy B: <b>Diversified FDI (Neutrality)</b>
Consent/to Outsourcing	(H: +10, S: -5) Hungary gains control (r=0.88r equals 0.88r=0.88); Slovakia gains liquidity but loses sovereignty.	(H: -2, S: +2) Hungary seeks an alternative path; Slovakia remains isolated but sovereign.
Nationalization Attempt	(H: -5, S: -10) Hungary withdraws capital and blocks energy (MOL); Slovakia experiences systemic collapse.	(H: 0, S: 0) Status quo.

#### Variable X1: Strategic Energy Infrastructure and Market Concentration (MOL/Slovnaft)

The strong correlation between Hungarian FDI and logistical control (r=0.87) is empirically grounded in the structural position of Slovnaft (100% owned by MOL), which remains the sole refinery in Slovakia. According to MOL Group's strategic reports (Annual Reports, 2023), Hungarian capital controls not only the production vertical but also the primary logistical network of pipelines and storage facilities.

In this context, Slovakia's geographical position as a landlocked state creates a condition of logistical path dependency, where access to alternative crude oil sources is operationally mediated by MOL's infrastructure. This confirms the author's earlier findings on strategic infrastructural integration (Šarić, 2023), suggesting that control over energy nodes serves as a primary lever for regional geoeconomic positioning.

#### Variable X2: Institutional Minority Funding and Asset Acquisition (BGA Foundation)

The high correlation (r= 0.75) between subsidies from the Bethlen Gábor Alap (BGA) foundation and regional land acquisition (y2) indicates a synchronized pattern between identity-based funding and economic expansion. An analysis of the BGA Zrt. database (Pályázati adatbázis) reveals that significant capital flows are specifically directed toward the agricultural and real estate sectors in Southern Slovakia.

The author interprets these results as empirical evidence of a "strategic investment footprint" - a process where state-backed capital, channeled through minority institutions, facilitates a long-term shift in the ownership structure of strategically relevant territories. This localized concentration of assets, supported by the "motherland's" capital, represents a sophisticated model of geoeconomic anchoring, ensuring a permanent economic presence in the border regions.

### Variable X3: Institutional Financial Expansion and Sectoral Credit Dependency

The high correlation coefficient (0.79) between OTP Bank's credit exposure to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in border regions and the percentage of logistics companies utilizing integrated regional supply chains indicates a process of strategic financial anchoring. According to data from the National Bank of Slovakia (NBS, 2024), the targeted channeling of capital through the OTP Group facilitates the development of a distinct financial ecosystem in Southern Slovakia. The author interprets this mechanism as a "sectoral economic bypass" that operates alongside Slovak national institutions, creating a high degree of credit dependency on the Hungarian financial center for local entrepreneurs. This structural alignment ensures a high level of coordination among regional economic actors and fosters a closed-loop system where integrated regional suppliers and logistical channels are prioritized. This process further consolidates the strategic infrastructural integration described in Section 5.1, effectively institutionalizing a model of regional geoeconomic influence.

### Variable X4: Institutional Identity Policy and Cross-Border Social Capital

The relationship between the granting of Hungarian citizenship (based on data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office – KSH) and the intensity of cross-border economic integration shows a moderate to strong correlation (0.69). Despite legislative efforts in Slovakia to regulate dual citizenship, this process has fostered a robust network of consumers and entrepreneurs with high cross-border mobility.

The author interprets this trend as a form of "institutional soft power", which serves as the socio-economic foundation for broader geoeconomic operations. In this context, identity-based affiliation acts as a mechanism for regional cohesion, providing the necessary social capital for the long-term sustainability of the strategic investment footprint described in previous sections. Without this underlying social integration, the "Economic Infantry" (the network of state-backed economic actors) would lack the institutional resilience required to maintain a consistent regional presence.

### Quantitative Synthesis: Correlation of Geoeconomic Inputs and Sectoral Outputs

The following correlation matrix summarizes the relationship between Hungarian geoeconomic inputs and the corresponding strategic outputs within the Slovak economy.

**Table 7.** Correlation Matrix of Geoeconomic Input and Logistics Outsourcing  
Source: Author's calculation based on KSH (2024) and NBS (2024)

Variable (Geoeconomic Input - Hungary)	X Variable (Logistical/Strategic Output - Slovakia)	Correlation Y Coefficient	Meaning for (Interpretation)	Analysis
<b>X1:</b> Annual volume of Hungarian FDI in Slovakia's energy sector (MOL/Slovnaft)	<b>Y1:</b> Percentage of foreign entity's market share in national oil storage and transport capacities	<b>0.87</b> (Very High)	<b>Strategic Infrastructure Control:</b> Direct link between capital inflow and control over energy logistics.	
<b>X2:</b> Total amount of subsidies from Hungarian foundations (e.g., BGA) for Southern Slovakia	<b>Y2:</b> Number of hectares of agricultural land and real estate transferred to Hungarian ownership	<b>0.75</b> (High)	<b>Strategic Asset Acquisition:</b> Correlation between institutional funding and localized ownership shifts.	

<p><b>X3:</b> OTP Bank's credit exposure to the SME sector in border regions</p>	<p><b>Y3:</b> Percentage of logistics companies in Slovakia exclusively utilizing Hungarian supply chains</p>	<p><b>0.79</b> (High)</p>	<p><b>Financial Ecosystem Integration:</b> Creation of localized financial networks alongside national institutions.</p>
<p><b>X4:</b> Number of Hungarian citizenships granted in Slovakia (ethno-politics)</p>	<p><b>Y4:</b> Intensity of cross-border logistical integration bypassing Bratislava's corridors</p>	<p><b>0.69</b> (Moderate)</p>	<p><b>SOFT POWER:</b> Influence of identity politics on the formation of informal economic corridors.</p>

Statistical verification of these coefficients is provided in the attached analytical dataset, utilizing Pearson's correlation method on time-series data from 2015 to 2025. While the Pearson coefficients (r) indicate strong to very strong relationships, the author acknowledges the limitations of the ten-year time series (n=11). Statistical significance was tested using a two-tailed t-test, with x1 and x3 showing significance at the  $p < 0.05$  level. These results are not presented as absolute causal proof but as empirical indicators of a synchronized trend. The high correlation values ( $r > 0.70$ ) align with the qualitative 'process-tracing' performed in the PEST and SWOT analyses, collectively suggesting a deliberate geoeconomic strategy of strategic anchoring in the Slovak market.

### CONCLUSION

The research has confirmed that Hungary's geoeconomic influence in Slovakia is not a series of isolated market events but a highly coordinated strategy utilizing integrated logistics, finance, and institutional minority support. The strong correlation coefficients identified in the energy sector (0.87) and the strategic land sector ( $r = 0.75$ ) provide empirical evidence that the concentration of strategic infrastructure and the targeted inflow of institutional funds have resulted in a significant shift in Slovakia's regional economic autonomy.

Through the application of the Game Theory model, this study demonstrates that Slovakia currently faces a "Lock-in" position. In this scenario, the systemic cost of re-establishing full sectoral autonomy (exit cost) has potentially surpassed the immediate costs of maintaining the current dependency on Hungarian strategic capital. The concept of "Economic Infantry"- the use of state-backed national champions and institutional networks - which the author conceptually proposed in 2018 (Šarić, 2018), finds substantial validation in the Slovak case as a synchronized mechanism of energy dominance and strategic asset anchoring.

A specific contribution of this research is the detection of an internal socio-economic substrate - an integrated ethno-economic network - which, through specialized funding models (e.g., BGA), facilitates a long-term reconfiguration of ownership over strategic resources. These findings suggest that the traditional distinction between "economic cooperation" and "strategic influence" is increasingly blurred in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To address these challenges, the results suggest that nation-states within the EU should consider refining their geoeconomic screening mechanisms to ensure that critical infrastructure and strategic land assets remain aligned with national security interests. Ultimately, this research underscores that logistical and financial autonomy represent fundamental prerequisites for sovereign decision-making. Failure to monitor and regulate the concentration of strategic

assets by foreign state-backed entities may lead to a state of permanent asymmetric interdependence, where national policy is increasingly dictated by external geoeconomic imperatives.

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