



Weekly Briefing

**Hungary political briefing:
The Prime Minister's speech
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The Prime Minister's speech

It has become a tradition in Hungarian politics for Mr. Orbán to give a speech at the Bálványos Free Summer College and Student Camp, which is basically a large-scale intellectual workshop in the Carpathian Basin, held in Tusnád. The speech is somewhat different in nature from the annual address of the Prime Minister, as it focuses more on long-term issues, but it can also be interpreted as a semi-annual account of the year. This briefing analyzes the content of the speech and the domestic reactions to it.

Introduction

The speech given by the Prime Minister on July 22, 2023. The content of the speech has provoked many reactions from around the world. Reuters, Bloomberg, Free Europe and leading news portals in France, Portugal, Austria, Belgium, Poland, Romania, Croatia, Russia, Turkey and India reported on the Hungarian Prime Minister's speech this year. In the speech, the prime minister addressed issues such as the European Union, migration, gender ideology, China's rise, imbalances in the world, Russia, the decline of the United States, the Visegrad Four countries and the Easter opening policy. First we take a look at the content of the speech, then in the second part of the briefing we look at domestic reactions.

The speech's content

The Prime Minister began his speech by referring to the Romanian demonstrators who were present at the event. He immediately emphasized the positive side of cooperation with Romania, arguing that the Latin Catholic version of Christianity is weak in the struggle for a Christian Europe and that we also need the help of Orthodox Christians. He referred to the Romanian Foreign Ministry's demarche describing what topics the Hungarian prime minister should avoid in his speech. The Hungarian prime minister responded to this individually in his speech, but most importantly, he promised that when the Romanian prime minister comes to Hungary, he will not present the Romanian politician with a list of topics to avoid. He also reminded that Hungary is the biggest supporter of Romania's membership in the Schengen area.

Mr. Orban continued his speech with world politics. The most important changes in world politics are that China has shifted the balance of world politics. He quoted Napoleon who reminded Europeans of the possible changes due to China's awakening¹. He explained the failure of the West thus: when making decisions in politics, questions must be classified as tactical, strategic, and historical. If the classification of each issue is wrong, it can lead to problems. To illustrate this, he cited two situations in which questions were misclassified. Merkel's decision was not tactical, as she believed when she supported migration in 2015, but strategic. engagement with China in the early 1970s was not strategic, but historical. He also emphasized that China is rising in a different way than the U.S. because the U.S. was created while China has always existed. In other words, the rise of China is the return of a powerful civilization with a 5,000-year-old past and 1.4 billion people. China has become a global manufacturing center focused on the production of automobiles, computers, semiconductors, and information and communication systems. What has happened is that the 300-year path of Western development has been surpassed by 30 years of development in China, he said. There is no problem, but there is a problem for world politics as the United States defends its status as a world leader. The prime minister recalled that the United States was successful in its efforts when the country was challenged by the Soviet Union and later by the European Union. He emphasized that European economic strength was also waning and contrasted it with American success.

The Prime Minister drew the attention of the audience to a simple correlation: the greater the GDP, the greater the political influence of the country in question. And that is why the U.S. is now being challenged by China. He asserted that current trends in economics, technology and military power favor Asia, not the West. He added that the creation of multilateral institutions is also evidence of China's rise, having launched the Belt and Road Initiative, BRICS and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. Orban said the most important question is whether or not the collision between China and the United States can be avoided. He concluded that the collision is more likely than not based on past experience. Hungary's role is to remind the main powers that peaceful coexistence is possible, the prime minister argued. Creating a new balance in the world will take many more years, he added.

On the European Union, the prime minister said the EU feels encircled, it is rich and weak at the same time, it sees a rebellious world, unrest, old grievances and hunger, and gigantic consumption, and millions are ready to migrate to Europe. In 2030, the GDP of the UK, Italy

¹ "Let China Sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world"

and France will no longer be among the top ten countries in the world, which is also a sign of the future, and Germany will slip from 4th to 10th place. This is the reality, the Prime Minister stressed. The European response to this new environment, decoupling (or de-risking), was strongly criticized by Mr. Orban. The policy toward Russia can also be interpreted as decoupling. This policy cannot stop Russia, but it worsens the international competitiveness of the EU, as it pays double the price for energy. He also addressed the reactions of European companies to the sanctions, which are reluctant to follow "high politics". (The volume of German exports to Kazakhstan has doubled in 2022, which the prime minister cited as a sign of the hesitant reactions of companies)

The political struggle has been described as between federalists (with a vision of empire) and sovereigntists (focused on the nation). Brexit tipped the balance between the two political forces. He argued that concepts such as rule of law procedures, conditionality, or economic governance could be introduced because the British left the EU.

As for Hungary, the prime minister analyzed the period starting in 2021, saying that the most important achievement of this period is the new constitution, which, unlike Western European constitutions, focuses on the community rather than the individual. The Hungarian constitution strengthens the place where our children will live, the male and female roles, that is, the family and our borders, because this way we can determine with whom we want to live together. In this dispute, he said that the migration crisis cannot be solved on liberal bases. At the root of the disputes with the EU is the Western European rejection of Christianity, he argued.

At the end of the speech, the Prime Minister made a list of economic achievements:

- Hungary's GDP has tripled in the last 13 years.
- GDP per capita was 66 percent of the EU average in 2010 and rose to 78 percent in 2022.
- Hungary's exports have doubled over the past 13 years.
- The employment rate was 62 percent in 2021 and 77 percent in 2022.
- In 2010, none of Hungary's universities were among the top 5 percent of universities worldwide. Last year, they were 11.
- The fertility rate went up from 1.2 to 1.5 etc.²

Domestic reactions

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-t0o97BoQaE>

Below you can see a brief summary of domestic reactions to the speech:

- The largest Hungarian opposition party responded with the next sentence: “We don't give advice to a sick person, but medicine.”
- According to a Jobbik representative, Hungary does not have a prime minister since “Orbán knows the solution to all the world's problems, just can't seem to solve the problems of the Hungarians.”
- The faction leader of the LMP responded to extra profit problems of multinational companies by pointing out that Orban protects the multinational companies in Hungary while the price of recession is paid by workers, and not by the Mercedes or the Moil company.
- In a communication, the Momentum state that “Orbán Viktor once again showed that he's good at nothing else but incitement and provocation, while he should be dealing with real issues such as the livelihood of Hungarian people and the social crisis affecting our country.”

Summary

What we could see in Prime Minister’s speech in Tusványos, is how he sees the most recent changes in the world politics and economy and what responses Hungary can give to them. While the government's stance on global issues was evident, it also exposed a notable gap in the discourse from the Hungarian opposition. Their limited focus on domestic affairs could be perceived as parochial, raising questions about their readiness to address broader global challenges and contribute to shaping historical changes. For a country like Hungary, with its rich historical heritage and strategic location, being actively engaged in international discussions is vital for its long-term well-being. In conclusion, the Prime Minister's speech shed light on the intricate interplay between Hungary's domestic policies and the rapidly evolving global landscape. It called attention to the necessity of finding a balance between addressing internal challenges and actively participating in shaping the course of world affairs.