

# **Lecture of Viktor Orbán**

## **at the webinar conference “Europe Uncensored”**

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Thank you very much; first of all may I just welcome my friends Janez and Aleksandar, President and Prime Minister. The fact is that the merit of organizing this event is not going to me; it's going to the organizers, a foundation here in Hungary, the Civic Hungarian Foundation. My job was only to find good company to have a discussion on the future of Europe.

You, Aleksandar and Janez, should know that both of you enjoy a great respect here in Hungary. Janez is always considered here in Hungary as the bravest anti-communist fighter in European politics, the big come-backer who is always fighting, never giving up and always coming back, and we respect it very much. Aleksandar, you know well that the Serbian-Hungarian relations were never as good as they are today, and we appreciate you as a leader who put back Serbia on the political map of Europe. Now it's obvious to everybody who has some common sense that without Serbia as member of the European Union, the security of the continent cannot be guaranteed. We should be very happy that now there is a leader in Serbia who could be a good partner for the European Union to negotiate on how to complete the security architecture of the European Union. That's why I thought that it would be a nice idea to be together this afternoon with you. So, thank you very much.

Plus, I would not like to hide the fact that it's always a great honour to speak in front of good patriots. All three of us invested a lot of energy to fight for the freedom and sovereignty of our nations, so this is a special club of freedom fighters and fighters for national sovereignty, so again welcome all of you. Plus, do not forget that nowadays experience cannot be often found in the European politics. If you look at the politicians of the European Union today there are only a very few active politicians who were active and who contributed at the time of the downfall of the Soviet Union and the changes of the history of the continent, but we were there. The only Western European politician who made a major contribution and is still active is Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is just about to leave. In brackets, I tried to convince her not to do so, but I was always rejected. If you look at the European politics from this angle, the experience we have is quite rare. I think that the old freedom fighters of Eastern Europe

are the ones still in the line of the politics today. So, as freedom fighter veterans, may I say, it is good to share our experience and future ideas on Europe.

To speak on Europe in 20 minutes is almost impossible, so I will follow your recipe and will pick up certain issues and add some comments. First of all, may I just say something about the context in the light of which I will speak about Europe. The first element of the context of the age we are living in Europe is that Europe is in retreat. Europe is performing worse than it was doing 30 years ago. Just concentrating on certain facts, because this is not an opinion, these are basically facts, the fertility rate in 1990 in the European Union was 1.8, in 2008 it was 1.6, and in 2018 it was 1.5, this means that Europe is on a slope regarding demography. The annual number of marriages shows the same pattern. If you look at different spendings in 2018 the defence spending was only 1.4% of the GDP, 30 years ago it was 2.5%, so it means that we are paying much less attention to our safety than we did so 30 years ago. And the ratio of the European Union economic output globally, which was 25% in 1990, last year was only 15%. So, there is no need to explain these data. So, the context of the future of Europe we are speaking of is that our continent is in retreat.

The other element of the context is that the balance of power has changed in Europe. 30 years ago the pattern was very simple. The French-German cooperation was the engine of the economic development and the United Kingdom carried the flag for the Nations of Europe concept, which created a balance of power in Europe. That was the case even when our countries joined the European Union and the continent was reunified. What can we see today? France is fighting purely to maintain its competitiveness and is deeply indebted. The United Kingdom has left, and Germany is once again is the strongman of Europe. The point is that the balance of power of nations inside the European Union has now dramatically changed. Whatever difficulties arise, everyone expects Germany to save the integration. So, 75 years ago Germany was bombed back to the Middle Ages and now they are again the saviour or the only big country that can save the European countries because of having dreadful economic difficulties at this moment. So, this is the new power reality in Europe, it has a lot of consequences for the future, too difficult to be disputed in just 20 minutes, but this is a fact we should keep in mind when we speak about the future of Europe.

Still belonging to the context, I would like to draw your attention to the three crises that have squeezed Europe in a very short period of time. In the last 22 years in Europe we have moved

from one crisis to another. The first crisis was the financial crisis in 2008, then the migration crisis in 2015, and then the virus crisis now. As you have just mentioned, neither of these crises has been treated properly and each of them has been handled differently on the two sides of the old continent. So, there was a different crisis management in the West and a different crisis management here in Central Europe. The first crisis, the financial crisis in Western Europe, they wanted to solve it by saving the so-called welfare state. In Eastern Europe, and mainly in Hungary, we embraced the idea of workfare state. We saw that the crisis was an opening event of a new age, and we have to renew our economic and political structure. So, the welfare state was not anymore the proper structure, but we need what we called the workfare state. Prior to the virus crisis the unemployment rate in Hungary, but in other V4 countries also, was around 3% and the economic growth rate was more than 4%, close to 5% GDP growth rate. Then the migration crisis arrived and we again have given different answers to that, different in the West and different in the East. In Western Europe they wanted to solve its demographic problem by promoting migration, so they were not anti-migrant at all. In Central Europe, we didn't want to import other civilisations' problems to our countries, because during the centuries our countries have experienced what it means to have a cohabitant with totally different cultural habits in our backyard, which can create a lot of difficulties, and we never wanted such a situation to be repeated. So this is where we are. Changing position of the European Union in the global arena, changing power structure and balance situation inside the European Union, and some experiences and lessons of the three crises we have had.

I would like to mention another problem also, which I just identified in the recent years: being part of the meeting of the Council and party meetings. While Europe could not even solve its own problems, it wanted always to change the world. And still it is an ambition. So the current leadership of the European Union cannot even solve our own problem, or the surrounding international problems; we cannot handle the Libyan conflict, we cannot handle the Ukrainian situation, but, despite our inability to act, we want to tell international partners how to run their own country. We tell it to the Chinese, we tell it to the Russians, we tell it to the Turkish, we tell it to Israel, you know, now even to the United States of America, how they should run their own country. So that kind of misunderstanding of our own situation, is a serious challenge, and we have to put an end to that practice, and we should come back and firmly believe that Europe should focus on its internal problems first, and then probably -

probably! – we can have some advice to somebody else. So managing our own problems is essential to regain the EU's influence on international economic and political arena.

May I just say that, as a consequence of all these factors, when I look at the ideas concerning the future of Europe, in the European political dispute, I can identify clearly two different concepts of Europe. They are not just different, but they are contesting each other. For the first concept is the progressive, liberal leftist, may I say, from a Budapest point of view, semi-Marxist concept of future in Europe. They promote multiculturalism, they are pushing forward pro-migration policy, they follow an anti-family policy, they want to get rid of the concept of nations and nation states, and they consider irrelevant the Christian social teachings. And there are more and more politicians supporting that kind of vision of Europe, may I confess sometimes even inside EPP. But there's another concept of the future of Europe, which is a concept of Europe based on Christian culture that we have inherited. This concept considered relevant the values of Christian social teaching, this concept is deeply anti-communist, pro-family as an elemental component of society; this concept treats national identity as a value, which needs to be preserved.

So the question is what can we do, if we have inside the European Union so many and huge differences on the future of Europe? How can we keep together the two parts of the European Union with two different concepts of Europe? The question is, is it possible at all, or not? And I think there is a narrow track, following which we can be successful to keep together the European Union as a whole. And this is the way that the West does not or should not force its views on Eastern countries. We need to learn to tolerate our differences again and we, Central Europeans should not want to tell the Westerners how they should run their countries. If we are ready to accept that kind of differences, even in terms of the vision for the future, we can manage to live together and keep together the Union as a whole. We Central Europeans should ask the Westerners "please don't tell us how we have to live our lives." So I think this is the basic precondition to continue our history as the history of the European Union, but I think it's possible.

Then may I just have some short remarks on current issues. Especially on MFF and the Next Generation Fund and then I would like to come back to the future of Europe issue. The MFF up to now in the last 30 years was always a success story. A lot of disputes, sometimes heated disputes, but finally we were always able to find a compromise which was good for

everybody and created a win-win situation, because we got new allocations and, at the same time, 70-75% of the money went back to the Western countries anyway, but contributed to the development of our economies. So I think we should understand that that kind of compromise is necessary again when we try to create the MFF. But the real challenge now is that we would not like just to create a new MFF, a new budget for the future, but we would like to create something extraordinary, which was never done and this is the so-called Next Generation Fund. And I think we would like to manage together the budget issue and the Next Generation Fund at the same time. I think that the name of this fund – Next Generation – should be taken literally, because the next generations will be paying for it. Because it's a loan, it's a credit, it will be taken for 30 years and it will loom over the head of our grandchildren. We Hungarians don't like to tackle any crisis by loan, but now we have to accept this approach in order to help those countries who are in trouble now. So the Hungarian position is very clear: if we would like to create that kind of credit, the distribution must be fair, flexible and non-political. So, I think we will have very tough negotiations in the forthcoming week in Brussels and it is difficult to imagine how we can conclude this debate in one round. I think during the summertime, the vacation will not be the most important thing for Prime Ministers and the Presidents of the European Union, but rather to continue the negotiation to find a way how to relaunch our economy by the budget and the Next Generation Fund.

My final remark, my friends, is back to the future of Europe. So, if the description I have given to you is true, I think now we have to admit that what we need is a proper strategy for the European Union. It is always up to the politicians' wisdom to decide when to follow a tactical or a strategic approach. I think in the last 12 years, during the crisis times, Europe was basically following a tactical approach and it seems to lead to a dead-end road. In my understanding, the EU was only giving reactive answers to the events of the world. So, in the future we need a strategy instead of tactics and we need to be proactive, instead of being reactive. Proactive strategy requires strong commitment to work together on the grounds in which we share common approach. What could be these grounds? So, these grounds are the need for economic cooperation and to increase our common competitiveness capabilities. The strategy for Europe should concentrate on these issues. I accept that human rights are important, even gender issues could be disputed but the real challenges are not that kind of difficulties. We are champions in gender and champions in human rights in the European Union, but the real challenge is the economy and competitiveness and how to strengthen the

structure of our economies. So, I think we should strategically approach these points, we have to admit that pushing different cultures to the same direction politically will always be counterproductive and only a waste of resources. As Bismarck stated clearly - and I like to quote Bismarck on European issues regularly because he has a very healthy relationship with the issue of Europe - he said "I have always heard the word 'Europe' from the mouth of someone who wanted something from another which he dared not to ask on his own account." So, I think that we need not that kind of European strategy, but a strategy that focuses on the need of the European Union. The final question is who will create that strategy for Europe? On the birthday of the EPP, I wish the EPP to be the one to do so.

So, this is my final remark and I would like to say thank you very much for your kind attention.