



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# Does the EU have a way to overcome fatigue from Viktor Orbán?



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is positioning himself as a key European partner for the US in case Donald Trump wins the presidential election on November 5.

His highly critical speech before the European Parliament in Strasbourg served as the final and comprehensive self-recommendation for the EU leader, which would be desirable for Trump and his administration if he wins on November 5.

Mr Orbán's speech served as the culmination of his long-term strategy to highlight a strong ideological and political alternative within the EU that would align with Trump's policies in a potential second term.

"There's nobody that's better, smarter, or a better leader than Viktor Orbán. He's fantastic... In Europe and around the world, they respect him," **said** Trump last March, when he hosted PM Orbán at his estate in Florida.

It was the first of their two cordial meetings in the US within a span of just four months. For the second meeting in July, Orbán travelled just ten days after his government took over the six-month EU presidency.

Using this rotating position among the members of the Union, Orbán actually abused the Hungarian presidency of the EU to provide political support to his favourite in the US elections.

Furthermore, he presented his visits to Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping at the beginning of July, when he assumed the EU presidency, in the same format.

Orbán's promotional tour caused volleys of **indignation** among European leaders, and the European Parliament assessed his meeting with Putin as a "blatant violation of the EU's Treaties and common foreign policy."

## Patriots of Europe

An important part of Orbán's strategy of self-

promotion as an EU leader desired by a potential Trump administration is the creation of a separate conservative bloc in the European Parliament.

Immediately after the June elections for the European Parliament, Orbán initiated the creation of a parliamentary faction of Eurosceptic, conservative forces, in whose promotion he was helped by former Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and Austrian far-right leader Herbert Kickl, who recently won the most votes in the parliamentary elections in Austria.

Patriots of Europe, comprising slightly more than 10% of MEPs in the European Parliament, serve as a safe haven for political options that advocate for a weakening of ties within the EU, a greater emphasis on national sovereignty, and a greater understanding of Russia and its leader, all while refraining from the previously significant European support for Ukraine.

### Orbán vigorously advocated the shift of the Union regarding its key policies

This bloc is a significant part of the political landscape that Viktor Orbán, along with his far-right partners, wants to establish as a mainstream in European politics.

Presenting the priorities of the Hungarian EU presidency in the European Parliament, he vigorously advocated the shift of the Union regarding its key policies. He said that his government wants to be a "catalyst of those changes" during its half-year presidency.

## A U-turn regarding Ukraine

Orbán opposes the main economic and political directions of the Union, the green transition, for example, demanding the continuation of industrialisation. He then shifts his focus to the migration policy, advocating for the closure of European borders and keeping asylum seekers outside

the EU until their claims are reviewed.

In particular, the Hungarian Prime Minister calls for a review and abandonment of the EU's conflict policy with Russia and Putin, stating, "The EU, recklessly and on the basis of incorrect data and with an incorrect strategy, intervened in this war. If we want to win, we must change this strategy, which is a losing one."

Balázs Orbán, a close associate of Orbán, recently made it even clearer when he **said** that his country would not defend itself against Russian aggression, unlike Ukraine.

### Orbán's desire for a change in the functioning and main policies of the EU aligns with Donald Trump's expectations from Europe

Orbán's desire for a change in the functioning and main policies of the EU aligns with Donald Trump's expectations from Europe. This is primarily the weakening of internal economic cohesion, with Trump announcing in the campaign that he will re-introduce trade tariffs towards the EU if he is elected. "They (EU) treat us violently," he previously **told** Bloomberg.

Trump is especially interested in the changes that Orbán advocates in relation to the war in Ukraine. They generally imply a passivation of European support for Kyiv, a thaw in communication with Putin, and a move towards a peace solution in which there would be much more understanding of Moscow's goals than Kyiv's.

## The focal point of Euro-sceptic populists

During the unusually lively session of the European Parliament, the majority of European politicians condemned the Hungarian Prime Minister's plans. Under intense pressure from various political

factions, Orbán even acknowledged in his closing speech that the European Parliament had exposed him to the "Intifada."



*There is no so-called problem of fatigue from Ukraine, but there is a problem of fatigue from Viktor Orbán - Donald Tusk*

However, this will not deter him from the path he has already taken, which is to become the focal point for Euro-sceptic populists, who have all linked the success of their project to the return of Donald Trump to the White House.

The growth in support for the far-right and Eurosceptic right across Europe, evident in last June's European Parliament elections, parliamentary elections in France and the Netherlands, and more recently in Austria, has collectively encouraged them.

PM Orbán will undoubtedly mark the remaining two and a half months of Hungary's EU presidency with similar actions, including blocking decisions whenever possible.

The success of this, still a minority course within the EU, will directly depend on the outcome of the US presidential elections. Pro-EU forces will test their opposition to Orbán and his "Patriots" during that period, as previously described by Polish PM Donald Tusk: "There is no so-called problem of fatigue from Ukraine, but there is a problem of fatigue from Viktor Orbán."