

China and Hungary Strengthen Relationship While U.S. Soft Power Declines

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Glenn Greenwal (GG): There's a very interesting geopolitical trend taking place all over the world that has been going on for at least the last several years, which is that more and more countries are pursuing a financial partnership and geopolitical cooperation with China. More and more countries are seeking to join the bloc, the alternative bloc, called BRICs, in which China is obviously the most powerful and most important country, along with India and then Brazil, Russia and South Africa. More and more countries are applying for membership in the BRICs alliance. One of the countries that is pursuing stronger and stronger ties in cooperation with China is Hungary. And the reason that's so worth noting is because the Prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orban, has become a hero of the American right, at least the populist wing of the American right, the populist right of the Western world. He's become a favourite of the populist right, and yet he is continuously moving away from the West and pivoting toward China, toward a partnership, a strategic cooperation, greater and greater relations of every kind with China. And he's talking about China, Prime Minister Orban is, as crucial and central and vital to future Hungarian prosperity. And given that the American right largely views China as the world's greatest evil, even though they have not fought a war since 1979 – and that was a one month war about a border dispute with Vietnam, one month. Obviously since 1979, the US has fought dozens of wars, has spent trillions of dollars on wars, that is one of the reasons why so many countries are pursuing more and more strategic cooperation with China, along with the financial benefits that it brings.

[00:02:08] Here from AP news, the Associated Press earlier this week, May 9th, quote: *Hungary and China signed a strategic cooperation agreement during visit by Chinese President Xi.* Quote: "During a press briefing following the talks, Viktor Orban praised the quote, 'continuous uninterrupted friendship' between Hungary and China since his tenure began in 2010, and promised that Hungary would continue to host further Chinese investments. Beijing has invested billions in Hungary and sees the other EU member as an important foothold inside the 27 member trading bloc. Hungary is also hosting several

Chinese EV battery plans, and hopes to become a global hub of lithium ion battery manufacturing, and has undertaken a railway project – part of his Belt and Road Initiative – to connect the country with the Chinese controlled port of Piraeus in Greece as an entry port for Chinese goods to Central and Eastern Europe. Quote, 'Looking back at the world economy and commerce of 20 years ago, it doesn't resemble at all what we're living in today', Orban said. Quote, 'Then we lived in a single polar world, and now we live in a multi-polar world order and one of the main columns of this new world order is China'. He added that Hungary would seek to expand economic cooperation with China to the field of nuclear energy. Hungary is currently working with Russia on adding a new reactor to its Paks nuclear facility, which is expected to go online by the end of the decade."

So it isn't just that they signed a trade agreement. This has been going on for many years. Hungary sees China as central and crucial to its future prosperity, its future growth, its future geostrategic security. Here all the way back in 2015 is the Global Construction Review that reported this. Quote: *Hungary is the first European country to sign up to China's Silk Road vision*. "Hungary has become the first European country to sign a cooperation agreement for China's Silk Road Initiative to develop trade and transport infrastructure connecting Asia to Europe". "The country's foreign ministers signed a memorandum of understanding for what China calls its 'One Belt, One Road' vision in Budapest, according to a statement on the Chinese foreign military website. China's foreign minister said China would work together with Hungary to modernise the railway between Belgrade in Serbia and Budapest in Hungary and to build a, quote 'China-Europe land-sea express line', and other major infrastructure."

So I think it's very important to know that in the United States we are constantly bombarded with a narrative that says China is the most evil country on Earth. China is the most threatening country on Earth. China is the most militarily aggressive country on Earth. They're the most antagonistic country on the planet. They're the gravest threat to world peace, to world stability. Aside from the fact that China again is not part of war since 1979, 45 years ago, and that China actually mocked the United States, once we left Afghanistan after 20 years, mocked the United States for having spent trillions of dollars on foreign wars again, that achieved nothing. The Taliban just marched right back into power as if it was 2001. They contrasted the trillions of dollars spent by the United States on all of these wars over the last 20 years, in the name of the war on terror, with the \$800 billion rapid rail system that the Chinese built that connected all of their cities, including their rural areas, to one another, something the United States doesn't have anything close to in terms of high speed infrastructure. Because, they were implying, they spend their money on building and modernising technological advancement while the United States spends its money on either bombing, other countries are paying for other countries like Ukraine and Israel to bomb other countries as well. That's just the reality. And while Americans believe that China is this grave evil, the rest of the world just doesn't see it that way. Which is why you see so much migration from allegiance to Western institutions, to allegiance to Chinese led institutions, or to China itself. They've made extraordinary inroads in places where the United States or the West, Western Europe, have long dominated, in South America and Africa and in Asia and now even in Central Europe. I think it's worth asking why? Why are we constantly told that

China is this evil country that wants to militarily attack and dominate, when we have military bases all around China?! Now they have military bases all around the United States. And you see all these countries that obviously perceive China vastly different than the way we're told to see China.

Here from Reuters in April of 2021: *Hungary blocks an EU statement criticising China over Hong Kong, diplomats say*. Quote, "Hungary's argument was that the EU already has too many issues with China,' a senior EU diplomat told Reuters. A second senior diplomat confirmed the blockage and Hungary's position. An EU official said the statement had been withdrawn from the EU's approval process. Budapest reluctantly supported the EU sanctions last month, calling them 'pointless', and then hosted China's defence minister for an official visit days after the EU sanctions decision. Hungary is a large recipient of Chinese investment. In the past both Hungary and Greece, where China's COSCO Shipping has a majority stake in Greece's largest port, have blocked EU statements on China. Beijing's top representative in Hong Kong this week warned foreign powers that they would be taught a lesson if they tried to interfere in China's management of the global financial hub, as tensions escalated between China and Western governments over the city." Here's a statement by Lawrence Summers, who was a bit embedded in the US establishment as much as anybody. He was president of Harvard. He was Bill Clinton's chief financial advisor, a top financial architect, that led to the collapse and the financial crisis of 2008. He's the consummate establishment insider. Then he monetised all that. He went to investment banks, got extremely rich. Here's what he said in April, just last month. Quote: "I do think in many ways the most profound question for American foreign policy, and it's one that very much implicates economic policy, is that as right and just as we feel we are, there just a larger number of countries that are not aligned with us or that only weakly aligned with us. I heard a comment from somebody in a developing country who said, quote, 'Look, I like your values better than I like China's. But the truth is, when we're engaged with the Chinese, we get an airport. And when we're engaged with you guys, we get a lecture'."

And this has been something that's been said many times. Larry Summers claimed that he just heard that. But you can go back years and find officials in Africa saying, When China visits, we get a new hospital or a new building. When the US visits, we get a lecture. Fiona Hill is also extremely integrated into the establishment official. She's a massive hawk on Russia and China. She is the protege of John Bolton. She worked with John Bolton inside the Trump administration. She is a major advocate and proponent of US aggression in the world, US imperialism in the world, and yet she gave a speech in May of, I believe it was in 2022, we've covered this before, at a conference of Western elites, Western policymaking elites. And the main point of her speech was to try and get Western elites to see that international perceptions about China and the West have changed dramatically. That there are huge parts of the world now that prefer to be part of a world where China is exerting more power, or at least as a multipolar world, rather than having the US rule the world through homogenous, superior force or through a unipolar world. And one of the points that she made – and remember this is not a leftist, this is a Marco Rubio, John Bolton, kind of advocate for American aggression and militarism – but she said that one of the things that the United States has done by going

around the world in fighting wars and initiating wars and financing wars like the one in Ukraine is, it has created a ton of resentment all over the world. There's so many countries; on every continent on the planet that has been negatively affected in some way by US aggression, by US interference, coups against democratically elected governments, imposition of dictators, attempts to force a sanctions regime on these countries, to force them to not do business with other countries that they have no problem with. They see the war in Ukraine as an American project, as an American attempt to have interfered in the diplomatic resolution that likely would have taken place between Ukraine and Russia, that the Americans and the British stopped for their own interests. And obviously now with the US tied at the hip to Israel, in a word that has become extremely unpopular around the world, that resentment against the United States has grown even further. That's why I say we sacrifice a lot to support Israel. Just like we're sacrificing a lot to fuel the war in Ukraine. And what Fiona Hill said is that there's this huge irony at the heart of all of this, which is Washington has continuously said for the last decade or longer, that we have to pivot away from the Middle East and focus on Asia. That China is the most important adversary the United States has. And yet there is nothing that is strengthening the Chinese, nothing that is fortifying their position in the world more than the eagerness of the US to constantly be involved in more and more wars. Now, this was before the US began financing the war in Gaza by arming and funding the Israeli, but it was in the middle of the US funding of the war in Ukraine. I'm just going to give you a little taste of what she said, because I think it's so important that we think about China. We can condemn it morally. It's obviously a very authoritarian country domestically. But it doesn't really matter how Americans perceive China. Our media tells us to hate China, our political parties tell us to hate China. Elon Musk, for example, another hero of the right, has an enormous amount of business in China, will never utter a negative word about China, because Tesla and other of his companies depend on good relationships with the Chinese. That's the reality of where China is in the world. But here's how Fiona Hill described the US policymakers and US foreign policy war making in Washington, feeding this resentment that helps the Chinese more than anything.

Fiona Hill: Now since 1991, the United States has seemingly stood alone as the global superpower. But I would argue that today, after a fraught two decade period shaped by American led military interventions and direct engagement in regional wars, the Ukraine war highlights the decline of the United States itself. Now, this decline is relative, of course, economically and militarily, but it is very serious in terms of US moral authority. And again, we've heard quite a lot about that as well. Unfortunately, just as Osama bin Laden intended, the US's own reactions and actions have eroded its position since the devastating terrorist attacks of 9/11. America fatigue – and we actually heard about that last night on the panel, as you might recall, I'd already had that in my notes, and then we heard one of our panellists actually say it – America fatigue and disillusionment with its role as the global hegemon is widespread. And this, I would argue, also includes the United States itself. A fact that we frequently see on display in Congress, news outlets and in think tank debates. For some, the US is a flawed international actor with its own domestic problems it should be attending to. For others, the US is still a new form of imperial state that ignores the concerns of others and throws its military weight around. Well, why am I saying all this? Because in the near term,

this is particularly detrimental for Ukraine. And I think we've heard a lot about that over the last year. Because globally, the war in Ukraine is viewed as one in a long series of dramatic events since 2001, driven by the United States. America's heavy handed conduct of the war on terror alienated the vast swathes of the Muslim world. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003, hot on the heels of Afghanistan, revived the horrors of US Cold War interventions in Korea and Vietnam. US inaction and conflicts like Yemen and selective interventions in Libya and Syria underscored US foreign policy inconsistency. I am relating to all the things that I've been hearing myself over this last year from all kinds of interlocutors.

GG: Now, she went on to say, Fiona Hill did, that she doesn't agree with that perception. She was an advocate of any of these military interventions. But what she's saying is that it matters what the rest of the world thinks. The United States can't dominate the world any longer. It's a multipolar world. Not just China, but India and many other countries have risen in power. And the point she's trying to make, to emphasise to European elites is that this obsession that the United States has had with fuelling wars, with bombing whatever countries they want, with financing wars, with being perceived as being at the heart of so many wars all over the world, of throwing its military weight around, an economic weight around, as she put it, is feeding exactly all the resentments globally that China is now exploiting successfully to induce countries to believe that they would be better off in bed with China. Now, there are other reasons for believing that as well. We heard the experience of countries say, When China comes, we get a new hospital, we get investment in our country. When the United States comes, we get lectures about how we should do things and who should rule our country and who shouldn't. And obviously you're going to prefer the former to the latter. But the US obsession on a bipartisan basis, on a unit party basis, on a war machine basis of continuously pursuing wars, of fighting wars, of bombing countries, of financing wars, not only has the effect of draining American wealth and saddling generations with massive debt and killing a lot of people and destroying a lot of places, but for those people who believe that the United States has as his main adversary China, arguably the most significant consequence of all is that it is strengthening the adversary that we're constantly told we most have to undermine and subvert. So every time there's a new war that Washington proposes, every time they convince Americans to finance a new war to become involved in a war, and bomb another country, those all have consequences all over the world. We don't see the US government actions the way the rest of the world sees them, because even though we don't like to think of ourselves as being propagandised, we very much are. We constantly get tribal reinforcement that what we're doing is right, that we're the good party, we're the good guys, what we're doing is noble. And of course, they do a good job of convincing Americans who want to believe that about their own society that that's true. But it's very important to understand that the perception that Americans have of their own government is not at all the same perception as what the rest of the world has. And that causes a massive consequence for the United States, a massive cost to the United States for its standing in the world. Every time the United States isolate itself at the UN, when the entire world is ready to pass resolutions to end the war in Gaza, or to denounce Israel or to recognise a Palestinian state, and the United States uses its veto power to stand with five countries in the world, with Israel and three tiny little Pacific islands like Micronesia and the Marshall Islands that we bribed to be on our side,

that were part of the coalition of the willing, and the entire rest of the world is over here, of course that undermines American standing in the world and soft power in the world, and our ability to continue to persuade other countries that we are actually a force for good in the world. Many countries have gradually concluded that we are anything but that, and it's hard to say that that perception is entirely invalid.

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