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Could the Hungarian right-wing ever come to like America?

It has been already 10 years since (and I am afraid this will be new to some readers) that in 2004 György Matolcsy, the current Governor of the Hungarian National Bank, then a mere researcher in economy, published a book entitled *The American Empire*. In this book we read paragraphs such as: “In this era, the world is ruled by a new World Empire, the United States, aka America. For us, Hungarians, it is crucial to know what motivates America, what are her interests, values and the strategic factors behind her decisions, because we can only form the correct Hungarian national strategy if we are in knowledge of these.” And elsewhere: “Perhaps, if, at the turning points of the 20th century, we would have been able to understand America’s motives and the true nature of the ongoing events of the world, then maybe we would not have had to suffer all that we finally had to. Maybe it was not the wickedness and indifference of America that caused the great Hungarian disasters of the 20th century, but our own incomprehension and ignorance of the world.”

Every leftist liberal would happily agree with this. And every Europeanist from the right-wing would as well.

This nearly 400 page book is an open, unambiguous, and even biased homage to the United States' history, values and engagement in world politics. The author is a truly “unorthodox” pro-American, who thinks that the prerequisites for the emergence of Hungary are the knowledge and understanding of American politics, and that the “empire” should become a fixed point of guidance for Hungarian politics.

It should be easy to figure out why I wrote this all. Today, it seems as if the entire Hungarian right would turn its back on Matolcsy’s “heritage”.

Because (to put it grandly), what has the late economic researcher left to his successors? The importance of self-awareness and the sense of reality. Meaning that in the future – not like in the past, which is burdened with failures of external
orientation – Hungary will have to assess her international political power relations correctly, and create good relations to them. If America is a world-leading empire, then our first priority is to adapt to this world, led by the United States. Unfortunately, this goal now seems to be quite far away.

What could have happened?

A loss of balance. A one-sided enforcement of our self-awareness, and sense of reality. In recent years, the Hungarian right – in the name of of self-awareness and sense of reality – moved away from the aforementioned axioms, and instead of emphasizing the importance of understanding our external environment, focused almost exclusively on making others understand its internal processes, the situation in Hungary. This was expressed through the more and more forceful representation of Hungary’s national interests, the struggle for the recognition of the so-called facts, and, in this respect, through the continuous “correction” of the western opinions on the actions of the Hungarian government. I do not deny that, in order to have a good foreign policy, it is important to define the national interest. It can also be stated that the thesis according to which global interests incorporate national interests is no longer tenable. But it is also certain that, in recent years, with the rock-solid representation of national interests, the Hungarian government paid much less attention to the understanding of the changing external environment that surrounds us. America plays a prominent role in this external environment.

Indeed, if Matolcsy is right – about America being a World Empire today – then many things follow from this. For example, the fact that such a super power sometimes wishes to represent its interests quite strongly. I found it surprising that the Hungarian government has recognized only recently that the United States invests heavily in supporting civil society organizations. It shouldn’t come as a shock, America did not begin to play this kind of role after the Hungarian local elections on 12 October. On the contrary. Ever since American politicians feel that many of the world’s democracies are not developing in the right directions, the US uses many traditional and new forms of civic education. It is enough to flip through some American journals or studies of think tanks. Even from the mid-2000s.
Therefore, the real question is, could the Hungarian right-wing’s perception of America be altered by the events of the last two months? To overheated right-wing politicians we can advise only one thing: feel free to reread Matolcsy’s unorthodox Bible.

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