As the Hungarian public got accustomed to the concept of faulty products in connection with foreign currency loans, it would make sense to introduce the definition of “too good product” as well. Namely concerning the frameworks of Europe. Although following the recent terror attacks in Paris, perhaps it is not the right time to discuss such things – as the old continent wasn’t “good enough” to protect itself – but being “good enough” means something completely different in this case. We will soon see why.

Let’s begin by stating that we cannot talk about Hungarian foreign policy or Hungarian politics in general without considering an external context – Europe. This is one of the more talkable topics in Hungarian political discourse which nevertheless has an adverse fate. From the comments of the governing party it seems – with a little exaggeration – that the Hungarian right wing is just fighting Europe and wants to lead Hungary out of it. According to the opposition, who do not exaggerate, the government is fighting a freedom fight against Europe. These patterns of thought are too simplified however. The greatest problem with them is that they divert attention from the two most important issues: where is Europe today, and what the relationship between countries in various stages of development is.

Extraordinary Values
If this article were to analyze the strategy and tactics of the opposition, we’d come to see a close connection between the opposition’s way of thinking and it being an uncompetitive force in internal politics, as well as between the excessive criticism of the West by the governing party and their good position in internal politics. But let us keep our focus on a very interesting phenomenon; the Galapagos Order of Europe and its effects.

Ivan Krastev and Mark Leonard recently wrote an exceptional analysis on the subject titled the New European Disorder which assumes that Europe has always been considered a role model for other regions, but since 1989-91 it has become a model in a completely different way. The New World Order established after the Central and Eastern European democratization was no longer built on the balance of power or sovereignty in its former perception, but universal principles and values. These include the spiritualization of borders, violence-free International
Relations, free movement of people and ideas. Furthermore, that the 1989-91 democratization was a common victory shared by the Russian population and the West.

The thing is, the poles on each end of the former balance of power were on the same side from 1990 until now. The annexation of Crimea however drastically changed the outlook for everyone. Naturally, the authors do not settle for pushing full responsibility on Russia, as an actor of violence. The main goal of their paper is exactly to highlight a specific phenomenon, which – adopting a phrase – they called the Galapagos syndrome.

The particular phrase was first used by Takeshi Natsuno Japanese professor a few years ago in an article for New York Times. The article said that the new 3G mobile phones produced in Japan are so good that they cannot be sold in other parts of the world. The situation is similar to that of Galapagos as observed by Darwin, where almost all animals are special and exclusive to the island. The common element in the Japanese phones and Galapagos – according to the authors – is that the example set by them is impossible for others to follow. The annexation of Crimea seemed like a drastic sign that the values we believed to be universal for 25 years may turn out to be exclusive therefore not necessarily applicable elsewhere.

**Historical burdens**

The Hungarian opposition’s views on Europe are homogeneous and lack dynamics. Mostly they just state that Hungary is a western-oriented country and that the government aims to lead Hungary out of Europe. At the same time, the leftist-liberal side is surprisingly not eager to consider the meaning of Krastev and Leonard’s article. Their world view simply does not raise the question that maybe Europe’s main problem is that it is “too good”, and that this makes it especially hard to follow for historically burdened countries, for example Hungary.

Of course, there is an explanation for the lack of analyzing our “historical burdens”. During the change of regime, the idea that liberal democracy will prevail everywhere was dominant. To put it simply: the present defeats the past. This thought, elaborated by Fukuyama and many others, was unchallenged and very refreshing in those days. It proclaimed that we do not have to bother with solving our inherited conflicts and developmental failures. Who would have thought then that this present-centric thinking was a product of a historical evolution itself?

For example: in the 1960s, western political thinking was dominated not by universal values, but the doctrine of international differences instead. This is also understandable, as many countries
became independent that time because of the (partial) ending of the colonial period. No one would have expected them to instantly adapt to the universal values of western democracies. Moreover, at the time even these western democracies were not what they have become some decades later. The equilibrium of the liberal and democratic elements was not as sophisticated as in the early 90s. The 60s and 70s were still framed by nation states, not to mention the delicate power balance of the cold war.

The past reemerges
All these historical burdens were immediately trashed by the fresh and “ahistorical” ideology of liberal democracy. The late Soviet Union worked hand-in-hand with the West in this regime- and history-deconstructing process. At the same time, Russia is not at all the same as the late Soviet Union. While the latter, under the rule of Gorbachev, could sincerely believe that with their democratization they can eliminate the century long gap in development compared to the level of development in the West, Putin’s Russia cannot think the same.

In the end, the article is about whether a good product, namely Europe, can be deployed anywhere permanently and alike. Looking at the Hungarian right’s relationship to Western Europe, it seems that we should not merely criticize the government’s war of independence; we should focus on the main question. What if history returned to Central and Eastern Europe?

Do not think that this is over-explanation. Let us look at it from another perspective. At the time when the Central and Eastern European countries – as Fukuyama predicted – decided to leave their histories behind, and transpose their lives into the current era, this was not a spontaneous decision. The ideology was undoubtedly fresh, and very promising, but first the elites had to agree on this decision. In other words: to make sure that the transposition will be successful, the elites did not accentuate the ever-present conflicts between them. With a clever and (in a positive sense) calculating move they agreed to freeze them. However, anything that has been frozen for a long time may melt and emerge again. This is exactly what has been happening since 2000, not only in Hungary, but even in other parts of Europe.

Why don’t we want the EU model?
In a near sighted way the common answer to this question has simply become the accusation of populism. According to this approach everybody is a populist, if they search for a geopolitical logic or believe in an ideology different from those canonized during the transition. However, these explanations which are always using the term populism simply do not see the point. The point is: why is it that we have a good product, i.e. the EU, but many still don't want to use it?

In any case, we have to face the dilemma that the developed countries' “G3 mobile phone” or “Galapagos” model perhaps cannot be followed by the developing ones; not in the way we imagined 25 years ago. Of course, this does not mean that we should simply stop following their model. Instead we have to reconsider everything we thought about the relationship of this model to Hungary, as well as the relationship of Europe and Hungary, in the last 25 years.

After all, it is much harder to follow a “too good” product than to get rid of a broken one.