

THE RATIONALE BEHIND ANTI-EU VIEWS: THE CASE OF HUNGARY

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The decline of the West is a very old topic in social sciences. The idea was very popular in the early 20th century; and yet again, Europe has been recently featured as a declining region that is expected to lose economic and political importance in the decades to come.

Originally, Oscar Spengler's successful book – first published in 1918, receiving a Europe-wide attention – popularized the concept of 'the decline of the West'. Nationalist and extremist political movements used Spengler's arguments, which followed a biological model of growth and decline, emphasizing the ineluctable collapse of the Western civilization.

This gloomy view is followed by many even today; so not only historians of the past but politicians of the present have also emphasized the fragile state of the European project, in many cases predicting the break-up of the EU. Brexit appears to be a clear evidence for the spread of this approach; however, the British have always been a reluctant European partner. (This is why the outcome of the election in June 2016 might have surprised the elite, although the rejection of the European project has a very strong tradition in the English political culture.)

In the literature, the phrase 'reluctant partner' has been used to describe the ambiguous British attitude towards the European Union. After Brexit, the Central Europeans⁴⁹ will be labelled as the reluctant partners in the EU. Their reluctance to go further in the European integration project has come as a shock to the EU-governing elite and the core countries of the EU (Germany, France, Benelux-countries). It was surprising to them since

⁴⁹ In this analysis, Central Europe refers to new member-states of the EU; the Visegrad-Four countries, the Baltic-countries, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia. Russia and other Post-Soviet states (with the exception of the Baltic countries) are different in many ways; therefore, these countries are not taken into consideration in the analysis.