

James Heartfield, *The European Union and the End of Politics*, Manchester (UK)/ Washington (USA): Zero Books, 2013, ISBN: 978-1-78099-950-0

Alexandru Drăgulin

The politics of the European Union are a very known and researched theme among social science scholars but it is not easy to identify new directions and principles in the development of this organization. The European Union is not static, its evolution is dynamic and requires a combination of research methods to provide an in-depth analysis and obtain valuable results. Also, offering a few predictions on the future of European politics is a challenge for a writer such as James Heartfield.

In this book, James Heartfield explains the evolution of the European Union's rise of power and influence over its member states in the last decade. The Greek crisis was the apex of this mindset in terms of politics and government. In the author's view, the power of EU is related to the weakness of the national parliaments. In a significant number of the member states there is not yet a consistent democracy and we cannot see a strong contestation of elites from the people's side. The quality of the European democracy is given mainly by the national political systems which are together correlated. Also the weakness of national sovereignty is a cause for the Brussels' continuous ascension in exercising its authority. Some countries, e.g. Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic had developed more and more nationalist attitudes and politics to prevent these European tendencies.

In the introduction, Heartfield analyses the implications of the Greek crisis in the Eurozone and reveals the real behaviour and principles of the European elites' politics. As we will see, in the author's view the actions of the EU's institutions are not so democratic as we thought. In the EU there are not a principle of equality among the members; the effective powers are in hands of some most economically developed states (Germany, France, Netherlands). Greece was, from this point of view, a simple victim in the game. On the other hand, there was a conflict between the leftist regime of Greece and the liberal politics of the European politicians. Liberalism is the main feature of the Union's regime at the moment and, as the author argues, it evolves toward a dictatorial style. Italy, with the prime-minister Silvio Berlusconi being charged with corruption by the European Commission, was in a similar situation. "In a single week the elected governments of two of Europe's democracies had been swept aside. At the very moment that Italian and Greek people needed to deal with the problems they

faced, they were robbed of the chance. Before they could see their own political representatives argue out the best outcome on party lines, with the parliamentary contest mirroring the contest for votes. The party political system was a lever for ordinary people to push their goals right into the centre of government. But without it, public administration stopped being democratic, or even political. It was called technocratic - government as technique, not as a negotiation". (Heartfield 2013, p. 7)

The book has eight chapters in which are presented the main features of European Union's politics and its strategies of the integration process. James Heartfield explains the consequences of European integration from a perspective centred on the dictatorial position of the European Commission.

The first chapter is entitled "Pathological Nationalism?" and debates the relationships between the autochthonous politics and the European directions. The argument is focused on a positive interpretation of the nationalism in the EU, faced with the more and more negative opinions of the important politicians from Brussels and Strasbourg. The author argues "that the contemporary case for the European Union is bound up with the idea that nationalism in Europe is a pathological condition that needs the European Union to constraint it – even though the actual historical record indicates a different origin. We will argue that the antinational claims of the European Union are more contemporary and correspond instead to the ideology of globalisation". (Heartfield, 2013, p. 21). In the next chapters the author discusses the loss of power of national states in the EU (chapter 2), "The decline of nationalism and the rise of the European Union" (chapter 3), "The domestic allies of European integration" (chapter 4), "The developing institutions of the European Union" (chapter 5), "European Identity" (chapter 6). The last two chapters are focused on a very known and applied research method in political science – the positivism. "Positivist approaches to European integration" and "Post-positivist theories of European Integration" are the sections which presents the last scientific perspectives on the politics in this area.

Regarding the research methods used in this book, the author was inspired and analysed a series of existing connections between the European policies and the national spectres. Surely its hypotheses are contested by other scholars who are the proponents of the EU, but generally this book have good structure and arguments. James Heartfield starts from a presentation of facts and continues with a theoretical approach emphasizing the contradictions in construction of the European Union. Apart from being a supporter of nationalism, he describe exactly the political context of the last period and formulates some predictions related to the future evolutions of Europe.

In conclusion we say this writing is an original research in the field of the European Union's politics. It has a strong theoretical structure, completed with a combination of research strategies that leads to

an articulated result. The conclusions of this study may not be appreciated by a part of European public opinion but it is a signal for a reform in the continental politics regarding the process of integration and the sovereignty of the member states.