

PINTERIČ, Uroš – PRIJON, Lea: European Union in 21st century

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Uroš Pinterič is an associate teaching professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences of University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. His recent book, „European Union in 21th century“ dedicated to crucial issues of the European integration, offers some interesting contributions to public debate about the European Union (The EU). As he claims in the introduction, „the main ambition of this book is not develop some innovative aspects of the European Union“ (Pinterič, 2013, p. 5), but the core attention of his tiny book is to analyse the impact of the EU. The European Union project is one of the most challenging constructions of supranational governance. Not only the economic integration, but the deepening political union is one of the important to be critically evaluated. Pinterič's work is devoted to undergraduate students who want to understand deeply these processes of supranational-building. As he points out, the European Union is a place for opportunities to young people, so the main goal of the book is to offer a critical-cynical view to this young generation. In contrast to another theorists of the European integration, Pinterič's methodology is created by a geographical and historical implications.

In this sense, the reviewed book is divided to several chapters in which Pinterič describes the main arguments. In the first chapter, his concern is about the pre-history of the pan-Europeanism. Because of the history is the teacher of the life (Pinterič, 2013, p. 7), Pinterič compares the pan-European idea with the past. He concludes that the European Union is geographically and historically the second largest empire/political system in Europe.

Moreover, the next chapter deals with the historical development of the modern European integration. The values of the pan-Europe idea are the heritage from the enlighten times of a „spring of nations“ and the industrial revolution. The first principles of a „pan-Europeanism“ were based on Christianity, liberalism, social responsibility and pro-Europeanism (Godart van der Kroon in Pinterič, 2013, p. 11). Pinterič is also asking if another influence such as Judaism and Islamism are not the reasons why the EU is demonstrating its own values. Then he argues, by his emphasize on the historical and culture heritage that today's globalizing Europe is facing a problem of multiculturalism.

The third chapter discusses the two crucial issues of the EU, the institutional development and the relationship between member and candidate states. From the explanation of the negative integration to the beginning processes of the positive integration, the EU has been overcoming several types of deficits. One of them is a democratic deficit, which can be understood as a lack of participation of citizens in the political system of the EU. On the other hand, there is another meaning of the democratic deficit – the legitimization of the European integration. The examples of the unsuccessful referendums in France and Netherlands, which stopped the institutional progress but open the discussion about the EU's future, made the European elites concern about the ultimate people's sovereignty. Pinterič points out that one of the lack of the Lisbon Treaty is the check-balance of the proclaimed representative democracy. He admits that „they forgot the basic concept of representation where people, if they are not satisfied with representatives, can change them” (Pinterič, 2013, p. 17). The democratic deficit is not only a so-called deepening process, but also a widening. The second important issue of this chapter is a question of an enlargement. One of the important meanings of the enlargement of the EU is the integration process, which is shaped by the relationship between member and candidate countries. Pinterič correctly notes that the EU seems to be the elite club of countries which has a right to set the rules for applicant states and the EU is like a rule-maker who makes barriers for them. Paradoxically, the member states and the European institutions are less prepared to the enlargement like the prospective countries. From the perspective of the eastern enlargement in 2004, Pinterič demonstrates what is a role of the candidate countries and even if they can influence their future. This part of Pinterič's book is very important because it evaluates the real sense of the European integration. Pinterič briefly expresses some ultimate problems about the EU. However he identifies the EU as a factor of the democratization, but the economic and social gain from the integration is still vague. What is more, Pinterič mentions in one paragraph the question about informatization of society. According to him, the main task for political science is to completely inform public about the European matters. In my opinion, it is not only the knowledge of the information, but also about the right understanding and evaluation of this information's. The last point of this chapter is concerned about the disintegration of the EU. Because of the historic and cultural diversifications of the member states, Pinterič is putting the possibility of the EU disintegration also due to the inappropriate institutional framework.

The fourth chapter demonstrates that the European Union is becoming one of the (con)federal model of political constitutionalization. The European Union is not only a political system but also an international organization. Nevertheless, Pinterič analyzes only the EU as a political system on the basis of the theoretical framework of a federation. His assumption divides this chapter to three main topics – the description of the normative theory of federation, analysing the Constitution of the European Union with the (con)federal elements, and the last to the social conditions of the (con)federalism. This part of his work is trying to figure the theory of the federalism with the European Union's approach. Firstly, Pinterič recognizes the different sense of federalism and confederalism and then he shows some dimensions of the modern federation. These following factors are: the historical-cultural dimension, political-constitutional dimension, fiscal dimension, program dimension, representing/cooperation dimension and the role of federal units (Pinterič, 2013, p. 38). Consequently, he puts these dimensions to the European institutional framework and notes that the EU has undoubtedly the characteristics of the (con)federation. In my point of view, there is a question whether it is a natural process of the supranational integration, or it is a project of the European elites/politicians.

The last and the largest part of the book is the fifth part. The name of the chapter is Proud to be European – Illusion or Reality? Previously, Pinterič was arguing about characteristics of the European integration, about the meaningless of the enlargement, the theoretical background of the constitutionalization, but in the final part he summarizes the institutional character of the EU. This brief overview of the political system, which includes the outline of a daily decision-making process or the legislative procedure, gives us the evidence that the EU is a highly complex of few „euro-bureaucracy institutions“. Much more interesting part of the final chapter is about the construction of the European identity. The European identity has become the crucial question to the further development of the EU. The theoretical background of the national identity has its roots in the late eighteenth century when Adam Smith contributed the key factors of nation such as a historical territory, common myths and historical memory, mass culture, common economy and common legal rights for all citizens (Pinterič, 2013, p. 48-49). Then he recognizes the three basic ways of the creation of nations – state-nation, nation-state and state without a nation (Južnic typology in Pinterič, 2013, p. 50). On the behalf of the comparison of the two new member states (Estonia and Slovenia) and the old member states (France and Great Britain), he concludes that national-building

process has a long tradition in the old countries but their national identities were created inside of the pre-existing political framework. Furthermore, Pinterič is finding out that the constitutionalization of the common European identity is much more a top-down formation. This methodology includes the common institutional system, creation of different European spaces and what is important, and the historical-cultural point of view. The EU is already sharing the common values which were set up especially before the fourth largest enlargement. On the other hand, there is a core problem for this type of unification – a linguistic diversity. The significant point of Pinterič's view is the current questions about the European identity. Indeed he tries to explain the complex problem of the identity building in the age of the globalization. What is interesting, that he understands that the national identity could be the obstacle to the construction of the European identity and vice versa. For example, a project of cosmopolite communitarism could create the flexibility of parallel consciousness in the hierarchy of several identities.

The review book called “European Union in 21th century” is a brief introduction to the main discussion about the European integration. This short preface to the current problems of the European Union theory is an appropriate handbook for the undergraduate students. The main goal of the book, the critical contribution, was full filled by the authors and in some part the topic was overcome by the strong assumption of historical and cultural back-round. The publication could be recommended to students and used as a basis for a research work. Because of the topic of the European Union is still current, the main arguments of this publication will always be discussed.

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