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EUROPEAN UNION AS POLITICAL SYSTEM LA UNIÓN EUROPEA COMO SISTEMA POLÍTICO

PhD. Nicolay Popov

Universidad Suroeste Neofit Rilski, Bulgaria

npopovilir@law.swu.bg

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Abstract

The processes of creating/establishing regional alliances after the 50s of XX century are being characterized by the emergence of a number of the compound subjects of the contemporary international relations – the international organizations. Most of them function through the traditional approach of intergovernmentalism. The European Union is a dissimilar organization where the integration has been being developed by supranational approach, which makes it unique. Thus, Simon Hicks has good reasons to consider the European Union as a political system, but not as a state in the modern meaning of the concept. That's precisely the reason analysis of this political system and its response in the context of the challenges of today.

Keyword

Politics – Political system – European integration – Challenges

Resumen

Los procesos de creación de organizaciones regionales después de los años 50 del siglo XX se caracterizan por la aparición de una serie de entidades constitutivas de las relaciones internacionales contemporáneas. La mayoría de ellos operan a través del enfoque tradicional de intergubernamentalismo. La Unión Europea es diferente y la integración dentro de la propia unión se desarrolla por un enfoque supranacional, lo que la hace única. Esa es la razón por la cual Simon Hix considera la Unión Europea como un sistema político, pero no como un Estado o Supraestado en sentido moderno de esta categoría. Es por ello que en este artículo hacemos un análisis de este sistema político y sus efectos en el contexto de los desafíos de nuestro tiempo.

Palabras Claves

Política – Sistema político – Integración europea – Desafíos

Contemporary international relations are characterized by a multiplicity of objects, dynamics etc. The course of the globalization process raises questions about the functioning and the existence of the modern nation states and the international organizations they have created. They are the basic actors in the international relations despite of the criticism of the results of their functioning for the society.

Analyzing these subjects as political systems allows us to explain their effectiveness. This implies to briefly consider the concepts of politics and political system.

The term “politics” comes from Greek and is perceived and defined in various ways. The notion of politics is now often considered as a process, activity, line of conduct, way of management etc. One of the main definitions is

“a process of making common decisions for a group of people whose interests and course of action initially differ, but generally, these decisions are binding for the group and applied in the same way to all members of the group as a common/uniform politics.”¹

Another meaning of the term is “relationships between large social groups in which they express and stand up for their interests”.²

Almost always politics is associated with state management, distribution of values and interests defense and this determines its importance for the development and existence of mankind.

Policy can be internal and foreign. Internal policy of states comprises activities for regulating the life of society. Foreign policy of all countries is primarily aimed at securing national interests in the establishment and development of relations with other nations and the surrounding world.

Generally acknowledged foreign policy objectives are:

- strengthening the national security;
- building and increasing of potential – economic, military, scientific etc.;
- consolidation of the international positions.³

In the public life sphere, domestic policy is divided into economic, social, legal, national, defensive, scientific, religious etc. As activity types, politics is implemented on several levels – local, regional, national and international.

The structure of the politics includes various components – people, organizations, relations, actions. These components can be divided into three groups – subjects, objects and resources.

¹ Енциклопедия на политическата мисъл. Блекуел, съставители: Дейвид Милър и др., ЦИД, С., 1997, с. 375.

² Политология. Под редакцията на Георги Янков, УИ „Стопанство”, 2001, стр. 9.

³ Михайлович, С. Н. Политология, 2006, Питер, стр. 21-24.

Subjects are circulators of deliberate political action:

- States, parties and trade unions, political movements, social communities, media. Nonpolitical organizations and institutions having an effect on the politics /churches, universities/, are also included. The general object of the politics is the society and the taking course processes in it. In this sense, the activity of the political subject is aimed at giving the processes such a direction, which would, corresponds to its interests. Specific objects of politics are the main spheres of live in the society, these exact institutes, social groups, communities and individuals, on which they have political effect. The differences between subject and objects are conditional and situational. They exchange their places depending on the impact.⁴ This determines political system as a part of the social system.

In the 50s and 60s of the XX century, systematic approach entered in the political science. Its best-known representatives are David Easton and Gabriel Almond.⁵

Usually structural components of the political system are:

- institutional state and government institutions, political parties, NGO's, media etc.;
- normative /legal regulations/;
- functional – set of social roles and functions, carried out by the political institutions;
- communicative /the diverse relations between political actors in connection with power, politics, rights, freedoms.../;
- ideological /cultural/ political views, theories, ideologies, values, orientations.

Generally, the political system is the combination of the different political institutions, as well the forms of interaction and relationship between them regarding the distribution of the political power.

Functions of political systems are:

- preservation of the integrity of the social life. Consolidation of the social groups with different interests;
- detection, aggregation and realization of the interests between the social groups, and finding the balance between them;
- defining long-term goals and tasks of social development;
- distribution of power and resources;
- mobilization of the population for accomplishing the objects set;

⁴ Михайлович, С. Н. Политология, 2006, Питер, стр. 25.

⁵ Лавриненко, В. Н. Волтер Клувер, Политология: курс лекций, 2010 г. Стр. 171.

- maintaining reliability in the public life;
- establishing legitimacy of the political power;
- political socialization.

Typology of political systems can be defined on different criteria. For example, according to Karl Marx and his system, they are the following:

- slave system;
- feudal;
- bourgeois;
- socialist.

Sometimes according to the political regime, political systems are classified as follows:

- totalitarian;
- authoritarian;
- democratic.⁶

In this context European Union is a democratic political system.

Simon Hix in his book describes European Union not like typical international organization or like federal state. He says that term “political system” describes better major characteristics of European Union. According to Simon Hix “there is another category we can use to conceptualize the EU: as a political system. Gabriel Almond (1956) and David Easton (1957) were the first to develop formal frameworks for defining and analyzing political systems. They defined a political system as having four key characteristics:

- 1.- There is a stable and clearly defined set of institutions for collective decision-making and a set of rules governing relations between and within these institutions.
- 2.- Citizens seek to realize their political desires through the political system, either directly or through intermediary organizations such as interest groups and political parties.
- 3.- Collective decisions in the political system have a significant impact on the distribution of economic resources and the allocation of values across the whole system.
- 4.- There is continuous interaction between these political outputs, new demands on the system, new decisions, and so on.

⁶ Лавриненко, В. Н. Волтер Клувер, Политология: курс лекций, 2010 г. Стр. 172-174.

The EU possesses all these characteristics⁷. European Union has institutional structure which includes European Parliament, European Council, Council, European Commission, Court of Justice of European Union, European Central Bank and Court of Auditors. Interaction between those institutions is constituted of European Union law, which has primary and direct effect over legislations of member states.

Simon Hix argued that “What is interesting, nevertheless, is that EU does not have a “monopoly on the legitimate use of coercion”. The EU is not a “state” in the traditional Weberian meaning of the word. The power of coercion, through police and security forces, remains in the hands of national government.”⁸

EU contains four groups of political subjects usually included in political systems in national states. They are:

- citizens and civil society;
- political parties, groups of interest and mass media;
- institutions and bodies including EU institutions, nation states and their institutions as well;
- administration.

All of these political subjects are part of the political process in the member states and the European Union.

As a political system, today the European Union is facing a number of challenges. The ability of its institutional structure of coping with them will reveal its effectiveness. The migrants and refugees flow issues, the increase of the influence of the nationalistic parties in the member states are just some of the issues which have to be adequately resolved.

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⁷ Simon Hix and Bjorn Hoyland, The Political System of the European Union (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 12-13.

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