

ines the most notorious revolution theories and analyses in-depth the events in 1989 in accordance to them. Moreover, it brings a valuable contribution to the elucidation of the myths and realities of the Romanian revolution, by analysing different perspectives on the events such as "revolution", "coup d'état" and "popular uprising", and by giving space for a fierce polemic over the nature of the revolutionary act.

It is important to notice that even if it takes into consideration the hypothesis of "coup d'état" or "coup de palace", widely debated among the international academic community, the book under review concentrates strictly on the revolutionary perspective of the analysed events, concluding that it was a "violent and involved mass mobilisation, which led to the storming of the institutions of the old regime, followed by the establishment of revolutionary councils". Hence, the author provides us with a very prudent conclusion and leaves the debate open. We consider important to point out that, event if the reviewed book is based on excellent sources, it fails to bring into discussion the documents of the communist archives, relying mainly on academic books and on journalistic sources. This is a fundamental aspect considering that the very truth about the Romanian revolution of December 1989 can be known only when the entire archives will be available to the researchers, fact that can only occur when all the ones accountable for the violent events will leave the political scene of Romania.

To conclude, we can certainly argue that many of the unanswered questions on the events of December 1989 can find their response in Peter Siani-Davies's brilliant work about the Romanian revolution.

## What's Wrong With The European Union & How to Fix It

Simon Hix, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2008

Cristian Ghinea \*

However different they are, John McCain and Barack Obama have a common message: unifying a divided America. Both candidates aim to come across the aisle for less divisive politics. This sort of message seems to become a mantra for politicians and scholars. And yet Simon Hix swims against the current in his newly released book *What's Wrong With The European Union & How to Fix It*. Hix analyses the

political system of EU as a classical case of a consensualist democratic model. And he points out precisely to this consensualism as being the main problem of the EU. The political game at European level needs a real stake, with clear winners and clear losers.

Author of a well known study text about the political system of EU and a reputed scholar of European studies, Hix offers the readers a spectacular mélange between academic research, political realism and bold anticipation literature. He starts by underpinning the historic achievements of the European Union. Sustainable peace and internal market went further than many hoped 50 years ago. But that era has ended in the early '90s. In that sense, EU could be considered a victim of its own success. Given its achievements, what is wrong with it? Why has decreased the trust of Europeans in that project with 20% in the last decade only? Could it be the lack of information about EU? The European bureaucracy prefers to blame the lack of information for its unpopularity and pays for propaganda like activities that bore the public. Actually, the citizens are more informed today about the EU than in the past. Why is that? Hix says that EU's problem is deeper than bad PR: "Citizens who perceive that they gain new economic opportunities from market integration in Europe tend to support the EU, while citizens that perceive that market integration threatens their economic interests tend to oppose the EU" (64). This example illustrates the Hix's argument at its best. Given the nature of the problem, more politics could help EU in gaining popular legitimacy: "In democratic political systems, if a citizen loses from a particular policy or suffers economic hardship, the citizen does not blame the political system as a whole, but rather blames the government of the day. In the EU, in contrast, those who lose from economic integration or from policy reform simply blame the EU system as a whole, as they do not perceive a governing coalition at the European level who they can replace" (66).

But the popular mood is not the biggest problem identified by the Simon Hix. The EU suffers from a deep policy gridlock. For many years its politicians believed this was a result of bad constitutional arrangements. Consequently they made enormous efforts to solve the problem at constitutional level. But they ended up with a failed Constitution and endless new negotiations with little effects. This is the bad news: the Lisbon treaty will not fix the EU. The good news is given also by Hix: the problem is not there. He simply demonstrates that EU functioned satisfactory until early '90s with worse institutional mechanisms than today. Simply put, a huge volume of legislation was adopted in creating the single market when the unanimity was the rule, not the exception as it is the case today. Isn't it ironical that once the decision-making became simpler the decisions were increasingly difficult to be made? What is the problem then?

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Hix changes the topic from institutional shaping to policy making. The very nature of EU's decisions changed dramatically. Internal market was built on a centrist platform. Very different political forces, from French socialists to British Thatcherites, were able to agree on this issue. But once internal market created, the EU played more and more a redistribution role. In other words, it is more and more difficult to have win-win situations. Someone has to lose. And many actually lose, as many really win. For instance, deregulation of labor market creates new opportunities for investors but the well-protected Western workers are losing. The historical consensual model of EU was appropriate for agreeing on the internal market but creates tensions once the redistribution requests more competitive politics.

EU functions de facto as a system divided on ideological lines. Moreover, Hix says, more conflict is inevitable. After 2005, a right wing political coalition governs the EU both in Parliament (the dominance of EPP), Commission (Barroso and most of his commissioners) and in the Council (a right-wing majority of governments). But this coalition does not have a specific political mandate to move the policies rightward. This combination between more ideological decisions making and lack of political mandate creates popular frustration and political stalemate: "The current political majority in the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament is on the centre right, which means that the current policy of the EU are in a more free market direction. Without open democratic politics, this particular "governing coalition" is not recognized by most citizens. So, rather than recognizing that the current right wing policies are the product of this particular governing coalition and would change if a different coalition emerged as the governing majority, those parties and citizens on the losing side in the current policy battles (on the left) believe that free market policies will be a permanent feature of the EU. This explains why many citizens on the left, particularly in Western Europe, increasingly oppose the whole EU project rather than opposed the current policies of the EU" (106).

This could be the main message of Hix's book: the consensus era is over. You have to fight for real, he transmits to European politicians. The author seems to treat them as a bunch of toothless pit-bulls that forgot their goal. Moreover, they do not have to change the treaties in order to make the EU a real polity. On the contrary, Hix proposes just some changes within the current constitutional system. He makes some recommendations for each of the main European institutions. The Parliament should renounce to distribute the internal positions (from the EP president to chairs of the committees) on proportional basis. Thus the real competition between the political groups would be encouraged. The Council should open its meetings to the public and to proceed voting for each issue rather than making behind door arrangements. Finally the most provocative proposal

is to transform the election of Commission's President into a real political competition. Each political group in the European Parliament should announce a candidate for this position prior the European elections. Electing a sort of "prime-minister" for EU would create a real stake for these elections. Hix brings arguments for each of his proposals, makes comparisons with the current situation and underpins the advantages of the alternatives.

Hix uses good academic skills in order to shape the reality. His fresh angle is welcomed in the debates about EU, which are usually good in identifying the problems and depressingly poor in finding some solutions. Hix thinks out of the box and his new book will shape future debates about Europe. As the history of EU often proved, this could be the first step in shaping Europe itself.