TRANSFORMATION OF DISCOURSE OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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TRANSFORMAREA DISCURSULUI DE IDENTITATE EUROPEANĂ

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Abstract. The article deals with the analysis of the transformation of the discourse of European identity during the second half of the XXth–beginning of the XXst centuries. The search for general patterns of this process can help to build appropriate models applicable to the political conditions of countries seeking to integrate into the European community. The situation in the European community was chosen as the empirical material, mainly within the framework of the European Union, currently uniting 28 countries. Since identity, including the European identity is not only a construct formed with varying degrees of success, but also an objective reality, acting as a set of characteristics that distinguish Europeans from others in this particular case, this topic is not only a subject of study of academic discourse, but also an important topic forming a real political agenda.

Keywords: discourse, discourse transformation, political identity, European identity, civil society, social constructivism, political elites, European integration, European Union

Rezumat Articolul tratează procesul transformării discursului identității europene în a doua jumătate a secolului XX - începutul secolului XXI. Căutarea modelelor generale ale acestui proces poate ajuta la construirea unor modele adecvate aplicabile condițiilor politice ale țărilor care doresc să se integreze în comunitatea europeană. Ca material empiric a fost aleasă situația din comunitatea europeană, în principal în cadrul Uniunii Europene, care reunește în prezent 28 de țări. Întrucât identitatea, inclusiv identitatea europeană, nu este doar un construct format cu diferite grade de succes, ci și o realitate obiectivă, acționând ca un set de caracteristici care îi disting pe europeni de ceilalți, acest subiect nu este doar unul de studiu, dar și o temă importantă care formează o adevărată agendă politică.

Cuvinte cheie: discurs, transformarea discursului, identitate politică, identitate europeană, societate civilă, constructivism social, elite politice, integrare europeană, Uniunea Europeană.

The proposed article deals with the analysis of the transformation of the discourse of European identity and the search for general patterns of this process that can help build appropriate models applicable to the political conditions of countries seeking to integrate into the European community.

From our point of view, an analysis of the transformation of the discourse about identity could be quite useful for decision-makers in the field of cultural policy (both at the legislative and executive levels) in such societies.

Need to mark, that the category of political and civic identity is quite well developed in science. Since identity, including European identity is not only a construct formed with varying degrees of success, but also a reality, an objective fact, acting as a set of characteristics that distinguish Europeans from others in this particular case, this topic is not only a subject study of academic discourse, but also an important topic that forms the real political agenda. The criteria for these differences are very different: traditions, culture, mode of life, system of values, common history, picture of the world, etc. Moreover, all this should be considered not in the dichotomous key "either-or", but in terms of searching and identifying priorities in the hierarchical system of the prevalence of certain values.

With that, it is important to fix the gap between the theory of the problem of identity and its real content. The issue of developing common criteria is very important, because in the public space there are completely different political, social, economic, worldview ideas about European identity. Thus, one of the architects of the single European space, the French statesman and politician Robert Schuman (1886-1963) believed that the process of integration and the creation of a new Europe would be a long and gradual event, at each stage of which it would be possible to fix the increase the pan-European solidarity [5, p. 5]. Obviously, the process of real integration went faster than the founding fathers of the single European space expected; and following the example of Mongolia, which, according to a well-known joke, tried to get from feudalism into socialism immediately, European identity is understood differently in almost every one of the 28 states, EU members.

Let us not forget that any discursive construct is based on an ideal concept; in our particular case, we should talk about the concept of a united Europe from the point of view of its ideal structure. Any declaration of this kind, be it an official pan-European document or a manifesto of a specific political force, is based precisely on the image of the desired reality, and not on the rough 'prose of life'. However, here lies a paradox, which led to a rather tangible 'correction' of public policy and the choice of an electorally significant majority both in many individual countries of the European community and, for example, in the elections to the European Parliament held in May 2019. The ideal future is based on the idea of the ideal carriers of such a future and its builders, i.e. here the question of an 'imaginary community' in its classical sense, first proposed by B. Anderson (1936–2015) [1].

In practice, this means that within the framework of one approach, an ordinary voter, when asked about the true values of a European, immediately declares individual freedom, a liberal economy, legal consciousness, multiculturalism and tolerance. Within the framework of another approach, the predominance of the idea of competition ('every man for himself!'), "the burden of a white man", intellectual and economic snobbery, regional protectionism, etc. are declared. Within the third approach, there is the rejection of the idea of the state and supranational institutions as such. The fourth and subsequent ones demonstrate a combination of different factors from different approaches, from the point of view of theory, they are weakly combined with each other or even mutually exclusive, but in practice, they are quite inherent in one consciousness. Moreover, just as references can be found in the Bible to conflicting norms of life, so in European history one can find confirmation of mutually exclusive and antagonistic discourses.

At the same time, some researchers dealing with issues of identity believe that there is no separate identity tied to a geographical location, and point out that 'what we call European, American or Asian identity is [only] generation of discourse' [3, p. 72].

Since, as shown above, the very concept of European identity is ambivalent, and it does not have clearly defined and consensus temporal and spatial criteria, there are still different approaches to the concept itself. One of points of view tells that European values prevail where the majority of the population shares them, and this phenomenon in itself does not have a clear geographical and spatial reference. Therefore, for example, Japan or Botswana in the political sense can be much closer to European identity than, for example, certain European countries. According to this approach, European identity, on the whole, can not be localized at the borders, be it the borders of the „euro zone", the Schengen Agreement, the European Union or even the European subcontinent, but go beyond them according to the principle of the ancient aphorism about the tent and Rome who is 'always with you'.

At the same time, it should be remembered that the key concept in real identity (as opposed to its manifestation) consists in following (and not in simulation or imitation) the institutional component of "Europeanness", and not some external markers, such as fashion, architecture or level of consumption.

Wherein, there is a clear understanding of the fact that if earlier the European construct itself practically coincided with the distribution area of the Western version of Christianity, now it has significantly expanded both civilizationally and spatially. At the same time, there is a fact of transformation of approaches to the concepts of European identity, in most of which the emphasis is shifted from the discourse of a single cultural and civilizational space to the discourse of the need to quickly respond to external incentives, sometimes posing a significant threat to the very existence of a single European space (migration, Brexit, economic crisis, organized crime, corruption, the factor of large states ideologically or functionally opposing EU policies (Iran, Russia, Turkey)).

There is an opinion that the institutional problem today hinders the development of European identity, drives it into a dead end, making it more and more a category of political discourse, rather than a practice. "For the majority of European citizens, the EU represents nothing but an abstract concept. Many people do not consider the EU governance system to be part of their daily lives, although the arenas of intervention and political powers of the EU are constantly expanding" [3, p. 75].

In order for Europeans to feel a common European identity, the institutions of the European Union must become more significant and legitimate in the eyes of ordinary EU citizens. It is precisely in the lack of a sense of such a connection that, in our opinion, lies the reason for the D. Trump phenomenon in the United States of America, P. Grillo in Italy, V. Orban in Hungary, etc. It is obvious that people cannot sincerely participate in a system to which they do not feel they belong.

It is impossible, in our opinion, to talk about European self-consciousness outside the awareness of the bearer of such an identity of his/her own belonging to Europe, not only in the geographical, but also in the socio-cultural sense. Denying the fact that traditional identity is being eroded is pointless. There is an objective process of transition of one of the forms of identity to the plane of European institutions (Brussels), and to the medium and micro-regional levels (Alsace, Catalonia, Swabia, the Baltic region, etc.), subsequently causing new connections between the regions directly with the institutions of the European Union, bypassing the national governments.

The transformation of a new identity proceeds rather contradictory and often paradoxically. In a number of cases, we can record both the strengthening of national and even nationalist movements and practices (Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland) in Germany, the Northern League (Lega Nord) in Italy, the Flemish interest (Vlaams Belang) in Belgium, The Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom) in Hungary, etc.), and the desire of part of society to common European identification (Catalonia, Scotland).

The politicians who were at the origins of the creation of the European Union did not consider the task of forming a common European identity to be of paramount importance and priority. They believed, as already noted, that the very process of creating a united Europe would be a long process, consisting of several stages, each of which would be successively to solve the issues of creating a new identity. At that time (the middle of the 20th century), it was obvious that different historical, political, social and normative values and approaches coexist within the same European space and, as a result, ideas about European identity. Moreover, initially one of the fundamental foundations of the European project was the thesis of identity, based on the denial of only one's national identity.

Those who formed the initial discourse of a common European identity had an initial conviction that it was possible to create a universal European identity that would rise above and eventually replace national identity. We can single out two main trends in this matter: an appeal to the universality of European civilization throughout its thousand-year history or a commo-

nality of political principles and institutions that can be created within one or two generations (Chinese in Singapore, two Koreas etc.).

It is also impossible ignore the fact that the priorities within the hierarchy of identity factors are transformed not only among the bearers of this identity, among the addressees of the formed discourse, but also among the addressees, those who determine the political agenda. Therefore, with the beginning of institutionally formalized integration processes, economic and political factors came to the fore, while historical, cultural and civilizational ones became secondary. One of the prominent supporters of this approach, the Italian political scientist Furio Cerutti, formulated it this way: 'Political identity is an ensemble of political values and principles that we recognize as the basis of our political group ... This act of recognition or identification unites us into a single We' [6].

More broadly, in European public discourse, the mainstream is the position that identity is a social construct that is closely related to integration processes. The most famous philosophers and opinion leaders French Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) and German Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) published a manifesto in 2003 called "After the war: the revival of Europe", where they wrote the following: "Today we it is known that many political traditions that claim to be authoritative under the pretext of being natural are in fact "invented". In contrast, the European identity that could emerge in the light of publicity would be constructed from the start [5].

From the analysis of historical processes, one can see exactly how the European identity was constructed. The first Declaration of European Identity was signed by the first nine member states of the European Union (the first six countries that stood at the origins of the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community – Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France - and the three countries that joined – Great Britain, Denmark and Ireland) in December 1973. It was recorded there that "despite hostility and conflicts in the past, European countries have common goals and interests. This should contribute to the unification of Europe and the creation of pan-European institutions. The main principles of institutions should be the rule of human rights, observance of laws and democracy" [4]. Further, in the summer of 1984, at a summit in Fontainebleau (France, a suburb of Paris), the leaders of ten member countries (nine countries that signed the Declaration of Identity and Greece, which joined in 1981) officially proclaimed the need to strengthen European identity. They authorized the creation of a working group to develop a roadmap to boost the European identity and the formation of a common internal space of Europe. This project was called „People's Europe" (alternative translation – „Europe of the Peoples"). As part of the implementation of this program, such specific measures were taken as the mutual recognition of higher education diplomas by all EU member states (1985), the introduction of a single passport (1986), the adoption of common symbols – the anthem and the flag (1986) – then, without which today it is impossible to imagine a single European space.

Already in the 21st century, the emphasis shifted to micropolitics. Thus, within the framework of the Europe for Citizens program, special attention is paid to three areas: establishing cooperation between the municipalities of European countries, supporting civil initiatives and civil society organizations, and holding special unifying events – conferences, holidays, events, etc.

The largest European sociological service Eurobarometer regularly conducts and publishes data from surveys of the population of EU member states, including on questions of the priority of their identity. For example, in 2013, only for 32% of respondents did European identity come first compared to national identity, while 74% considered themselves Europeans and 94% put their national identity in the foreground [2].

On the one hand, the ethno-cultural factors of identity (nationality, language, religious affiliation), currently represented within the entire space of the European Union, are so diverse that it is impossible to build a European identity on their basis. Rather, the opposite is true – the

ethnic factor deconstructs potential unity, is an important factor in the well-known discursive dichotomy „Europe of nations” versus „United Europe”. Thus, despite the undoubted primacy of the English language as the language of international communication within the European (and world) space, the language problem itself has not gone anywhere and is an important factor in the political struggle. Since language is a very, very important factor of identity, sometimes prevailing over all others, it occupies a significant place in the course of political struggle. In addition, here an important role is played by the use of political and political science discursive practices, as opposed to practices that appeal to civilizational and cultural foundations. The political institutional design of the EU member states is very diverse: presidential and parliamentary republics, as well as constitutional monarchies with different electoral system. Collecting them into a single unified whole seems to be an utopian and meaningless task. Despite these facts, political unity is manifested not through the ideal political organization of this or that society within the European Union, but through ideal political practices. At the same time, do not forget that since the signing of the Treaty on the Establishment of the European Union, the issue of the legitimacy of supranational structures and their connection with the citizens of each of the countries has not yet resolved. This in itself strengthens the position of Eurosceptics, both playing „in the long run” (see the case of the Brexit, the process of the UK leaving the European Union because of a referendum on June 23, 2016), and more opportunistic ones (aimed at specific election campaigns).

Concluding the study, we note that, in our opinion, at the moment, European identity in the context of elections to the European Parliament does not go beyond the scope of, in fact, discourse and political rhetoric and is weakly connected with the context of the real agenda of the modern world. The following is undoubted: European identity is a social construct and is formed with the help of various state and supranational mechanisms, the main of which are symbolic politics, supranational citizenship, open borders and free movement of citizens, educational and economic integration. Obviously, we are present at the beginning of a long process that will lead to certain consequences depending on the fate of the European integration process and the consequences of the decisions made, and this process in itself can and should be very instructive for the decisions made in this sphere.

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