Formation of Modern State Identity: Social and Cultural Dimensions

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Abstract: The article aims to stress the importance of cultural factor influencing the formation of modern states' identities. Studying the formation of state identity through the consideration of exogenous (globalization, establishment of interactions between different states, geopolitical situation) and endogenous (level of social interactions between people, historical memory, common destiny, cultural heritage) factors, the author concludes on the dominance of internal factors influencing this process. It is substantiated that the latters, maintained by the whole society, help the state to act as a unitary actor in the international arena. However, the state can construct its own identity only when the so-called We-feeling is supported by all members of its society. Today only a few countries are considered as nation states because their societies are formed by different ethne. If the cultures of some ethnic groups clash inside the country, the latter is unable to build its own identity. Taking into account the effects of two possible scenarios of cultures' coexistence, it is offered a few models which allow the social identity to be constructed. They include the policy of multiculturalism supported with the state, interexistence of groups, and the collective strategy of ethnic social competition.As a result, it is assumed that, while any of these models is applied the state should play a dominant role promoting the erasement of intercultural contradictions existing between different ethnic groups. The research itself and the conclusions made are based on the usage of inductive, comparative, analytical and historical methods.

Keywords: state identity, interethnic contacts, cultural identification

State Identity Phenomenon: Exogenous and Endogenous Components

Numerous transformations of international relations caused with the reformatting of political systems at the end of the 20th century allot the global elite the task to revise the assessments of international situation; to define the status, role and place of states within a new system of international relations; to establish the main foreign policy priorities of countries with regard to the increasing influence of some actors and therefore their potential. Accordingly, the issue on the rethinking of states' identity was also put to the foreground because the identity itself was considered to be one of the elements of a complex process of countries' establishment during the transitional period. In this regard, the theoretical study of

international relations focused on the key factors determining Selves of different states and thus the relations of constructed Selves with the significant Others, which directly influence the development and establishment of states, and their integration to the global or regional systems of international relations. Therefore, considering the state's role in the international arena, one can't analyze the process of its self-identification without the analysis of its foreign policy role and its recognition/non-recognition in the world politics by the third parties that thereby stresses the interdependence of these processes.

However, the correlation of the state's role in the international arena leads to certain changes of its identity. However, the latter is not an absolute universal which is immanently characterizing the state actor: it is constructed by society and maintained on the basis of a certain set of notions about the state formed as a result of its international interactions, i. e., the identity is born, develops and disappears under the influence of some social, political, economic or cultural processes. According to M. Castells, all identities are constructed. The identity construct takes its building material from history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, power mechanisms and religious revelations. But concrete people, social groups and societies work up these materials and order their meanings in new ways, according to the social determinants and cultural projects got implanted into their social structures and the spatial and temporal boundaries. In general, the symbolic nature of a certain identity and its meaning for those who are identifying with it or existing beyond it are determined by a subject that constructs this collective identity having some purposes.

In this sense, the state, considered to be the main consolidating power of the society which is able to organize it on the basis of common goals, interests and, at times, coercion, also acquires the ability to have its own identity constructed due to unique We-feeling, existing within the society, that is often extrapolated outside during the international interactions. The nature of state identity, which was built inside, may often be subject to change under the influence of global political situation. The latter is a relatively dynamic concept, but if for a long time the leading states are maintaining the main courses of their policies, the global political situation can be interpreted as a state of the international political relations. Consequently, the state identification process is a bilateral phenomenon. On the one hand, it is an instrument to strengthen the country's image in the international arena, and, on the other hand, it is a tool to realize the tasks of internal political consolidation as an expected reaction

to certain foreign political actions of the actor.

As a result, the identity can be considered at two levels: at the domestic (as the social and national factor) and foreign (i. e., self-identity or the role of an actor in the world politics) ones. However, there is no reason to assert the dominance of a particular type of identity. Each type of identity is made actual with a particular situation. The political activity is considered both as the instrument to construct the state identity which conditions the state to determine its national interests, and as the means to implement these socially constructed interests defining the nature of political activity.

Culture as the Main Factor of Society's Identity Construction

Being considered as a particular social community in its inner dimension, throughout all the period of its existence the state has to maintain the We-identity concept, formed by different individuals, which unites the state inside and allows it to appear as a whole in the international arena. Theorizing on the existence of the collective in-group identity within a separate state the American analyst A. Wendt presumes that the basis of any state should necessarily include a separate social construct, but nonetheless this state remains unitary because has its own identity. Accordingly, focusing on changes in the state identity, the researcher delineates the concepts of

"social" (externally defined) and "corporate" (formed on the inside) state identities. The corporate identity of the state is built on the basis of some internal social, ideological and cultural factors which help this state to define the essence of its own Self. The corporate identity presupposes the self-organizing qualities that constitute the actor individuality.

As a social community the state has different endogenous and exogenous sources of identification. Being caused with the opportunistic processes of the world politics, changes in the system of international relations or economic fluctuations in the world markets, exogenous factors can only partly change the state foreign political course if it maintains a stable social and political identity formed by society. This identity is built under the influence of cultural and historical factors such as the historical memory of the people, the degree of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic similarities with the referents, the level of adoption of nationalistic ideas. Having the close relationships and being interdependent, they define such dimensions of external state identity as the degree of national self-consciousness and the level of understanding of the uniqueness of this state in comparison and in the relations with the other actors in the international arena. Therefore, in terms of values the foreign policy strategy of the state is formed not so

much with the military, economic and political factors as with the peculiarities of the collective cultural identity, that is a set of social notions and cultural norms which reflect the emotional guidelines of the society and state leaders regarding their state and other actors in the international arena, and are embodied in the public consciousness and consciousness of the statesmen.

Today, the majority of collective identities are the products of social, political and cultural traditions, the results of the adherence to certain values and memories, which have evolved over time and produced a common collective heritage. For example, A. Wendt defines the collective identity as an individuals' sense of being part of a group which gives actors an interest in the protection of their culture, because during the construction of this identity they redefine the boundaries of their Selves and the Others in order to constitute a common in-group identity. That is, the formation of social identity of any state a priori requires maintaining its usual cultural traditions, while protecting their unity the state is able to elaborate a set of its own foreign policy interests. In this sense, the Russian researcher A. Kara-Murza concludes that the nature of the identity of each state (as the main actor in international relations) includes the synthesis of civilization (ethnic and cultural) and geopolitical identities that function together supplementing each other. The

mutual construction of national ethnic and cultural identities takes place during the establishment of interactive contacts between states in the international arena when one can discover how actors, participating in the interactions, see each other in the context of the external conditions.

In fact, nowadays there is no single approach to the determination of the cultural identity components as the asynchronous development of regions and countries, provoked with the processes of globalization or, conversely, fragmentation of the global space, caused the fundamental modifications of cultural habitats of societies in many countries and, at the same time, strengthened the tendency to the maintenance of historical forms of cultural identities of the others. Nevertheless, it is untimely to say that the globalization process completely erases the cultural boundaries of identities. Even if the states are ready to transfer a significant part of their sovereignty in the fields of economics, politics, international security and human rights to the transnational structures or international institutions, they still retain their significance, especially as keepers of the cultural component of their identity.

For example, today there is a double identity within the European Union – the pan-European and the national and cultural – which main criteria are the discourse and a particular set of political and humanistic values (this

is clearly evidenced with the concept of "Unity in diversity" maintained within the organization). To maintain the cultural component of their identities the Asian or Latin America countries use, in their turn, the ethnic factor, religious values (which are much more important than in the Western Europe), and specific ways of life that are largely influenced with the traditional ones.

One can argue that the culture is always showing some inner integrity; the cultural and historical process appears as the movement from some integral types of culture to the others. Each of these types has significant specificity, a unique historical character. The recognition of the cultural integrity causes the concept of the "spirit of culture" which runs through all its elements, despite their specificity and uniqueness. The essence of the spirit of culture is its direct steering and regulatory mechanisms of the individuals' activities and of the development of society as a whole. The identity of the society and, consequently, of the state, nourished with the spirit of culture, contributes to the establishment of the state and its recognition by the others. The strict self-determination and reliance on cultural identification codes give the state some possibilities to conduct its own domestic and foreign policies based on deeply realized and clearly defined national interests.

Interethnic Contacts: the Influence of Social Differences on the State Identity Formation

However, taking into consideration the main trends of modern social processes, it can be argued that most of the world countries have no longer been considered as homogeneous nation-states which are capable to maintain the unified cultural areas. If earlier some cultural differences did not constitute a threat to the existing societies which were able to absorb or negate them, today their displays often cause the destruction of the existing state collective identity. While this identity is constructing, the violation of cultural differences existing inside the society becomes inevitable because the logic of the process of identity formation requires to minimize their importance and, correspondingly, to homogenize the society in the cultural sphere. The construction of state identity is always defined either as the appropriation of differences into identity, or of identities into a greater order such as the absolute knowledge, history or, ultimately, the state.

In order not to be defined as the "otherness" due to the cultural component, the differences must comply with the general rules which appear in the form of certain social values. Accordingly, to preserve the original image of the existing differences, the authenticity of their origin should be negated because, in any case, they are automatically involved to the normalization of

social way of life and, consequently, adapted within the framework of the public system. The world around is always richer and more diverse than separate systems used in order an individual to comprehend and organize it. On the other hand, if some values of the external world do not correspond to the ones which are typical for the existing state identity, they are playing a deviant role during the process of its construction, simultaneously acquiring the features of hostility.

Today, such differences are mainly brought by the representatives of other cultures presenting within a society. If the latter is able to absorb these differences or to prioritize its own ones, the state retains the cultural dimension of its identity supporting the previously established homogeneity of the society. This homogeneity can also be maintained in the event of so-called "inter-existence" of differences which essence is not only in their tolerate perception on the part of the dominant society groups but also in the cooperation between different groups in order to achieve common goals. The logic of inter-existence replaces the logic of selfishness and exclusiveness, which admits the relationships along the "We – Others" axis, with the strategy of a collective We-concept formation based on the interests and principles implemented with the help of the state. Therefore, the inter-existence replaces the zero-sum game between the rivals with the positive-sum one

in which players have the relations of partnership and common interests, that's why they start to support the concept of coexistence.

In principle, the main factor, forming the state identity based on the processes of inter-existence of different cultural groups within the society, is the clearly designated area where these groups cohabitate. This unique space factor determines the general historical fate of nations forming the community of their cultures. However, the relationships between different groups are rarely based on the recognition of common interests and territory. The artificial borders of the majority of modern states and, consequently, the diversity of their societies push some groups to find their own identities which are formed due to the interaction of completely different factors, respectively. In addition, these groups uphold radically different interests causing the destruction of well-established state policy.

At the present stage the state identity is going through the transformation processes which main characteristic is the splash of awareness of ethnic and cultural group identity as the belonging to a particular ethnos (ethnic community) which has its own historical fate, traditions, culture and, ultimately, its own political interests. Being influenced with social homogenization, which has the goal to create a common We-feeling within the society of a

particular state, ethnic groups face the need to preserve the key characteristics of their own identities.

In this sense, the Russian scientist L. Gumilev stated that while interacting different ethnic groups have a subconscious feeling of sympathy or antipathy regarding their counterparties. The feeling of mutual sympathy was considered by the researcher as the so-called "positive ethnic complementarity", as the sense of mutual antipathy was named as the negative complementarity. The complementarity depends on the rhythms of ethnic fields of various ethnic groups. The positive complementarity occurs if the superimposed rhythms of different ethnic fields form a harmony. In the case of disharmony of ethnic fields, the representatives of various ethnic groups, contacting, have the feeling of malevolence or even hostility, that is, the negative complementarity.

The positive complementarity of ethnic systems sometimes leads to their merging to form a new ethnic group, or, that is more often, to their symbiosis. Creating the symbiosis each ethnos has its own niche in the social landscape and does not prevent the neighboring nation from occupying the other niche. The originality of each ethnic group does not lead to their hostility, but rather facilitates the exchange of the results of their activities. The content and form of their world views are more similar if they are based on a common religion. In due course they can produce the same national characteristics of the symbionts, so the ethnic groups are transformed into the sub-ethne within the ethnic system of a greater order, i. e. the superethnos (e. g., French and German minorities in modern Switzerland).

If ethnic systems with the negative complementarity contact within one region, and if one of them can't find the appropriate niche in the landscape, the state formed on the basis of their co-existence would be unable to construct its own identity because this state would not show the common We-feeling of its population abroad (e. g., the Republic of Cyprus with its Turkish and Greek parts). These states are unstable socially. They are destroyed because of internal irreconcilable contradictions or become the victims of the neighboring ethnic groups. As a result, they lose their own national and cultural identities, and that leads (as the international practice shows) to the loss of their national values, and sometimes to the loss of some parts of their national sovereignties of state territories (for example, as it was in the case of Serbia or Georgia). This, in turn, means the refusal from the national interests, the inability of these states to implement their independent domestic and foreign policies.

In such cases, the state experience an identity crisis because the collapse of ideals and values to be the

foundation of the previously dominant political culture makes people seek for new guidelines to determine their place within the society and their relations with the outer world. These processes are gradually resulting in a new world order, new geopolitical, economic, and civilization world view. There is even the supposition on the so-called "identities turnover" as their transference, transformation, loss, and restoration. Since the identity is an important structural component of the states' competitiveness, it is also drawn into the maelstrom of the global competition. In this sense, the states, which identities have great historical, cultural, ethnic and political depth, are considered to be stronger and more resilient because they can confidently act in the international arena recognizing their own interests supported with societies. States, which are weak in this respect, have to observe their national identities to dissolve in the processes of ethnic struggle or globalization in a rapid and inevitable way.

On the other hand, the right state policy directed at preserving of traditional ethnic cultures existing within the society can help the members of minority groups to maintain their positive cultural identity, negating the importance of political features of their ethnic identities. In this case, the state is considered to be the sole representative of the population interests that can be satisfied within the territorial borders and protected outside.

In such circumstances the ethnic identity of certain groups, firstly, can be pushed to the background due to the advantage of personal identity of individuals over the ethnic or social identity as a whole. Understanding themselves as a unique individual, but not a member of an ethnic group, a person tries to achieve their goals initially operating with their own interests. Although, in time the latters are likely to face the society interests, as if this society strives for creating a common We-feeling, it would try to negate the importance of individual Selves. However, in this case the diminution of displays of individual Selves of the ethnic groups' members would not be considered so painful for them because it would not appear as the suppression of minority interests, and be thought as a kind of sacrifice made by every member of society in the name of formation of a common identity supported with the state machinery.

Secondly, taking into consideration the existence of separate ethnic and cultural displays the society can restructure its social identity forcing the ethnic identities out of it. If so, forming their social identity the individuals can rely, for example, on the civic identity which cultural component is thought to be the same for all society members but does not exist as its key shape element. In addition, the individual can consider

themselves as a member of large supranational communities like Europeans, Asians, etc., declaring the so-called cosmopolitan identity. This course of events will facilitate the formation of a unique cultural and, consequently, political state identity, though, on the other hand, the supplanting of the ethnic identity, as one of the most important components of the social identity structure, threatens the person to lose the integrity of their Self-image, or the ties with any culture. The lost of cultural identifications of a person, in principle, may subsequently lead to their abandonment to support the identity of society a person exists in. The properly defined ideology of identity formation, used for this society not only on the basis of cultural unity or common traditions factors, can prevent the occurrence of such negative effects joining a person to the process of the unique collective identity formation, that, ultimately, may lead to further reorientation of an individual towards the cultural values and priorities supported by the society.

In addition, while developing the positive ethnic identities of certain groups the society can elaborate the collective strategy of social competition. It envisages that the positive differences of the groups are established during the direct competition, and the winner group can either take up higher position within the society, or even acquire the features of the dominant cultural community. Unfortunately, when the interests of one ethnic group to maintain a positive ethnic identity clash with those of the other ethne, the social competition very often turns into the situation of interethnic tensions. In principle, the abovementioned situation takes place when the ethnic group defends its interests which are not limited to the protection of its cultural habitat or traditions. The limitation of sovereignty in the past, the artificial division of the ethnic territory or usurpation of power are the most significant reasons to breach the ethnic balance nourished with cultural factors.

State Identity as the Mechanism of Social Homogenization and Actor's Representation on the International Arena

Taking into account the total cultural globalization ethnic groups often do not have many established traditions and stable world views, as many elements of their cultures are being diluted: the economic activity, lifestyle, artistic preferences are internalized. Today all, without exception, ethne are largely turned away from the traditions, and the behaviour of their ancestors is no longer considered by the members of the group as a model. According to the terminology of M. Mead, they form "configurative cultures" which use the behaviour of contemporaries as the priority model for the people.

Today one can't mindlessly resist the processes of globalization. It is not

only impossible but also counterproductive. Acquiring its "rules", a person should use its opportunities, and, that is desirable, influence these rules. If it is possible, one should not only be the object but also the subject of the globalization. Nowadays every country is its object. But only few of them are its subjects. For example, Japan is both the object and the subject of globalization. Being influenced with the West, it is its object. However, transforming borrowed values, it acts as the subject of globalization because transfers adapted values to other Asian countries.

Thus, in most cases, the cultural standardization, being to some extent a consequence of the information transparency, undermines once closed cultural identities. Using the sophisticated information technologies, which cannot be resisted, globalization breaks the barriers between different cultures seemed to be inviolable earlier. Only cultures which are able to adapt to a changing world and introduce the latest achievements of world civilization without losing their own originality can survive. In fact, the basis for its preservation is the construction of state identity based on the principles of respect for and support of the common We-feeling existing within the society. In this sense, the European states of the 17th century can serve as a good example because they considered as nation states that directly included the aspects of cultural society interests

into their policies, thus identifying the society as a whole. However, currently the political map consists a few countries could be considered as the nation states. Therefore, their identities should be based on common traditions produced at the state level. The sustainability of such identities will not only give states the opportunities to satisfy their foreign and domestic political interests, but also help to oppose globalization with more powerful and strong national and cultural projects.

The world history showed for many times that the formation of a true state identity takes place when a nation begins interacting with other peoples which have other values (the relations within the "We – They" tandem). The clash of values usually leads to self-identification, and the more intense it is, the harder (but at the same time clearer) is the identification process. However, the defence of certain values should occur outside a group because their diversity within it inevitably leads to destabilization of its identity practices or, that is also possible, to absolute destruction of the existing identity. This is accompanied with the process which the Russian researcher S. Chuhrov offers to name as the "xenotransplantation" (in medicine – the rejection of an alien tissue). The value "transplants with the alien blood group" are rejected with the national value systems. The latters constitute themselves in the international political continuum (or affirm their identities) through the

military confrontation with other nations and states. The situation was the same in the 13th and 17th centuries. It also repeats in the 21st century. The protection of national values in all these cases was directly connected with the problem of national survival. Today the situation is radically different. However, it does not mean the termination of the "battle of identities". Weakening its military dimension, it turned into softer but, at the same time, more subtle forms which are sometimes even more dangerous regarding the preservation of cultural cores. Moreover, one can say that the cultural sphere became the main arena to determine the fate of state identities in the 21st century.

Thus, at the present stage the construction of state identity leads to the development of two fundamentally opposing processes based on the cultural factor of society homogenization:

firstly, the state can suppress the displays of national and cultural identities of certain groups living in its territory. In this case, the ethnic identity responds to this challenge with the strengthening of nationalistic movements, and, if achieves its goal, with the subdivision of state communities into smaller ones, i. e. into the sub-national entities. That is, according to R. Robertson and H. Khondker,

today civilizations, regions, national states, and ethnic communities have a possibility to reconstruct their histories and identities;

secondly, the state identification may be based on the so-called multicultural policy which helps to eliminate the existing cultural contradictions within the society allowing the latter to develop the unique We-feeling. This feeling should be grounded on the factors, which negate the importance of cultural differences, encouraging the satisfaction of group interests both within the state and abroad while it is implementing its foreign policy (human rights, economic and social security, human security, etc.).

If the state chooses the second cultural strategy to cooperate with society, it helps to elaborate some unifying factors for the communities striving to establish their foreign orientation and, consequently, the identity of their sovereign. At the same time, the diminution of the importance of cultural factors causes the stagnation of societies which are continuing their struggle for the dominance of cultures destroying the state identities and, thus, depriving the states of possibilities to realize their own national interests supported with the social and political unity.

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