

Social identity in the belligerent context

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Abstract

This article aims to explain how social identity is affected by unlimited access to scientific information and media through the internet in contemporary society. It also highlights the impact of the pandemic and the post-pandemic scenario, which has been worsened by the aggressive stance of the Russian Federation in Ukraine (as of February 24, 2022). These challenges will have a significant and long-lasting effect on society and its social identity.

Keywords: *social philosophy, human being, identity, renew, belligerent context.*

The concept of identity is a topic explored in various social sciences, focusing on diversity. At its core, the question of “Who am I?” is central to this exploration. Knowing someone’s name, where they come from, what they do, and their unique traits is essential for forming connections with them. Identity is shaped by both social and cultural factors, as well as the places where people live. Individual identity is a part of collective identity, and society provides security and a sense of belonging for its members. As we move further into the 21st century, ensuring the preservation of human identity and society is crucial for maintaining security and stability on a global scale.

It is widely recognized that the term “identity” was first introduced in philosophy by Parmenides, who lived in the 5th century BC. His statement “being is, non-being is not” is interpreted as meaning that the identity of an empirical being remains the same despite changes. This idea is now widely studied in the social and human sciences, particularly by existentialists.

The nominalist perspective, which emerged from Heraclitus’s ideas, opposes the current perspective. Heraclitus famously stated, “You cannot bathe twice in the same river,” and is also credited with the phrase “Everything flows” (*panta rhei*). This concept suggests that everything is constantly changing, and the identity of

any empirical being is dependent on the era and perspective from which it is discussed. Dubar argues that, from this viewpoint, the categories used to describe ever-changing empirical beings are simply names or words dependent on the language used. These categories serve as historically variable ways of identification within a specific context (Dubar, 2003).

Concerning Descartes's view, he locates the self at the apparent origin of thought: "I think, therefore I am." Hegel claims that "identity results from the mutual knowledge of the self and the other; it is the product of a conflictual process in which individual interactions, objective social practices, and subjective representations are constructed" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 85). At the same time, J-P Sartre and M. Heidegger believe that people are self-created. Ideas about the concept of identity can also be found in Aristotle, J. Locke, S. Schoemaker, or L. Wittgenstein.

In other perspectives, J. D Freeman (1993, p. 18) analyzes the concepts through the stories people tell about themselves as fiction: "That the elusive phenomenon we call "self" can be a fiction is not a very new idea. We find the same approach in D. Hume, F. Nietzsche, B. F. Skinner, and a lot of other authors. More recently, prominent poststructuralists like R. Barthes and M. Foucault have each thought in their own way about the "de substantialized" self, that is, to show why it cannot be seen as a thing, a linked entity, and to study it in the texture of the discourse itself where it is most often believed that it is found" (Freeman, 1993, p. 11).

Not less interesting is M. Schechtman's discussion of the "characterization question" in philosophy. The answer to this question is "the narrative self-constitution perspective." "The person's identity is constituted by the content of his narrative about himself. Individuals constitute themselves as persons by creating the narrative about themselves" (Schechtman, 1996, p. 94). The characterization question "defines a relationship between a person and their particular activities, experiences or characteristics" (Schechtman, 1996, p. 78). The answer to this question is important because "to define one's identity, one must be able to know not only which characteristics are part of its history, but also their role in this history – which characteristics are central and which are incidental" (Schechtman, 1996, p. 77).

Philosophical approaches to identity have been the basis of many developments in psychology or sociology. Thus, the psychological (more precisely, psychodynamic) and sociological approaches contest the essentialist interpretations of the concept (those which affirm, as the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology (Marshall, 2003) also specifies, the existence of a core or a unique

essence of identity – the “true self” – which is coherent and remains more or less unchanged throughout life). These approaches treat identity as a process and study it diachronically.

At the same time, in the definition of individual identity, sociology tried to find the answer to the question: who are *we*? Us as a group, a culture, a country, and a society in general. Social identity theory developed from Henri Tajfel’s work on accentuation effects in perception (the 1960s), from his lifelong interest in the social psychology of prejudice, discrimination, intergroup conflict, and social change, and from his desire to create and advance European social psychology.

More than four decades removed from the fall of the Berlin Wall, the distant event is not just a historical one but rather a philosophical metaphor. The instrumental and administrative event is a much more complex one that has been sensitized at all levels, from regional and continental to global. However, the contemporaneity of the event also resizes the entire space of Europe, as well as each subject (society). The size of the event, however, did not exclude the vanities and dissatisfaction of those who were forced to rally to the new realities but not to give up their practices unfavorable to their neighbors.

Many hopes were attached to a unified Europe at the end of the 20th century, especially that the horrors of the two world conflagrations would not be repeated in the 21st century. Hopes to which the reality of more than two decades of this century proves the opposite (Pascaru, 2012). It can be seen that the integration did not diminish the aspirations of some authoritarian regimes that, through the democratic exercise of reaching power, left themselves with revenge claims. The democratic exercise to which so many hopes were linked in societies separated from the totalitarian system is distorted and used by ethnocratic groups to remain at the top of the pyramid (Pascaru, 2012).

Of course, these things happen all over the world, the important being how the regimes in the respective societies for their behavior are treated externally, from bilateral and regional relations to the structures of representative International Organizations. Why? The accumulated experience shows that authoritarian regimes are cemented on the most unbelievable abuses, and they become the norm if the sanctions are not prompt. Thus, transforming the idea of belonging to democratic and general human values into an ideological doctrine was only the beginning for society, including the passive participation of citizens. We are discussing ideological doctrines based on benchmarks that only apparently seem to be valued because the most succinct analysis indicates deviations from the value fund and the system of democratic and general human values (Fukuyama, 2018). Under the conditions of the openings of the Information Age, the danger of

deviations increases because its opportunities are used to manifest forms without content from the actions triggered on all societal levels (Susskind, 2019). Also, the opportunities of the openings are used excessively both to restrict the access to information of the members of the society with a solid propaganda system, as well as involvements in distorting the realities in the societies in the near or far vicinity. It is a kind of imperial neocommunist in the case of the Russian Federation that proliferated after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Empire and was insignificantly condemned by international bodies for violating international law (Pascaru, 2012). The authoritarian regime used this lack of reaction or a delayed one in some way to impose the doctrine of *imperial neo-communism* [authors' note] on former colonies and deprive them of the right to develop independently, even if, in the meantime, they also build their societal identities.

In the given context, we point out that, in the 21st century, doctrines of this kind can be elaborated not only with the seizure of power by authoritarian regimes but also by organizations with geographical locations and among the most diverse ideas. Moreover, regulatory mechanisms continue to lag behind opening new horizons in EI. It is about the fact that thanks to EI opportunities, the rise of information no longer depends on a certain level of education and one increased responsibility on the user's part (Nichols, 2019). So, together with access to information and irresponsible behavior on the part of the individual or the organization, the group's actions open a real Pandora's box. On the one hand, those whose activities may harm social norms and international law benefit from the democratic principle. On the other hand, the community members are deprived of the right to benefit from that principle because those who harmed it are rarely identified and remain unpunished. Also, the individual, the group, or the organizations become promoters of authoritarian regimes, supporting them in their societies, simultaneously using existing rights for themselves and subversive actions (Fukuyama, 2018).

As an example, the authoritarian regime in the Russian Federation for more than two decades influenced and intimidated the breakaway societies of the former USSR. Societies in which their way to build their own identity has rarely been hijacked, bringing them to the brink of disintegration and division, including with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) tools. During this, the regime in Moscow intervened constantly and brutally, violating international law from the instigation and training of separatist forces in various organizations under the slogan that their rights were being violated, the use of oil and natural gas as a weapon of subjugation to undeclared wars (Pascaru, 2012). The wars in which RF got involved started with the Republic of Moldova (1991-1992), Georgia (1992,

2008), and last but not least, the one of 2014 and February 24, 2022, against Ukraine. These things would have been impossible if RF had not been used externally by the information monopoly and security structures still using Soviet practices. Practice that helped the RF to get the place of the USSR in the UN Security Council, to become a guarantor together with the US for Ukraine that gave up its nuclear weapons in the Budapest Memorandum (1994) (Lazescu, 2022), or the employment of former high-ranking dignitaries in Gazprom's structures, etc. The network evolved thanks to the opening of new horizons. RF tried to open culture centers next to embassies whose activity over time proved to be one of subversive influence in the respective societies since the jeopardy of the electoral ballots, the entry into the database, including the case Cambridge-Analytica (Facebook) META, until the demonstrations of renouncing the sanctions introduced against RF as a result of the aggression against Ukraine (Pascaru, 2012).

Last but not least, in the hybrid war, the Russian Federation against Ukraine uses opportunities in the Informational Era. Opportunities that RF created involved not only Ukrainian society in the belligerent state but also this state, causing considerable disruption in all areas of activity at societal, regional, continental, and global levels. The belligerent state influences the axiological landmarks of identity, changes the behavior of the individual/groups in society, and weakens the value of the identity components. It is about the fact that the belligerent state undermines the security of the society and the individuals / groups that constitute it. Or, if until the open triggering of the military aggression of the FR, the society, including the Ukrainian one, was trying to ensure the security of all the members, including through the system of international law, the hostilities unleashed on 24.02.2022 have put under the sign of uncertainties the assurance of identity security beyond the geographical boundaries of the war.

In that context, it needs to report that the belligerent state has triggered tendencies that undermine social and individual identities. These trends are supported not only by the socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-political crises that lower the standard of living but also by an increased level of uncertainty in the long run. However, the longevity of the belligerent state is not consumed with the cessation of hostilities, and its consequences will be found over generations, as it was met after the second world conflagration. This is all the more so because the effects of the belligerent state are vertiginously induced in the virtual space by the networks. Also that, Ukraine, as well as the Republic of Moldova, are societies are looking to be independent states in Europe and part of the EU to align themselves with values and identity country and strictly not stay like in past times, part of the

Russian Empire or Russian Federation in the *Russian Cultural World*. However, the security of the societies of the former colonies of the Soviet Empire continues to be vulnerable as long as the FR, which declared itself its successor, has not mastered the lessons of the past regarding the growth and decline of empires and to concern itself with solving internal problems and to focus on the development of cohabiting entities and not to remain in the eternal search for the external enemy. Searches through which they solved their issues by destroying their neighbors (Pascaru, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the end of history declared at the end of the 20th century about time was nothing but a new beginning. Beginning on which he insisted insignificantly and perhaps most seriously that his load, being a lesser known one, required a complex approach. However, that end-beginning of history was anchored in the process of globalization and the establishment of unity in diversity and not in unification and submission. Thus, understanding the philosophy of the concept (Hadot, 2019) of unity in diversity encompasses socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural development to recognize a multicultural reality at the level of society with an assumed cultural identity. However, identity remains fragile and vulnerable because its construction, being an intra-societal one, is not absolved by outside interventions (Pascaru, 2012). We are talking about the intervention of the historical homeland faced by the former colonies of the Soviet Union through the Russian speakers, exponents of the imperial policies of denationalization, and who, over time, also attracted representatives of the younger generations into their orbit. This recruitment of young people, carried out against the background of the multiple crises faced by the new democracies, was transferred to the violation of the rights of national minorities by the majority ethnic groups. Over time, the slogan of the breach of the rights of minorities has revealed its true face and is cloaked in the struggle for the identity of the Russian World.

Unfortunately, the complexity of the identity problem at the level of society becomes a reference in the context of the pandemic effect, but also of the FR's undeclared war on Ukraine. Why? Because beyond the neo-imperial rhetoric of the Kremlin regime, the identity of the society is the forum for communication between the representatives of the identities. Communication constructs reality (Hadot, 2019) in contemporary society, ensuring the rallying of identities to the culturally assumed one but also supporting the perpetuation of the historical-axiological heritage. Contribution in which community values (acceptance, tolerance, and trust) are connected to the general human ones through the cultural space. The cultural space usually transcends the identity boundaries of society.

Still, it does not mean that it must be used as an aggressive weapon to destroy others or an entire society for the simple reason that space promotes the circuit of its values and denounces dangerous deviations from outside. However, after two decades of the 21st century, the need to reevaluate society's identity, particularly the culturally assumed one, is highlighted. Otherwise, attempts like the RF to rush in with the military to dismantle society and then, seeing it stopped, annex the temporarily occupied territories. The remark is that the reassessments will lead to the mobilization of the understanding of identity in contemporary society and the weight of cohabiting identities in protecting peace and overcoming the fear of war, but also condemning the respective way of resolving disputes

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