

Conceptual bases for the research of regional political identity

Svetlana ROSTETSKA,
*the candidate of the political science,
assistant professor of the department of political science and law,
the State Institution «South Ukrainian National
Pedagogical University named after K. D. Ushynsky»*

REZUMAT

În acest articol sunt analizate principalele abordări conceptuale ale investigării identității politice regionale, în special abordările primordială, modernistă și postmodernistă. Este demonstrat că procesul de formare a identității politice regionale are un caracter contradictoriu, fiind una dintre principalele provocări ale lumii contemporane. Se argumentează, de asemenea, precum că pentru spațiul postcomunist este caracteristică constituirea unor noi principii politice de interacțiune a puterii și societății, prin urmare – se formează o nouă identitate politică regională.

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье анализируются основные концептуальные подходы к исследованию региональной политической идентичности, в частности – примордиальный, модернистский и постмодернистский. Показано, что процесс формирования региональной политической идентичности носит противоречивый характер, являясь одним из основных вызовов современному миру. Обосновано, что для посткоммунистического пространства характерно становление новых политических принципов взаимодействия власти и общества, а следовательно – формируется новая региональная политическая идентичность.

The problem for determining of conceptual bases of research of the regional political identity is updated in the transitional process from traditional to industrial society and from industrial – to postindustrial.

The urgency for determining the research conceptual bases is due to the fact that the regional political identity formational process is controversial. It is one of the main challenges of the modern world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Post-communist society is heterogeneous according to ethnic, religious, cultural and

linguistic factors, the level of economic development of territories and regions. There is a process of new political principles formation for the cooperation between the government and society in the post-communist space, and thus the new regional political identity is forming.

The regional political identity plays an important role in the national identity structure; it can serve as a basis for a special perception of national political issues and is based on common territory, economic life features, and certain systems of values, eth-

nic and religious communities. Each of these reasons, under certain conditions can cause the overblown of regional identity. Mostly the strengthening of regional identity appears as result of difficult relations with the center and the restrictions (or presence of mass ideas about such restrictions); regional, political, socio-economic and spiritual interests. In such a case, in the identities' ranking, the regional identity stands on the forefront of nationwide damage .

Regional identity is one of the basic elements of the "region" modeling as a specific socio-political space. The announcement of the territories summation by the "region" is possible only with certain characteristics: commonality of historical destiny, unique cultural characteristics preferred only to this group (material and spiritual), geographical unity of the territory, a common type of economy. In other words, for the regional identification, the fundamentally important concept is the idea of territorial relations, arising on the bases of common or neighbor living of social groups' members of various sizes and cultural identification [4, p. 15].

Conceptual bases for the regional political identity research have been changing under the influence of modernization and urbanization, and the modern day research development is associated with the industrialization, democratization, political parties' activity, mass-media's development, the emergence of political communities, groups and organizations.

The main researches of the political identity in the modern society are highlighted in the works of authors such as B. Anderson, P. Berger, W. Beck, M. Gibernau, E. Giddens, S. Hantynhton, E. Erikson, M. Castells, F. Fukuyama, B. Abushenko, A. Astafyev, M. Holovaty, I. Ilyin, N. Kostenko, I. Kudrya, A. Panarin, Y. Pavlenko, A. Stegnyy and others.

In the works of E. Erikson, there are highlighted the following aspects of identity: as a «sense of identity», «the identity forma-

tion process», «identity as a result». M. Castells emphasizes on three forms for identity construction. First, the legitimizing identity associated with the process of rationalization by a political actor and his belonging to a certain social-political institution. Secondly, the identity of resistance that occurs in those social actors, who shape the mechanisms of resistance and survival, based on principles which differ from the commonones in the society or are opposed to them. Thirdly, the design identity that occurs in the process of a new identity's constructing, when actors define their own position in the social and political space, trying to change the whole structure of social relations [2, p. 20].

In the traditional society, the political identity can be seen as the essence of community and individual property, which belongs to the person from his birth and cannot be changed. The modern theoretical visions of political identity pose it as a phenomenon that "is being constructed" by the individual, group and society during a given time. The constructivist approach emphasizes on the dynamic changes in the formational process of political identities, which are caused by globalization, forming of the information society and the crisis of national identity.

According to M. Tsvetkova, «If the political system of society is tough enough (totalitarianism, for example), the policy of identity formation is part of it. If the political system is democratic, the creation of identity is essential for the political system as a factor of the cohesion of society and maintaining of the state integrity. Identity can also serve as a tool to make the system administration (government). The policy pursued in a society is the root element of state citizens' identity formation and, this way, the weakening of its «Ego» in everyday life. The following can be said: the closer a society is to a democratic society model, the more diverse are the identities; the more stable is the individual idea of identity, the

more stable becomes the psychology [7, p. 336].

Conceptualization of the political identity phenomenon is realized in three directions. Firstly, the research of the regional political identity as a set of political principles, legal grounds for awareness of citizens of their political community (the answer to the question «Who are we?»). Secondly, the research of political ideas (ideology, mythology, advertising, symbolism) which form the essence of political identity by the correlation with "Other" in the binary opposition "We-They". Thirdly, the research of the historical events that have shaped the specific type of political identity.

According to I. Timofeev, «Political identity in circumstances of nation-state of modern type serves as the identity politics' subject, i.e. the concerted action of the state since its formation, serving the function the political community integration, legitimating the political regime, mobilizing citizens. At the same time, the targeted design of political identity is limited by historical context, political traditions, culture and other factors» [5, p. 35].

Conceptualization of the regional political identity is associated with freedom, necessity, political activity, psychological characteristics of the individual, the emergence of the political system representative model, increasing of the efficiency of public administration, the development of pluralism and democracy.

The phenomenon of political identity was considered in accordance with cognitive matrices of the traditional society, modern and postmodern. Thus, in terms of postmodernism, there must be taken into account the presence of multiple individual identification strategies. According to the Russian author A. Trufanova «the conditions of modern society offer an infinite number of possible identifications, each of which allows a person to create certain I - image. The human's I consists of a set I - images,

each of those corresponds to a particular aspect of external reality and inner individuality of a human, but only they together, make their world view into a single picture, create a complete human personality and allow each time to develop any particular aspect of reality from different points of view, so together these points of view create the most complete picture of the world» [6, p. 15].

The category of regional political identity has a multidimensional nature; its meaning consists of various factors of social and political interaction, diversity of human experience and practical activities of individuals, groups and communities. Naturally, with a change of historical, social, political and economic conditions the core of the regional political identity's nature changes.

The problem of political identity formation is integrated into the historical context, it is linked to the state's past, its traditions, political system. That is why the identity research is characterized by interdisciplinarity, it needs the appeal to empirical data and theories average (special theories), and most important - the search for adequate scientific methodology.

The study of regional political identity is based on the rejection from the unilateral understanding of the identity structure and interpretations of the last as a complex, multi-level and a changing political phenomenon.

In the most general sense, the identity is understood as a process that reflects the idea of the political actor regarding himself and is accompanied by sense of its own continuity, which allows him to take his life as a duration experience and the unity of consciousness, opening the opportunity to act consistently [1, c. 39].

At the same time, the conceptual bases of the regional political identity study are defined by scope of political science reflection of reality, which is due to the following factors.

Firstly, the interdependence of individual and political (as collective) identity. Secondly, the development and further radicalization of the national component of collective identity. Thirdly, the erosion of social institutions and social-political structures of modern society. Fourthly, the moral relativism, the practical absence of universally accepted standards and samples of moral behavior. Fifthly, the development of information technology and the media, leading to mediatization of policy, designing of social and political agenda of the mass-media.

Regional identity is able to perform a variety of functions. The cognitive function lies in the expanding of the knowledge system about the region, creates a sense of «small homeland», a kind of «regional patriotism». The communicative (integrative) function provides an appropriate degree of regional community cohesion, identifies the ways of social interaction between its members and mechanisms of social interaction. Simultaneously, it helps in the case of need (or its simulation), the communicative psychological distance of building, that separates this community from others. The emotional function creates a sense of ownership of the regional community and security with its help from the blows of fate. The compensatory function operates in the same direction, which turns a defining role in «traumatized» society. The instrumental function creates mechanisms for fixing in the minds the positive identity, disposition to the priority of own values, rising of the self-respect. But equally it can stimulate the distorted images of other identities, megalomania and xenophobia [3, p. 80].

It is necessary to accept the fact, that never before in the world history, «the identity problem was not that much crucial or even fatal. And it never before covered almost all the states and peoples of the world. This is due to the growing and highly controversial process of globalization. A number of globalization processes – democratizati-

on, economization, information, cultural standardization, the universality of values – directly affect the aggravation of the problem. Thus, the democratization of the modern world requires the transition to the general rules of the game both in domestic and foreign policy, changing the hierarchy of the main elements of society [...] At the same time identity gets into a tight grip of the economy, globalization is steadily leading to the formation of a single world economic space, making viable models of national security and political development based on isolationism» [2, p. 22].

The study of regional and national identity of the modern era is characterized by the following provisions:

- understanding of the national identity as a natural given (primordial approach) yields the interpretation of identity as a result of socio-economic development (modernist approach);

- construction of identity and ideas about it (B. Anderson writes about the “imagined communities”) happens through the introduction of a unified educational system, national myth, political maps, museums, etc.;

- modernization of traditional society has led to «unspelling of the world» (M. Veber), the rule of the rationality structures in all spheres of public life. Gradually the sacred dimension of identity disappears, which is now shaped by social and political technologies;

- national identity becomes the primary means of social-political mobilization, and the image of a unified nation promotes the unification of society in the face of political, economic and external challenges.

Summarizing the results of determining the conceptual foundations of the regional political identities research, the following should be noted.

Claiming «the plurality of meanings», the equivalence and convention of the moral-ethical values, criticizing «logo-centrism»,

calling into a question the humanistic ideas of the Enlightenment and proclaiming the end of the project «human» and the end of history, the postmodernism emphasizes on the variability of the identity concept.

The postmodern society is characterized by new types of identity associated with self-realization and self-identity of the personality and, at the same time, the weakening of the traditional types of social identification (mostly: class, group, ideology). The role of gender factor in shaping identity is increasing, including the regional political

identity. Regional political identity is not only an important component of social identity, but also a kind of key to designing a regional political space and simultaneously a measure of legitimating and social risks.

On the way of rationalizing the regional political identity phenomenon, there appears the state of consciousness and the political culture of both citizens and authorities, primitivism of this concept in everyday life, its mythology and its devaluation in the mass-media, public opinion, activity of the political parties and leaders.

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E-mail: svetlana.naumkina@gmail.com