

*Opinion Paper*

***The Macedonian story in the context of the contemporary discourse in terms of the European identity***

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The discussions regarding the significance and the relevance of the identity represent an inalienable segment of the current political, cultural, sociological and philosophical debates. The concept of identity is one of the most commonly repeated words in the course of international meetings and in international documents, as well as in publicists and in political speeches.

The identity is an issue that brings about crossing swords. As a bio-sociological category, the identity is not given once and for all. It is built and developed in the course of the entire human life. Simultaneously, the identity represents a dynamic process of formation, change and balance, conditioned by numerous internal and external influences. Therefore, its changeable nature, and the relativity in terms of the context – as one of the most significant elements that influence the construction of the human identity – frequently cause the abuse of the issue of identity in certain political aims. In such a case, it is said that the identity serves as a basis for manipulation with the recognition policies.

The issue of identity is one of the most current topics in the Republic of Macedonia at present. It is a topic which preoccupies the scientific and the political public, as well as the overall Macedonian public. Nevertheless, I consider the issue of *whether the Republic of Macedonia can be a part of the mosaic called European identity* a priority one and an issue of exceptional significance in the context of our Euro-integrative efforts.

In order to provide an answer to this issue, or at least make efforts to provide an answer, primarily we are to deal with the contemporary discourse in terms of the European identity, and then to acknowledge whether Macedonia corresponds to the contemporary

comprehension of the European identity.

There are several approaches, or several aspects from which the European identity can be analyzed and defined as such.

One of the existing definitions states that the European identity dwells on the idea of a common cultural family. According to this conceptualization, the European identity is based on the common cultural heritage and the common historical experience, which allow for establishment of a family of cultures. Pursuant to this definition, and seen from a historical, civilizatory, culturological and geographical aspect, Macedonia inherently belongs to Europe and the big European family.

On the other hand, it has to be emphasized that the idea of the European identity does not suppose homogenization of cultures. It strives to recognition and promotion of the diversities and the multiculturalism. In terms of this aspect, the Republic of Macedonia meets the European standards, particularly following the implementation of the Framework Agreement and its incorporation in the Constitution and the laws, which secured and promoted the right to expression of the culture and the identity of the different ethnic communities.

According to another definition, which I regard even more crucial and which I will elaborate on further, the European identity is founded on the idea of United Europe.

Namely, the idea of Europe that has literally emerged from the ashes of the Second World War is enshrined within the guiding principles of the European treaties. This idea is founded on the principle of establishment of economic and political cooperation for the sole purpose of fostering the security and stability in the European region. Simultaneously, the idea of Europe assumes recognition of some kind of common, or so-called universal values, such as democracy, rule of law, humanism and human rights. These ideals have come to symbolize the guiding principles of the idea of Europe and simultaneously comprise the core of the European identity.

The former Secretary-General of NATO, Daniel Tarshchys, provided the following general definition on European identity, by means of which this category (i.e. the European identity) is transferred to the sphere of politics, that is to say the European identity is given political dimension. Namely, Daniel Tarshchys defines the European identity in the following manner:

“A very strong commitment to the individual, a commitment to social cohesion and solidarity, a state that is neither too strong nor too weak, respect for human rights, tolerance, these are some basic

principles. The rule of law, of course, the idea that government must be bound by the legal principles and the people must be treated equally”.

According to this already commonly recognized definition, identity is equated with individualism, social cohesion and tolerance. These are usually understood as “universal values”. He locates the equation of the European identity with the universal values in the realm of politics and in such a manner it becomes a kind of political identity.

Thus, the formation and the development of the European identity, which is founded on the universal values, must be in close-knit relationship with the development in the political sphere. Institutionalization of the European identity is essential, which implies that the mechanisms which ensure the respect and the realization of the universal values are to be embodied in the institutions of the system and the state. The process of the European integration is the process that is to enable the necessary institutional frame for the formation and the development of the European identity. The institutionalization of the European identity is to occur hand in hand with the process of the European integration.

Just like any other form of identity, European identity has to be able to engender some kind of allegiance. In the modern era, this kind of allegiance is defined by its identification with liberal humanism, civil rights, freedom of thought, belief, expression of an association, with equality and the rule of law, with social responsibility and finally pluralist and participatory democracy. Therefore, the formation of identity at a European level presupposes a closely-knit relationship with the social and the political forces, and among the political awareness, the political will and the political decisiveness for institutionalization of the European identity.

Therefore, the European identity and the idea of Europe should not be seen as a goal; they should rather be seen as a political project and a long-term process, as essentially is the process of the European integration.

By means of recognizing the contemporary conceptualization or integrating in the contemporary discourse in terms of the European identity and adopting the universal values as a part of one’s own ideological matrix, the Republic of Macedonia has made progress in its Euro-integrative efforts. In certain segments, particularly in the sphere of the cultural rights and the usages of the

languages, the Republic of Macedonia has applied almost the highest world standards prescribed by international documents with legally binding character. Nevertheless, the Republic of Macedonia is to work on strengthening its overall democratic capacity, the functioning of the legal state, the development of the sense of common belonging of all its citizens and finally on the complete institutionalization of the universal values on which the idea of Europe is founded, and which comprise the core of the European identity.

At the very end, I would like to finish with a quotation by Jan Mone, the creator of the idea of United Europe. In his words:

“Europe has never existed. It is not the addition of sovereign countries met together in councils that makes an entity of them. One must genuinely create Europe.”

Therefore, we must really create European Macedonia and we must work on the creation of our own European identity provided that we aim at becoming a part of the big European family.