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NEGATIVE IDENTITY IN CRISIS-RIDDEN SOCIETY: ESSENCE AND FUNCTIONS

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Abstract

The main approaches and characteristics of political identity types connected with transformation of political regimes and society crises are analyzed. It is revealed that the state of the society results in the dominance of crisis and negative identity. The functional peculiarities of negative identity in the period of war conflicts have been considered.

Key words

political identity, types of political identity, crisis political identity, negative political identity, positive political identity.

1. Introduction

Conception of “political identity” is a very complex category. It comprises content characteristics worked out in other spheres of humanistic knowledge which are projected on the political aspect. Its content depends on the scientific approaches to the definition of “identity” and the subject of research.

An identity has no static character, and self-identity of a person is realized upon different bases and different levels. A human being has to define himself and his place in a constantly changing society and world, so self-identification is an open, flexible and dynamic process, an individual mobility and psychological features of an individual being of great importance.

The economic, political and cultural changes result in transformation of political identity, which in

its turn influences greatly the transformation of all social spheres.

On the basis of mentioned above, the process of political self-identity plays the main role in joining peoples’ efforts for the decision of socially significant tasks for providing life activity of political institutions. This defines a significance of political identity as one of the main factors of contemporary development and social transformations.

2. Crisis political identity

Development and types of political identity are determined, as well as its functions, by the specificity of political process. For the modern societies the most specific are typologies carried out according to the following indications: party, value – ideological, depending on duration, degree of internalization

and steadiness, according to the criteria of subject and object of identity. It is necessary to admit that different types of social identity (ethnic, religious, regional, demographic, professional and so on) can acquire a politicized character in certain conditions and be used by political subjects (state, parties, political elites and leaders) as a political resource.

Transformation of political regimes and crisis of political identity in post-communist countries have actualized in political science the theme of a crisis, positive and negative identity. Thus, political practice in countries with transitional regimes has not only complicated understanding of political identity in the whole but displayed new types of political identity connected with transformation of political consciousness and crisis state of the social system. Scientists have come to the conclusion that a crisis state of the society predetermines the dominance of a crisis state of identity which is displayed first of all in the disparity of his ideological, party and personified levels with the dominance of the last one, as well as in formation of a negative way of self – determination in the political space. The duration of this crisis is determined by the speed of mass consciousness adaptation to new realities (Попова, 2002a).

It is necessary to reveal a crisis state of political identity in the context of general socio – cultural crisis which is characterized by breaking of not only the structure of rational values and norms predominant in the society but the system of traditional symbols and stereotypes formed in it as well.

O.V. Popova (Попова, 2002b) asserts that four situations are typical for the crisis of a political identity. First of all, the broken systems of identification are not substituted by new ones (“ideal” models for imitation do not exist). In the second place, in the course of re-socialization an individual “gets stuck” at the negative stage of identification. Third, discoordination of ideological, party and personified levels takes place. In the fourth place, as a result of re-socialization the old and new identities are overlapped by each other, being often based on mutually excluding valuable directives.

3. Crisis negative political identity and its functions

A crisis state of the society is characterized by not only a crisis identity but also by the predominance of a negative model of political identity. The essence of a negative identification is determined by the collective “we” through the image of Enemy, “division” of the world into “us” and “them” (“friendly” and “alien”), assignment of responsibility for somebody’s

own failures on the collective “other”. The signs of a negative identity are self-affirmation based on the “contradiction” and aggressive attitude towards representatives of any political movement taken as “alien”, growth of xenophobia and simplification of the picture of the world, political demagoguery and ideologization of the social consciousness (Гудков, 2004).

A negative political identity is inherent for not only crisis transforming systems, it is a necessary stage of personal development, that is why it takes place also in the states with a developed democracy. At the same time it is in the transforming non – established political systems where a negative identity is one of characteristic features of political life.

Negative identification is often formed purposefully by political leaders, movements and associations for mobilization and consolidation of their supporters in the process of achieving certain political purposes. According to O.V. Popova (Попова, 2002b), negative identification in the crisis society realizes philosophical, compensatory and consolidating functions. L.B. Gudkov (Гудков, 2005) supplements this classification by a mobilizing function and introduces a concept of “negative mobilization”.

L.B. Gudkov (Гудков, 2005) describes a mechanism of population consolidation on the basis of growth of “diffusion mass irritation, fear, hatred”, accompanied by a feeling of community grounded by appearance of “enemy” with a perspective of “unwanted development of events”. The author admits “an uttermost non-constructiveness” and threat of such type of consolidation for the society, as it blocks a way out of crisis. “Negative mobilization resulting in the social consciousness represents a state of moral disorientation, inability to make any practical estimation.” Negative mobilization provokes cynicism, leaving behind “a scorched value space” and impossibility of appearing any innovations of purport (Gudkov, 2007).

D.V. Trubitsyn (Трубицын, 2010) proposes to interpret a concept “negative mobilization” as contra-modernistic strategy of the society behavior in the conditions of sociocultural crisis, because it can take a part of “a mechanism of return”.

4. Crisis negative identity in the period of war conflict

A period of war conflict is characterized by a deep public crisis which happens to be some kind of a point of bifurcation of social development and is accompanied by “wars for identification”, durable and exhausting for the population. A conductor of this or that identity is in the first place mass Media,

which helps to introduce definite orientations and stereotypes (for example, in modern Ukraine: "vatniks", "ukrops", "kolorads", "natsiks" and so on) into the social consciousness.

A better-defined and more definite demarcation of the society in relation to the purposes and values is characteristic for the war conflict. And if in the time of peace the characteristic feature of a political identity of the main part of the population is ambivalence (duality), non-stability of self-identification, hard confrontation and aggravation of identities conflict are inherent in the war conflict. "Other" as a marker of any social groups, takes a role not only of "alien" but a role of "Enemy". Identification is realized not according to the social criteria, but first of all according to the political and ideological values. The society is united on the basis of negation, negative mobilization.

A negative identity of the war conflict period successfully realizes all its functions: philosophical, compensatory and consolidating. However, with approaching the phase of war conflict the regulation of a negative identity can fulfill a part of "a mechanism of return", block the process of peaceful life, interfere with a collective identity on the basis of constructive peaceful purposes, consensus, compromise. A difficult task of creating a positive identity, consolidation of the society in the state of peace faces the state, which is more complicated in comparison with the process of forming a negative identity in the time of war. Not without reason, a post-war phenomenon of conflicts turns out to be so-called post-war syndromes (Vietnamese, Afghan, Iraqi, Chechen and so on), which characteristic feature is a difficulty of human adaptation to peaceful life.

Positive identification presupposes identification of an individual with some group or community on the ground of prescribed positive qualities and features (such as success, status, dignity and so on). The essence of a positive identity is a feeling of pride and self-respect aroused from being connected with a group or community which an individual associates himself with (Пантин, Семенов, 2004). Forming a positive collective identity is a deep-laid, mighty factor of capability of any state as an identity in the last analysis determines a vector of social development.

5. Summary

The subject of political identity requires a constant scientific monitoring. It is conditioned by the fact that political identity is an "alive", dynamic construct determined at each historical stage of public

development by a specific unique combination of political, economic, sociocultural and other circumstances and factors.

The problem of political identity is actualized in the epoch of crisis and changes.

Breaking the traditional sociocultural and political myths, values and norms, which have determined a process of political self-identification of a person, results in the crisis of a political identity, predominance of a negative model of political identification, performing a set of functions (consolidation, mobilization, compensation and others).

At the same time the predominance of a negative model of political identity, negative consolidation of the society can block the society's way out of crisis on the basis of consensus related to the constructive purposes. That is why the major task of an identity policy in the period of finding a way out of crisis is the formation of such a nationwide identity that could be revealed not only in collective positioning in relation to other nations-states, as the ground of integrity of the nation but also as a subject of consent on the problem how this community conceives public purposes, principles and values. It is in this sense that political identity presents the basis and mechanism of public transformations and is actual in the context of contemporary science.

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