UNIVERSITY: from Oradea

FACULTY: History, International Relations, Political Science and Communication Sciences

Specialization: Security Studies

Year: 1st

Type of work: ☐ essay

Quo Vadis Europe?

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Quo Vadis Europe?
(Where are you going, Europe?)

In the 21st century, we hear more often about the identity of the European Union. Does the EU have a well-defined identity or it has lost itself in the evolution's tumult and accelerated development? Many scholars brought up different definitions to this essential subject. Some believe that history, culture, economy is what we call *European identity*. Others are considering that the social values, political and legislative system alongside the common culture makes from the citizens of the 28th Union's Member States citizens of EU; in other words, the 28th Union's Member States citizens identify themselves as EU citizens through the values and culture that they share. Although it's hard to talk about the European Community identity without taking into consideration the differences between the Member States. There is a European identity that can't be founded on either the linguistic differences, the common history, or the geographical delimitation. (Dana, 2012: 9, 10) Two elements play a crucial role in understanding the european identity. One is that every nation-state has its own identity well depicted. But is it possible for a state/group to have dual identity? Another element is that, despite differences between Member States, there is a desire to create a common European future and direction; a common goal linking these states.

Through identity, one can understand the qualities, beliefs, etc., that make a certain person or a group different from the others.(Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.) By comparing culture and defining the identity of the EU Member States, we can find out the differences and similarities between them. (Mészáros, 2016) Thus, a state has both its own identity and a common identity with the other states.

Any group, community or a well structured union cannot exist without values. Values are those that make sense of communication and interpersonal relationships. The European Union developed itself based on these positive values which not only strengthen the international relations, but also protected the common target from the deviation of the trajectory.

"The Union's target is to promote peace, values and welfare of its citizens." (Official Journal C 306/17 D, n.d.) The values on which it is based are exposed in the consolidated version of European Union Treaty: "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality,

the rule of law, and the respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men." (Tratatul privind Uniunea Europeană, 2012) If a EU State Member breaks one of these values, based on the "unity in diversity" principle, certain rights will be withdrawn from it. The promotion of its own values depends on the connection with the Union values. (Luca, 2014)

Is there a common European identity?

In each Member State democracy governs, quality that demands through itself a series of values which must be respected for the well-being of the society. What connects the EU states into a single body is the attribute that each of them has, namely democracy. Once a country is democratic, it fights for freedom, human dignity, equality and rule of law. (Dictionar politic - „Democratie", n.d.) Contrary, each democratic govern guides its actions according to its own interests, thereby it "legitimize socio-cultural diversity as well as political opposition and conflict." (Olsen, 2005: 6)

The European Union has formed over time an increasingly pronounced identity. What is the reason why the EU has not remained at the ECSC stage or how has the ECSC reached EU? From a greater point of view, from the need after the Second World War to build a union through which some states have the possibility to reinforce one another has now reached a community of states that work together to preserve peace, security and the well-being of the society, as well as respect for human rights. Market interaction and free movement of citizens between EU Member States creates connections between Europe's culture, economy and history. This irreversible process demonstrates that Europe has a common identity. Still, we are struggling with the question of why the EU does not have well established borders yet?

The lack of a special EU delimitation is aimed at opening it to states that want integration into the Union. Any country in the European territory can join the EU only by meeting certain requirements mentioned by the European Commission. (European, 2016) Countries like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and others have a European perspective. In order to become members of the EU, they must meet the high standards of the Union in a variety of fields. (enlargement_policy_applying_eu_standards.pdf, n.d.) These conditions are laid down to ensure that European identity is not impaired and for the continuous development of values. If we lose our knowledge of values and their significance,

we will automatically lose the foundation of freedom, of modern and democratic society. (ewdef_en.pdf, n.d.)

Are EU values met?

In an interview with the Romanian Journal of European Affairs in April 2015, George Soros claimed that "The European Union was a very inspiring idea for people like me… It is the embodiment of an open society, such as countries with the same concepts uniting and sacrificing some of their sovereignty for the common good. *It was a volunteer association of equal.*" (Bonciu, 2015: 13) This was true until the economic crisis and the euro crisis in 2004 and 2007 when the situation was overturned. In case of switching from a voluntary association of peers, to a voluntary association of non-equals is the motto "unity in diversity" still valid? (Bonciu, 2015: 14) The stakes of the great powers have dramatically increased, which emphasizes the contribution to diversity. What is left of the concept of unity when divergent factors multiply? "Accepting reality means embracing diversity, putting the concept of diversity at the heart of the European Union's core, and building a new organization that will allow for a flexible unity." (Bonciu, 2015: 17)

Throughout history, the EU has experienced many turning points in which solidarity (one of the primordial values on which the European Community was founded) among members has become more than felt, helping to rebuild states.(The Charter of Fundamental Rights, n.d.: 15–17) Over the last few years, the EU "faces many challenges and constraints - persistent financial turmoil, migration, rising nationalist parties, separatist movements, and terrorist threats. What all these challenges share is that they demand common solutions - and solidarity."(Grimmel and Giang, 2017: 1) But the fact that they demand common solutions and solidarity does not mean they are offered. Everyone is looking for his own good. Everyone seeks to develop by breaking the rights of others, and we wake up in an anarchy that although we know where it came from, we can not see where it will end.

It is wrong to think that the European Union is the only one facing the issue of migration. "No region or country in the world is left out of the migration process and all countries are involved either in emigration and immigration, or in transit flows." (de Wenden, 2017: 67) There are both advantages and disadvantages related to this population movement. On the one hand, among the advantages are the exchange of information, contact with different cultures, human resources, economic development, demographic growth and so on. On the other hand, the disadvantages are major and with a particular impact: the loss of identity and values by embracing new cultures, the ageing of the population in some areas, the

loss of the economy due to the lack of labor, the transmission of diseases, the increase in the risk of terrorist attacks, mass weapons, trafficking in human beings, organ trafficking, drug trafficking and other substances. How are the values of the European Union about refugees manifested. In Article 18 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is the right to *asylum*. (The Charter of Fundamental Rights, n.d.) Article 2 of the Maastricht Treaty also states: "respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities". (Tratatul privind Uniunea Europeană, 2012) The large number of emigrants has sparked conflicts among European countries. European Commission's President Jean-Claude Juncker has proposed an "understanding of burden-sharing. In May 2015, it was suggested that 40,000 asylum seekers be distributed among EU countries according to their wealth and population." (de Wenden, 2017: 72) Many EU Member States have rejected the request of the President of the Commission, closing their borders for refugees. Other countries like Germany, Austria, Greece have accepted hosting a significant number of migrants. "Lack of confidence among EU states, as well as situations where states have been the main obstacles to European solidarity that have emerged throughout Europe due to the power of emerging nationalist ideologies." (de Wenden, 2017: 74)

The identity of the European Union has been hardly tried in the last decades. Doubts about its continuity will not disappear very quickly. As long as states consolidate their own identity, the identity of Europe will be strengthened. The motto "unity in diversity" continues over Europe as a guardian angel, a midnight prayer that has escaped from conflict for decades. Values were used rather in rhetorical formulations, because they often proved to be superficial, powerless. But values remain values, in spite of what people do.

Quo Vadis Europe? - is the question that raises fear and anxiety. Despite the conflicts between civilizations and the rupture of the law and its fulfillment, there is still a bit of confidence that things can change for the better. "We see our years passing as a sound," but what we leave behind is up to us. (*Resurse Creştine*, n.d.) If the law is not canceled and if we still have treaties that demands us to live in harmony with the states around us, we still have an united Europe. Europe should not be considered a ticking time-bomb from which one expects to explode at any time. Europe will continue for years if human values are respected.

My European dream does not end here.

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