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# TOWARDS EUROPEAN NATION POLITICAL FICTION OR POLITICAL REALISM?

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## **Abstract**

The idea of European nation was created by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, an Austrian aristocrat and promoter of European integration. His idea was based on certainty that European nation is a virtual fact (being). He regarded nation as a cultural community but he was convinced that the Europeans should build a common state – federation or confederation. When Kalergi formulated his concept, the idea of European nation had strong concurrent – rising nationalisms which were real barrier for integration projects. Generally, industrial – modern civilization was not a good period for universalizing and integrating activity. Nation state was uniformizing power which superseded universal community as well as regional and local societies. But transformation of civilization: from industrial to post-industrial and its political and cultural consequences, e.g. European integration, gives us a new opportunity and has changed our understanding of identity issues. That is why we should reconsider the idea of Kalergi and apply that to the new civilizational conditions.

*Keywords:* European nation, nationality, European integration, post-industrial civilization

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## **1. Introduction**

The intensification of integration processes in Europe which leads to the formation of European institutional order enables us to ask a question concerning the identity issues. *What does it mean nowadays and what may it mean to be a European in the future?* While referring to the question on the future it is not about some kind of distinction or prophesying but about taking advantage of the predictive potential of political science and in general social sciences which should not only give the description and explanation of facts but also are appointed to forecast the political tendencies and the directions of the civilizational development. Therefore, scholars may react in advance to new phenomena and processes which transform our reality in an essential way. Such an approach has not only a cognitive value but also a practical one and enables

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the preparation for the changes, overcoming the anxiety and shock which was defined as 'future shock' by an American futurologist Alvin Toffler. Obviously, predicting is much easier for the representatives of pure sciences who rely on precise quantifiable data rather than for humanists who mostly deal with immeasurable quality data. At most we can present their intensity in a quantifiable form. Therefore, our prognosis in humanities will be treated only in probabilistic categories even more than in pure sciences. We may assume that after fulfilling certain conditions, a given phenomenon or a process may possibly occur. We apply the theoretical thought for which forecasting is not only an intellectual challenge but first and foremost a test of its authenticity [1].

In this article I am thinking over the possibility of implementation of the idea of a European nation whose father was the Austrian aristocrat Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894-1972), 20<sup>th</sup> century activist in favour of uniting Europe, the leader of pan-European movement. I treat the theory of the development of civilization as a theoretical, initial basis for the formulating prognosis. It assumes that in the contemporary world a transformation of civilizational character occurs. The transformations happen in all fields of social activity. Profound transformations occur in the sphere of economy, politics, culture and what follows also in the identity. Generally speaking, it is assumed that industrial order is becoming a post-industrial order [2]. The characteristics of the last one in relation to the issues interesting to us will be presented in the further part of this text.

## 2. Coudenhove-Kalergi's idea of European nation

In the history of Europe there are various integrative and disintegrative concepts and activities overlapping. The end of World War I and World War II constituted an important basis for the development of contemporary integration thought. After traumatic experiences caused by nationalistic ideologies numerous suggestions and actions aiming at the introduction of some kind of a federation of European nations were a certain remedy. For many European thinkers the United States of America constituted a pattern for system solutions.

Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi also belonged to this group of thinkers. He commenced his activity for the benefit of united Europe at the end of World War I and continued constantly until his death. His political activity because of which he became one of the most prominent ideologists of European integration deserves a special attention. He published works important for the development of integration thought such as *Pan-Europe* (1923) and *Die Europäische Nation* (1953), in which he expressed his opinions concerning the ideas of European integration as well as the formation of European nation. In 1924 he announced *Pan European Manifesto* in which he summarized his own integrative notion. Kalergi believed that extremely comprehended national variety on European subcontinent is actually a fiction created on the grounds of the Reformation and religious wars which occurred on the Old Continent in 16<sup>th</sup>

and 17<sup>th</sup> century and the French Revolution which made fetish out of the nation replacing the king and religion.

According to the author of *Pan-Europe* in Europe there is one European nation which is divided into many branches. In *European nation* he stated: „Perceiving nation as a cultural community (...) indicates that the whole Europe is one nation which divides into branches and ethical nationalists see only individual branches which they regard as trees due to the fact that common trunk is hidden in their partial perception” [3].

For Kalergi re-integration of European societies was a necessity conditioned by a real threat of the destruction of European civilization. “Behind the wish *united Europe* – he claimed – there is neither hidden love nor fondness but a bitter necessity.” [3, p. 31] It was especially culturally and civilizationally strange Russian Bolshevism which posed a threat. He notices that “newly born Soviet Union became the greatest threat to Europe. It affected Europe both from the inside and outside through the revolution and war. Its aim was the destruction of European civilization and tradition as well as the removal of its defenders in case of the situation when they would not surrender to communism. The Bolshevik leaders did not hide their intentions towards Europe included in the Soviet Union up to coastline of the Atlantic Ocean.” [3, p. 15]

Therefore, the basic nation-forming Kalergi’s notion is the inner power. On one hand, posing a threat to the existence of European societies and culture – in the past Arabs and Ottoman Empire, representing hostile towards Europe civilization of Islam, after the WW I as it was already mentioned, Bolshevism. On the other hand, having integrative features due to the fact that only a real threat from some ‘strangers’ integrates the heterogenic society. It was already in the years between the wars they were seen not only in Russia but also in the economic field of the United States of America, Eastern Asia and even in the Great Britain, which at that time because of its colonial empire was not considered in the pan-European calculations but its membership in future state and federal European institutions was not excluded similarly like Russia which was considered if the condition of democratization of political system was fulfilled.

Coudenhove-Kalergi mentioned the Swiss, Germans and Italians as an example of successful attempts of national unity in the face of external threat. Obviously, in Kalergi’s notion Europe is not only ‘a besieged fortress’. It is also a cultural community which consists of the heritage of Greek and Roman civilizations, Christianity, especially Western and German people which contributed to the creation of the ethos of medieval knighthood – some kind of community of supranational values. These elements determine the European identity. The variety of (national) traditions is its wealth. According to the author of *Pan-Europe* there is no contradiction between love towards own nation and a respect to the heritage of other cultures as well as the awareness of “a thousand-year bond between all the spirits of Europe” [3, p. 22]. The awareness of belonging to the European community and so-called ‘European patriotism’ are to become the coronation and complement of the national feeling [3, p. 70].

### 3. Political or cultural concept of nation?

While creating communities defined as national one can usually distinguish two types of ideology delimiting the scope of a nation. They indicate a decisive factor in the process of building a nation. The first one has a political character: a nation is primarily understood as a political community. The notion of *nationality* is in fact a synonym to *citizenship*. The second one is a culturological ideology in which the first-class significance of culture in creating a nation is emphasized. A nation is perceived as a cultural community [4]. Within the framework of the second ideology we can also distinguish a sub-category – ethnical-cultural ideology which, besides the culture, indicates the relationship, blood relations, common genealogy as a factor creating a nation. Although an ethnic nation is always a cultural nation, not every nation can be reduced to this ethnic category. Common features of a nation in cultural and ethnic sense are cultural attributes as a set of factors creating a nation. It concerns inter alia: language, symbols, system of values, attitudes, approaches, customs, cultural tradition and also a common historical memory. In case of a not ethnic cultural nation an alleged relation of members of a community is not fetishized. Culture as such and not as a genealogical myth or a belief in relationship is a constructive factor. Not every nation in a cultural sense – for instance German-speaking cultural community (*Kulturnation*) – is a nation in an ethnic sense. A cultural nation as opposed to the ethnic one has a much more inclusive character. We become a member of such a nation only through the inclusion into the system of signs of a related culture and not through some mythical relationship which prevents or at least makes it harder to incorporate people of other origins into the community [5].

What connects both national ideologies is imagination of participation in national community. Many authors both in Anglo-Saxon countries and in Continental Europe perceive a nation as an imagined community [6]. It is related to the state of consciousness of the members of community. Auto-identification is seen as *conditio sine qua non* of the existence of a nation in general. Therefore, in the creation of a nation subjective factors outweigh the objective ones. It refers to the communities based on a cultural and a political paradigm. Whenever there is a lack of consciousness of the belonging to a national community, there are also no premises for creating a nation. One of Polish personalistic philosophers stated rightly: „A nation exists in people and owing to people” [7]. In order to use more precise definitions it can be said that a nation exists in human consciousness and owing to that consciousness a community becomes a nation. The notion of a Soviet nation may serve as a negative example. Self-consciousness of the members of the community did not follow the political project. As a consequence a Soviet society was created and a Soviet nation failed to be created. Soviet citizens did not realize or even did not imagine that they would create a national community, obviously, besides the ideologically involved individuals.

Questions concerning the sources of this consciousness are in fact the questions concerning the subjects participating in the process of creating the nation. An opinion of “an everlasting existence of nations” (*primordialism*) seems archaic [8]. Today it rather fits to the ideological discourse usually conducted on the margins of the public life of developed societies. Since nations are not something everlasting, they must appear due to some factors which form this representative community as well as form the awareness of its members to participate in this community. Modernizing theories convince us that a nation, in its contemporary interpretation, is a relatively new community. Its creation is connected with the industrialization and modernization processes and thus with the development of industrial (capitalistic) social relations, popularization of middle-class culture as a more superior culture in relation to a folk (traditional) culture, the formation of mass media, development of public education into which patriotic education is inscribed [9], and also a standardization in the field of language, which was supposed to become an all-nation language. In the process of establishing the national awareness state institutions (administration, army, schools and universities) were especially involved. In the places where national identity was defined as opposed to the state and state nation, as for example in Central-Eastern Europe, the role of nation-creating subjects was assumed by the social and intellectual elites which were called *the intellectuals* usually supported by the Church, educational institutions, cultural associations and press. Historians, also the academic ones, played a significant role because owing to them historic awareness of a nation was being created and it was some kind of a intermediary between generations.

The state in the process of nation formation can be treated either as a main architect of a community and national awareness (state nation) or as an aim which a national community strives for (national state). In case of establishing an own state by a nation, it assumes the nation-creating functions, popularizing the national idea and consolidating patriotic attitudes. It is perceived by the national community as a guarantor of its existence. In this process the state performs various functions, such as: external frames within which integration processes occur both in social and political sphere as well as in economic, cultural and linguistic one; power integrating a community in case of external threat; power forming state's ideology referring to the values, ideas, principles and aspirations characteristic of a given community; a patron of culture and institution which popularize it [10].

In this context we notice that a cultural project is inscribed in a political paradigm. However, we also notice that the projects of political communities (Anglo-Saxon, Swiss and in a way French nations) are built on the basis certain cultural paradigm, which may mean using a common language as a tool of internal communication within the community; such function is perfumed by English and French or at least the affirmation of basic political values as it occurs in case of the Swiss who use four languages. Generally, for a cultural project a common state is not a *sine qua non* condition of the existence of a national community. It can exist without its own state. As opposed to a political

project which cannot function outside of the state. It is organically connected with the state. But if it is not connected with a real state, then it is connected with its idea. However, the idea cannot remain an abstract form, community, or at least national elites, it strives for its realization, which is the creation of state of nation.

First and foremost we find the impact of ideology based on culturology in Kalergi's notion. There seems to be ontological error in the choice of cultural strategy which this thinker did not avoid. As a whole, Europe has never been a cultural community, at most axiological community as it was seen by for example Karol Wojtyła – the Pope John Paul II [11]. And as such it created a civilization community in which cultural variety is included. With regard to culture we observe the variety of: languages, symbols, myths, traditions, customs, confession and ceremonies, excluding the creation of to some extent homogenous national community – cultural nation. Kalergi did not notice the proper significance of a political factor of the nation-forming process. Obviously, we cannot say that he ignored it totally, nevertheless he made a factor constituting a European nation from culture. Most likely he did it on purpose, because in case of including a European nation in political categories he would have to assume it merely as a project still requiring the implementation. He preferred to emphasize the ontological reality of a European nation, which was to accept the European nation as a real existence. Therefore, Kalergi may appear as a utopian and his integration notion as *political fiction*. The idea would not be so unrealistic if Kalergi had based on political project. During his lifetime certain symptoms appeared – the formation of European Communities which formed the basis for the notion of a European nation but seen in political categories. Publishing *European nation* he could not notice the post-industrial transformations which since 1960's have been performing a relativization of contemporary national identity, which creates opportunities for other forms of identity: regional, ethnic and supranational).

#### **4. Idea of European nation in the face of integration and postmodern reality**

The intensification of integration processes in Europe as well as civilization transformation changing the industrial order into post-industrial reality, in a cultural and identity dimension called post-modern, are simultaneous phenomena. Although the origins of European Communities indicate the industrial origins, the European Union in its present form evolved towards the post-modern structure, which is confirmed by often breakneck efforts of the scholars tending to define the Union by means of industrial paradigms which Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes [12]. Therefore, the formation of post-modern identity and European integration in its present form can be treated as processes connected with each other which are the consequences of civilizational transformations which started in the 1960's. A common denominator for post-modern identity and European integration is the relativization of sovereign

nation state and its competences in the field of creation of homogenous national identity. It creates the opportunity for new, alternative forms of identity which can be treated as opposition or a completion of national identity. There is enough place for the identity on the regional level, also in an ethnic-linguistic dimension (e.g. the Scottish, the Welsh, the Catalanian, the Basque or not so well-known communities such as the Kashubians in the Northern Poland or the Frisians in Germany and Holland), and for the supranational identity, *national European identity*. At the same time regional and supranational identities are perceived as uncompetitive to each other. Today they compete with the national identity. And as long as national identity constitutes a predominant form of identity, Europeaness and regionality will not aim against each other [13].

Fragmentarization and liquidity are characteristic of an emerging post-modern identity paradigm. In industrial order identity was monopolized by the state factors. Nation state aimed at elimination or at least reduction of the significance of other forms of identity. Nationalistic totalitarian regimes constituted the most distinct example of this kind of tendency. Nevertheless, even democratic states did not avoid the politics of homogenization conducted in the name of national unity [14]. The emergence of new identity paradigm occurring as a result of civilizational transformation does not mean a radical rejection of modern national identity but it means its relativization and mixing into identity *melting pot*. This type of identity was already known in pre-industrial order. A metrics of one of Cracovian canons from the period of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: '*canonicus cracoviensis, nationae Polonus, gente Ruthenus, origine Judaeus*', which can be translated as: 'a Cracovian canon, of Polish nationality, Ruthenian by birth, of Jewish descent'. In post-modern world we can define our identity depending on the variable cultural and geographical conditionings. In a national system we may appear as an inhabitant of a given region, in a European system as a citizen of one of the member states, and in a global system as a citizen of the European Union, or simply a European.

Certainly, the transformations in the identity sphere do not mean the existence of *national European community*. The relativization of national identity may facilitate the process of creating European nationality. We will not have to deal with the copying of industrial paradigms. National European identity will not assume an homogenous form of industrial national identity. Post-modern paradigm of nation will assume a multilayered national identification: from ethic to a political (state) lower and higher rank (European). The last layer may turn out to be the strongest in the conditions of a constant spatial mobility.

Assuming that the realistic notion of a European nation can exist in a foreseeable future only in a political formula, it can be noticed that the integration and consolidation of the member states of the European Union result in the establishment of institutional framework, in which the process of forming a European political national community can be initiated. One can come across the opinions, also among the authors representing new member states, that some of the elements of ideological (political) fatherland, occur on the continent scale

and therefore it can be said that contemporary inhabitant of a member state of the European Union may consider its membership to a private fatherland (so-called little fatherland – a German term *heimat* reflects the meaning of a private fatherland) and two levels of fatherland in a political sense – national and European [15].

This tendency is proven not only in the European region. This moment can be found also in other post-industrial western societies, as in New Zealand [16].

The European Union resembles a state more and more, also in the symbolic layer: a flag, an anthem, currency, citizenship, diplomatic service, Lisbon Treaty which is a quasi-constitution [17]. What is especially essential for the process of the formation of national identity is European citizenship. Some lawyers and political scientist interpret its fact as assuming the form of federal state by the EU. “A transition – states Mokrá – from a market citizen to the Union citizen clearly illustrates a fundamental transformation of the European Economic Community being aimed mainly at macroeconomic goals shaped into entity very close to a political union because of its goals and activities. The citizenship is often considered to be one of the fundamental preconditions of federal organisation of state also in case that the Union has not reached this stage of integration process yet, formulation of the Union citizenship institute is of significant declaratory as well as constitutional meaning The EU citizenship as an individual institute markedly contributes to the common identity building, the citizenship is seen as a positive step towards the integration by the EU, the Member States as well as the citizens.” [18]

As in the case of before mentioned former Soviet Union, also in the case of the European Union, the existence of citizenship does not determine directly the existence of a nation. Today only about 13% of the EU citizens strongly identify with Europe (but in fact it is more than 50 million people) [19]. *Civic European nation* project only has a perspective character. And it has an advantage over *Soviet nation* due to the fact that it occurs in the conditions of a democratic society and civic culture. Certainly it is helped neither by the deficit of democracy on the supranational level nor by a strong scepticism of some Western societies (mainly the British). Also the current economic crisis does not form a favourable atmosphere for the discussion on a European nation. National resentments seem to prevail and quite often they undermine European solidarity which in case of national project must constitute its main principle. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that the crisis is a temporary phenomenon. The project of creating a nation is counted at least by decades. Despite the fact that the Americans had to deal with even greater crisis during American Civil War, *civic American nation* project survived and rather nothing jeopardize it at present. Neil Fligstein observes that first and foremost all the beneficiaries of the European integration are the capital for national European identity – and it does not concern the states, but the individuals. „It is people – he states – who are involved in such interaction that are most likely to come to see themselves as Europeans and involved in European national project. In

essence, Europeans are going to be people who have the opportunity and inclination to travel to others countries, speak other languages, and routinely interact with people in other societies in the Europe – wide economic, social, and political fields.” [19, p. 143]

It is the spatial mobility which may have a great influence on the formation of national European identity. Post-modern identity is symbolized by Bauman’s ‘tourist’, for whom mobility – the possibility of constant move - was the fundamental value. Possibly it is a global and a ‘European tourist’ as well. For the former the discovering space is almost the whole world, for the latter – uniting Europe. In both cases ‘the tourist’ does not have a permanent address. Temporality is his feature. He is everywhere and acts temporarily. Work is an important reason for the spatial mobility. Abolition of borders and the freedom of movement and work are conducive to such a lifestyle in European conditions.

The migrations of people within the borders of the European Union affect the weakening of bonds with present communities such as a nation, local community or a family. In a further perspective they may cause the substitution of the sense of membership to a given state with the awareness of participation in one great European space. At this stage of development of integration “secondary” European citizenship may have a much greater importance in the future and become the primary form of political identification, especially with regard to the residents who are the citizens of the Union but who do not have the citizenship of the county of permanent residence. In their case, it seems the most proper to refer to the status of the citizen of the European Union.

## **5. Conclusions**

The answer to the thesis advanced in the title of this article is far from easy. At present European nation project seems to be a *political fiction*, especially in its initial culturological form supported by Coudnehove-Kalergi. However, the function of political science and social sciences is to predict the tendencies in the development of social and political relations. As much as we can state that there are no premises confirming the existence of European nation, we cannot exclude the emergence of national European community in the future. A nation, in a historic and psychological sense, is a variable phenomenon [20]. Symptoms, indicating the possibility of the occurrence of such an identity category as a European nation, allow to diagnose both the research on the civilizational transformations as well as the analysis of the integration processes in Europe. The emergence of the awareness of the community membership will be a decisive factor prejudging the existence of national European community. There are already the institutional frameworks for the political project. The awareness may appear only when the European bureaucracy, pro-European organizations, European political parties, educational institutions and universities as well as European and national media promote political national European identity [21]. National *ancient régime* of industrial times determines the prevailing identity paradigm. It should be taken into consideration that

“Nation and *a fortiori* nation state are not Alpha and Omega of the history of human societies” [22]. In the perspective of few decades we may consider civic project of European nation as a realistic stand.

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