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## **NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. A VIEW FROM THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE<sup>2</sup>**

Once upon a time, a political scientist David Miller (1995) noted that national identity – besides the religious one – is probably the only form of identity for which people are ready to give their own lives. This means that in the minds of many people, belief in the reality of national community, and consequently the scale of personal experiences associated with participation in it, can play an exceptionally prominent role. However, for the national community to be perceived as a truly existing entity, it cannot be a simple aggregate of individuals with similar physical or cultural characteristics. According to Benedict Anderson (1991), members of the national community must perceive each other as countrymen; they must be convinced that together with others, they form a community that is united by a common psychological bond. In his famous definition, he refers to the sense of community by calling the nation an „imagined community”. As he notes, members of a community as large as a nation can, for obvious reasons, directly interact with only a small number of other members. Deprived of the experience of a personal contact, the strong sense of belonging to a group must consist of imagining oneself as entwined with crowds of anonymous compatriots in an invisible, but strongly experienced bond. Without such a bond, the idea of a national community would be internally empty.

To fulfill its bond-forming role, national identity must refer to a certain resource of knowledge, i.e. a better or worse structured content that is known and understood by all members of the community. This is emphasized

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by various researchers introducing the concept of a collective system of meanings, understood as a conglomerate of historical knowledge, symbols, cultural values, social roles, etc. (cf. Kelman 1997; Reykowski 1997). Paweł Boski (1992), analyzing in detail the content of national identity, refers to the concept of the prototype theory of knowledge. He indicated two types of attributes that represent national identity: criterial and correlative. Guided by this distinction, it can be said that national identity consists of knowledge about cultural symbols and their meanings (criterial identity), as well as of a system of values and behaviors shared by all or at least the majority of group members, reflecting the norms and values that are important for a given culture (correlative identity). Referring to the Polish context, the author indicates that the identity of a Pole is built of, on the one hand, criterial attributes such as knowledge of the national anthem, national emblem and flag, or knowledge of the most important historical events. On the other hand there are correlative attributes, i.e. characteristic norms and values like, for example, cultivating family ties, hospitality, a gallant attitude towards women, etc.

The concepts of national identity and national identification are often treated interchangeably. However, they are not equivalent. Group identity means the fact of belonging to a specific group, combined with having its cognitive representation. National identification refers to the individual-group relationship, and describes the strength of the emotional bond felt with other members and the importance of a given group identity. Expressive awareness of being Polish (group identity) does not necessarily mean a deep relationship with the Polishness and Poles (identification).

In James Cameron's widely accepted approach (2004), identification with a national group includes three closely related components: centrality (example: 'I have a lot in common with other Poles'), bond with the group (example: 'I feel a strong relationship with other Poles'), and satisfaction (example: 'I am happy that I am a Pole'). Thus, strong national identification when belonging to a group is an important part of the self image (centrality), we have the sense of a close relationship with other members (strength of the relationship), and participation in the group gives us satisfaction. It may be argued that national identification, understood in this way, reflects a psychological bond that plays a key role when one belongs to the national community. Thanks to this feeling, despite the lack of direct interactions with the vast majority of members, people feel that they form a community integrated by an invisible, symbolic and emotional bond.

Why, among dozens or hundreds of social groups that people participate in, does the national group seem to have a special status? There are a number of psychological theories explaining this phenomenon. I will refer to the most important of them later in this paper. At this point, perhaps the best

idea is to recall Marylin Brewer's (2003) theory of optimal distinctiveness. In her approach, people prefer groups that meet two important social needs: inclusion and differentiation. According to Brewer, both needs are best met by membership in exclusive groups. Exclusiveness gives people a sense of being included in a broader community, and on the other hand, because of clear boundaries separating the in-group from out-groups, people maintain a sense of separateness. It seems that a national group meets both criteria perfectly. It is much larger than social groups that determine our daily activities, yet much smaller and better defined than, for example, humanity as a whole.

### ■ PSYCHOSOCIAL ORIGINS OF NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Beginning in the 90s of the 20th century, researchers seeking the psychological conditions of national attitudes willingly refer to the theoretical assumptions and empirical achievements of the social identity theory (SIT) (see: Tajfel, Turner 1979, 1986). According to SIT, the essential part of a human social identity is based on the awareness of our belonging to different groups, and the basic mechanism for dealing with the diversity of the world around us is cognitive categorization. In the social dimension, it means the constant allocation of people to specific group categories, which results in (among other things) the phenomenon of favoring the „in-group” at the expense of „out-groups”. Using the minimal group paradigm, researchers have shown that grouping people into broader categories can be based on any criteria; in extreme cases, even randomly assigning unknown people to several groups. Henry Tajfel and John Turner (1979, 1986) argue that many categorizations are based on the need to have positively evaluated social identifications. Constructing an identity based on positive identifications builds a positive self-image and strengthens the self-esteem. Egotism makes people feel motivated to be members of groups that are perceived as strong and positive, and when they become members, they try to act in their favor. People who are cognitively classified as strangers are subject to different evaluation rules, often taking the shape of various forms of devaluation or discrimination. This is a natural consequence of the egotistic motivation. Thus, identification with a group has a special meaning within the theoretical framework set out by SIT. The perspective of SIT assumes that identity, along with self-esteem, is strengthened by any action that reinforces/improves the position of the group to which we belong.

Switching to „group mode” causes fundamental changes in people's perception of themselves and others. This phenomenon is a key issue of the self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987), which emphasizes that categorization

processes – as the basis for the mental demarcation of social groups – allow an individual to smoothly pass from the level of individual identity (autonomous Self) to the level of group member's identity, as well as switching between different group identities. It is an act of cognitive depersonalization, thanks to which people are able to include themselves in some social category (in this case into a national group), and perceive the personal self as equivalent or substitute to that of other people within the given group. Thanks to self-categorization, we can experience ourselves as a part of a larger community and give this experience a greater weight than the individual identity.

The social identity theory and the self-categorization theory they both describe the general mechanisms of shaping the human social identity and the dynamics of relations between the two spheres of personal identity: individual and social. Individual identity is a manifestation of the need for one's own autonomy and uniqueness, whereas the basis of social identity are identification processes, thanks to which we can recognize ourselves as a part of some community. Some authors emphasize that individual differences between people can be a very important aspect of the phenomena described by these theories. Ervin Staub (1997, 1999) notes that people for whom strongly and positively valued group identifications become a source of compensation for various ego deficits, have rather poorly developed individual identities. It is very likely that such people will need a lot of social identification in threatening conditions, such as in times of an economic crisis, a rapid socio-political system change, or a military conflict. This means that the degree of autonomy is of key importance for the quality and intensity of relationships with people. According to Staub, for individuals with high autonomy, which he describes as „connected”, relationships with people are very important and make an integral part of the self; but, unlike people who are „embedded”, they are characterized by a developed individualism and independence. In „embedded” people, collectivist attitudes dominate due to a relatively poor separation between the individual and the group identity. Such attitudes include, among others, easy compliance with group authorities, special care for group coherence and homogeneity, and a low tendency to cooperate with people outside the in-group.

Some researchers draw attention to the special properties of national identity, distinguishing it from other identifications that build social identity. Stephen Worchel and Dawna Coutant (1997), emphasizing that the national community is usually the largest and strongest group to which we can belong, write: „due to exercising control over the resources needed by the individual, the nation is very often the group that has the greatest opportunity to reward us for our loyalty”. Membership in such a community can be considered one of

the most valuable affiliations available to people. According to Herbert Kelman (1997), the nation-state is perceived as a source of a psychological gratification because: (1) as long as it represents the ethnic and the cultural identity of a given population, it gives individuals a sense of belonging and control over their own lives; and (2) because people, through belonging to a group such as a nation and the identification with an independent state, experience a strong sense of personal dignity and a satisfaction of the need for self-transcendence, rooted in the conviction of the inevitability of death. Being a member of a national community not only gives you a sense of strength, but can also, to a greater or lesser extent, give a meaning to your own existence. The emphasis on the latter aspect is noticeable in the well-known and often cited Terror Management Theory (cf. Solomon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski 1991). Its authors point out that an effective means of dealing with existential fears (constant uncertainty, threat to important values, inevitability of death) is belonging to a community whose permanence far exceeds the time of an individual's life. Belonging to a national community gives the opportunity to meet the need for self-transcendence. In the context of the need to master existential fears, positive evaluation of the national group, emotional attachment to it, and care for its interests, seem to be something obvious. The national community requires constant protection, combined with constant confirmation of its identity and separateness.

Finally, after analyzing epistemic, motivational and existential factors, it is also worth looking at the national identity and other forms of group identification in terms of adaptation, i.e. treating them as derivatives of socialization. Social life is subject to complex processes of synergy, which promote unification and convergence of group members. The sources of synergistic tendencies should be seen in two types of social influences: informative and normative (e.g. Deutsch, Gerard 1955). The former results from the needs of adequacy and agency (being right, being aware of the situation, taking appropriate and effective actions). In many situations, a deficit of objective information means that the most important source is the behavior of other people, providing guidelines on how to behave, what to think, what to say, etc. Meanwhile, normative pressure is motivated by the need for acceptance and belonging. The fear of being rejected by the group is an extremely strong motive for observing collectively accepted norms and adapting to social expectations. Both forms of social influence result in matching one's own opinion to the opinion of the majority and to the unification with the group's behavior. From this perspective, identification with a national group can be seen as one of the many manifestations of social synergy mechanisms.

## ■ THE TANGLED WEB OF NATIONAL AND PRO-DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES

Awareness of belonging to a particular national group and the sense of group identification are the two factors that determine the broad theoretical category of national attitudes. It includes psychological phenomena from various levels of analysis - from relatively simple manifestations of affect to complex ideological orientations. In most concepts of national attitudes, there is a distinction between patriotism and nationalism (although individual researchers use very different names) (Adorno et al. 1950; Kosterman, Feshbach 1989; Schatz, Staub, Lavine 1999; Blank, Schmidt 2003; Herrmann, Isernia, Segatti 2009). Patriotism can be understood in two ways. First, it is something that can be theoretically distinguished from nationalist attitudes. There is some empirical evidence that both dimensions are relatively independent and have different psychological implications (e.g. Kosterman, Feshbach 1989; Skarżyńska, Poppe 1997). In the second understanding, patriotism is more general and inclusive. It is a set of attitudes based on identification with one's own national community, in an affective dimension characterized by emotional attachment and a sense of pride of the specific values that make up the collective system of meanings (cf. Bar-Tal 1997; Kelman 1997). If we adopt a broad definition of patriotism, nationalism should be treated as a special form of patriotism with specific cognitive and behavioral consequences.

The adoption of a broad definition of patriotism assumes the possibility of indicating factors that trigger or inhibit not only nationalist attitudes, but also the development of chauvinism and xenophobia. With this approach, one can talk about some different forms or about the development of various cognitive and affective orientations within patriotism. The reason why patriotism has different faces can be seen in its focus on specific values that are considered the source of positive identification with the national group. This approach is presented by Robert Schatz, Ervin Staub and Howard Lavine (1999) in an attempt to directly link different types of patriotism with a specific system of values that dominate the subject's national consciousness. They distinguish constructive and blind patriots, and this distinction is axiological. Constructive patriots primarily understand their duties towards the national group as the realization of certain universal values and ideals (freedom, equality, justice, peace, etc.). According to the authors, people of this kind should be prosocial and engaged in a growth of the group well-being. They are distinguished by sensitivity to injustice and discrimination, which motivate them to engage in

social initiatives and political activity. In contrast, blind patriotism means very strong attachment to conventional patriotic symbols, combined with a typically nationalist tendency to glorify the national culture and with an emphasis on preserving cultural homogeneity. As these two forms of attachment differed in national and social goals (e.g. emphasis on military policy vs. emphasis on social policies) and in categories applied for social comparisons (e.g. homogeneity vs social diversity), Schatz and colleagues saw the reasons for such differences in competing systems of values and ideological ideals that are accepted or particularly valued by individuals. It is worth emphasizing that the lack of critical national consciousness and critical loyalty is an idea that inspired more researchers, not just Schatz and colleagues (1999). For example, many features of uncritical, blind patriotism can be found in the phenomenon of collective narcissism, which is usually studied in the national context (cf. Cichocka, Golec de Zavala 2011).

The supposition that one can distinguish various ideological premises that stimulate national identification raises an interesting question: does, and to what extent, the concentration on different categories of ideological values and ideals affect nationalist attitudes and ethnocentric hostility? Other prominent representatives of this approach, German researchers Thomas Blank and Peter Schmidt (2003), believe that attachment to one's own country can be rooted in two forms of identification: patriotic-positive (patriotism) and national-positive (nationalism). They are located in an identification with the current forms of a country's performance and with social values deeply rooted in the national culture and the historical heritage. These values include symbols, institutions, norms, ideas and beliefs about the importance of the rights of one's own nation, its sovereignty, positive image and even greatness. Researchers give the concept of „the current forms of a country's performance” a specific empirical sense - these are the key norms for the functioning of a democratic state, i.e. efficiently working democracy and its institutions, an extensive system of social welfare and security, the equal treatment of all groups and minorities, and the widespread involvement of citizens in public activities. It seems that Blank and Schmidt's concept is essentially an empirical quantification of the ideas of constitutional (civic) and national patriotism (cf. Muller 2007). The first is based on the affirmation of cardinal values and principles of the liberal democracy (contained in the constitution of the liberal democratic state), and the second is based on cultural and/or ethnic concept of the political community. German researchers argue that the nationalist-positive identification strongly stimulates national megalomania and ethnocentric hostility (including anti-Semitism), while the patriotic-positive identification (constitutional, civic) weakens these dysfunctional beliefs and attitudes. It is worth noting here, however, that such

an operationalization of the nationalist orientation seems very controversial. Equating a positive attitude to national history and culture with nationalism and xenophobia is undoubtedly an abuse, understandable only in the context of Germany's role in World War II, and how it influenced German collective self-esteem (Radkiewicz 2019).

The concepts described above seem very representative for the theoretical reflection in which the primary national identification acquires different mental characteristics, and may lead to different consequences in socio-political attitudes and behavior depending on preferred values and ideological ideals. Based on the theory of social identity, identity is seen as the result of two competing processes: individuation and identification. Both processes have a key impact on how people come to a self-definition, forming two components of their identity: personal and group. The effect of individuation is the differentiation between the self and the non-self, leading to the formation of a personal identity. Group identity is based on identification – it consists in identifying with certain social entities and perceiving oneself as a part of a certain group. Depending on whether individualized identity or social identity is central to the self-image, national identification may take a more civil or a more cultural form, respectively. In the researchers' intention, civic identification refers primarily to the citizen-state relationship and is based on democratic principles of a civil society. It should be characterized not only by support for the ideas of freedom, social equality, solidarity and tolerance, but also by a utilitarian commitment to these ideals. Rational engagement is

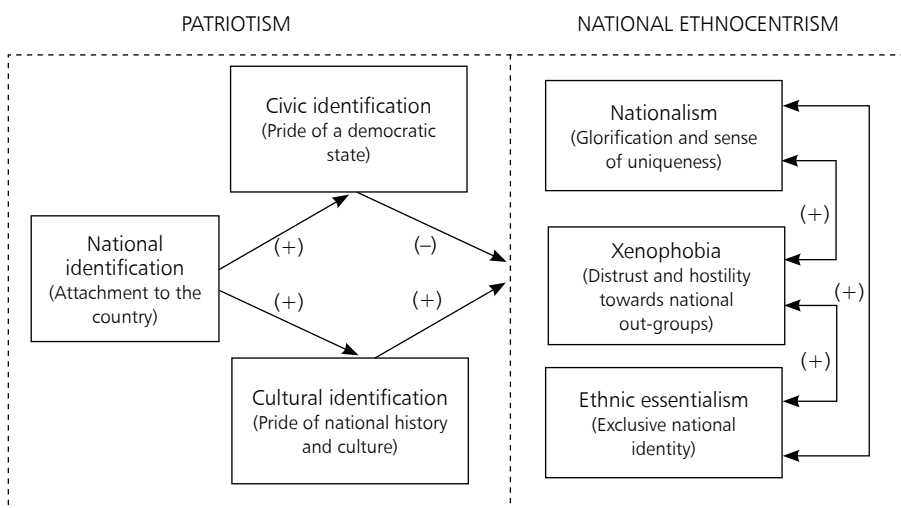


Figure 1. General model of national attitudes

possible thanks to critical awareness, i.e. the ability to independently assess the situation, apart from the group point of view. Susceptibility to group thinking is definitely closer to cultural identification, which is a derivative of a stronger concentration on group identity. This form of identification refers primarily to the relationship between the individual and the culturally (and often also ethnically) understood national community. In comparison to a civic identification, it contains an incomparably greater load of uncritical loyalty, conformity and purely symbolic-ritual involvement.

This way of thinking about national identification is illustrated by the left part of the model presented in Figure 1. The whole model suggests a division of national attitudes into two overarching categories: patriotism and national ethnocentrism. In this approach, national identification is the main component of a broadly understood patriotism. As for the second category, its content and structure result from the ambiguous definitions accompanying the use of the term „nationalism”. Most researchers believe that nationalism is a group of attitudes characterized by uncritical glorification and idealization of the national in-group, as well as a tendency to favor, exalt, and perceive the national in-group as better than other groups (which is usually related to the desire to dominate). Researchers usually see such attitudes as accompanied by a tendency to discriminate and to show hostility towards other nations. However, the combination of these two components leads nationalism to the identification with ethnocentrism, which in the classic approach (cf. Sumner 1906; LeVine, Campbell 1972) consists of a glorification of the in-group and a depreciation of out-groups. Nationalism is thus a specific form of ethnocentrism (national ethnocentrism), in which the nation is an idealized and glorified in-group. For example, Kelman (1969) or Rick Kosterman and Seymour Feshbach (1989) advance one overall syndrome by combining the sense of uniqueness, superiority and idealization of the national history and culture with the domination over other nations, chauvinism, imperialism, militarism, etc.

However, there is a different way of looking at the relationship between nationalism and ethnocentrism, consisting in treating them as related but not identical phenomena. This view is best reflected in the concept of passive and active nationalism developed by Worchel and Coutant (1997). The authors believe that the passive form – thanks to the belief that my own nation is better and stronger than others – builds social identity and serves to strengthen self-esteem. On the other hand, active nationalism, which consists in actively pushing national interests and demonstrating domination, is directly related to open resentment or hostility towards other nations. The belief that hostility and discrimination against foreign national groups are phenomena that are separate from nationalist attitudes towards one's own group has been

confirmed by the results of many studies (e.g. Scheepers, Felling, Peters 1989; Cashdan 2001; Bizumic et al. 2009). In addition, some researchers (e.g. Herrmann et al. 2009) argue that a strong national identification is combined with a tendency to active nationalism or chauvinism primarily when based on a cultural and ethnic definition of the national community. They draw attention to essentialism - a defensive attitude towards the influences of out-groups, aimed at strengthening in-group homogeneity and purity (LeVine, Campbell 1972; Bizumic, Duckitt 2012). According to Myron Rothbart and Marjorie Taylor (1992), essentialism is a belief in the existence of a certain basic substance that occurs in all group members and determines their individual characteristics. The effect of a belief in a group „essence” is the perception of social categories as natural categories, and not human products. Having the group essence excludes changing the group one belongs to, because group membership becomes something unchangeable.

Taken together, the phenomena described above are included in the right frame of Figure 1, where national ethnocentrism consists of three separate but related dimensions: passive, non-aggressive manifestations of nationalism (glorification and sense of greatness), xenophobia (distrust and hostility towards national out-groups), and ethnic/national essentialism (exclusive national identity). According to most empirical evidence, they all form a more or less coherent syndrome. The most questionable is the positive relationship of a passive nationalism with various manifestations of xenophobia, as it quite often turns out to be statistically non-significant (cf. Bizumic, Duckitt 2012).

In summary, Figure 1 shows two clear pathways for national identification. The upper path, in which civic identification inhibits ethnocentrism, symbolizes non-ethnocentric and inclusive patriotism. The lower path, where cultural identification activates various manifestations of ethnocentrism, symbolizes an ethnocentric and exclusive patriotism. The psychological core of this model, i.e. national identification, is neutral and does not directly affect ethnocentrism. Concentration on cultural criteria determines whether national identification becomes „ethnocentrised”.

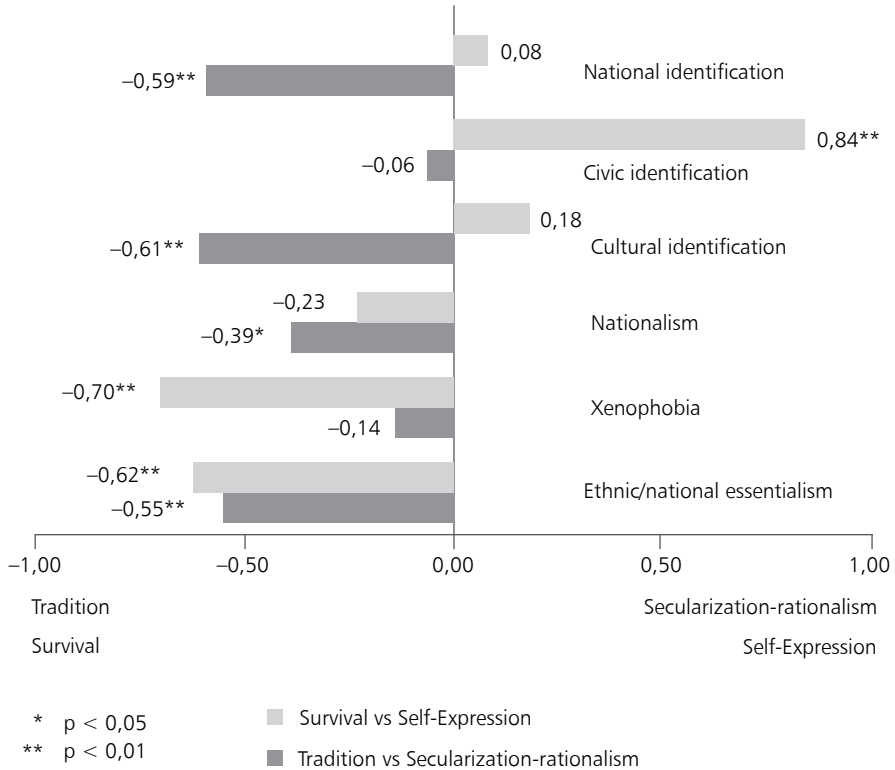
In fact, due to the huge load of ideological content, the model presented in Figure 1 shows images of „traditional” and „modern” patriotism that have been in force for more or less the last 4–5 decades. There is no doubt that the figure of a non-ethnocentric and inclusive patriot is genetically embedded in the ideals of an open society (cf. Popper 1987), which was intensively promoted from the mid-twentieth century on the basis of the liberal-democratic model of the state. According to this vision, the concept of the civil society is close to the idea of an association of individuals having their personal ideas of a „good life” and own original plans for its implementation. The organization of a society based

on any top-down framework of a good life is, at least in theory, by definition excluded; it is to be guarded by an ideologically neutral state. The psychological needs that citizens satisfy by belonging to different communities must take into account the individualistic patterns of interpersonal relationships underlying the democratic doctrine of human and citizen rights.

## ■ NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY – REAL ANTAGONISM

Undoubtedly, the growth and spread of cultural values fundamental for the liberal democracy entails a progressive decrease in national identification (Radkiewicz 2019). This phenomenon is particularly well seen in the research of Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005, 2010), who distinguished two fundamental dimensions of cultural values: traditional vs. secular-rational and survival vs. self-expression. The first dimension reflects the contrast between societies in which so-called traditional values (especially religious) are important, and the societies where the significance of traditional values is very limited. The second cultural dimension, survival vs. self-expression, is closely related to the civilizational transition from the industrial to the post-industrial society. Its central element is polarization on materialistic and post-materialistic values. The cultural shift described by researchers has had a constant two-way direction in the Western civilization for almost forty years: from materialistic values to postmaterialism, and from traditional values to secularization-rationalism. The horizon of cultural modernization sets the ideal of the individual as one who is free from everyday worries for existence and security, and free from involuntary involvement in strong collective dependencies (determined by traditional family, religion and national community). Thanks to these characteristics, the „ideal” citizen is focused on self-realization and creative cooperation with other free people. Seen in this way, the target configuration of cultural values is identical to the axiological basis of the liberal democratic society.

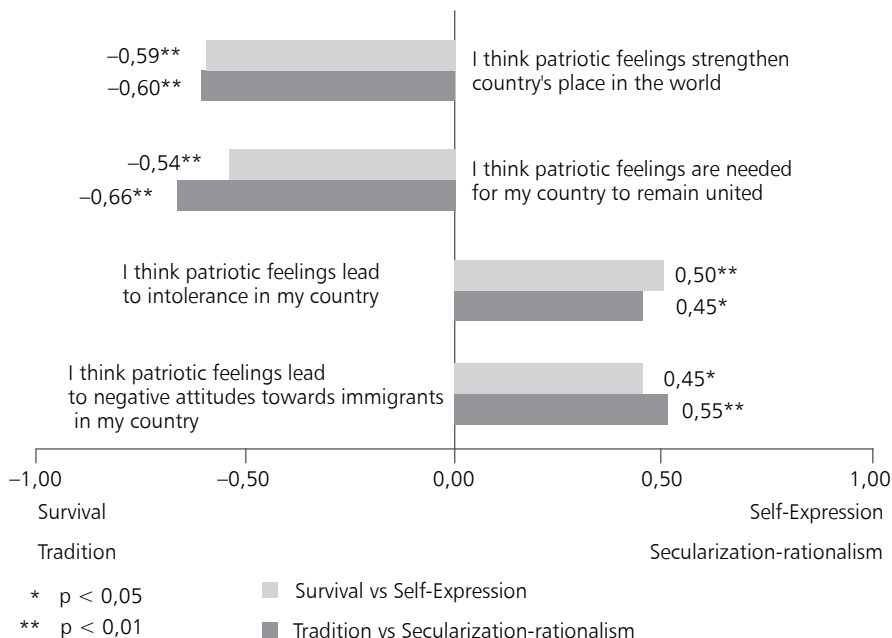
Inglehart’s theory has been developing for almost 40 years, based on the periodical cross-cultural comparative research known as the *World Values Survey* (WVS). Figure 2 shows the strength of the relationship between cultural values measured in WVS (2010–2014) and the results of *National Identity* survey (2013) conducted within the International Social Survey Programme (analyses were performed on 22 European countries participating in both studies). Measures of national attitudes used in the ISSP study served to operationalize the model presented in Figure 1 (see: Radkiewicz 2019).



**Figure 2.** Correlations between cultural values (WVS 2010–2014) and national attitudes measured in *National Identity* survey (ISSP 2013)

Looking at Figure 2, it is easy to notice that expansion of the core liberal-democratic values means degradation of patriotic feelings and values in their classical meaning, focused on the national community. The growing affirmation of liberal values is accompanied by inevitable disappearance of not only xenophobic and nationalist attitudes, but also by disappearance of national identification in itself. It is characteristic that the direction of cultural changes harmoniously correspond with only one dimension of national attitudes: civic identification, understood as a satisfaction with the performance of the state (quality of democracy, efficiency of the social system, strong economy, equal and fair treatment of all social/minority groups, etc.).

The phenomenon of degradation of the state-building importance of national identification is even more clearly demonstrated by the results in Figure 3. It shows very clearly that self-expression and values expressing secularization-rationalism lead to a strong negation of traditional judgments on patriotism. There is no doubt that any cultural shift in the right direction



**Figure 3.** Correlational relationships between the cultural dimensions of values (WVS 2010–2014) and beliefs about patriotism in *National Identity* survey (ISPP 2013)

of the horizontal axis means a growing social belief that patriotism does not strengthen the country’s position in the world, nor is it needed for the country to remain united. Moreover, patriotism is increasingly perceived as a source of negative attitudes towards immigrants and various forms of social intolerance. Of course, although the changes described by Inglehart and Welzel have been unidirectional for almost 50 years, this does not mean uniform linearity. Since 2015, a wave of nationalism and xenophobia has been growing in most European countries, largely associated with the 2015 refugee crisis (e.g. Kreuder-Sonnen 2018). These phenomena, at least in the short term, have certainly inhibited the proliferation of self-expression and secular-rational values.

The strength of the relationship between cultural self-expression and satisfaction with how well the liberal democratic state works is so big that both dimensions seem almost identical (the value of *r* coefficient amounts to 0.84). Therefore, it can be argued that the flourishing of postmaterialist and secular-rationalist values means a real reduction of the entire sphere of national identity and attitudes towards one’s own country to pragmatic citizen-state relations. This seems to be the same kind of relationship that has been postulated by the idea of constitutional patriotism. In this model of patriotism, a political community based on attachment to values and norms contained in the constitution of

a liberal-democratic state is contrasted with a political community based on cultural and national-ethnic forms of attachment and identification.

When looking for an explanation of the antagonisms between national identification and the cultural values of postmaterialism, it is worth looking first of all at the two components of liberal democracy, i.e. at the preference for „democracy” and its „liberal” fulfillment. Both dimensions are closely related, but refer to different sets of beliefs. Democratic orientation should be understood as the preference for a democratic system over all other forms of government. This preference is accompanied by an understanding of democracy in which the key role is assigned to human and civil rights, free elections, freedom to form political parties, separation of powers, rule of law, etc. There is no reason to believe that democratic orientation (understood in this way) interferes with national identification. On the contrary, many empirical data indicate that national identification favors pro-democratic attitudes (e.g. Blank, Schmidt 2003; Herrmann et al. 2009).

The broadly understood model of a democratic political community may be based on different concepts of citizenship and utilitarian role of the state in relation to the citizen. Following some authors, these concepts can be described as a liberal and communitarian model of democracy (cf. Szacki 1997; Wnuk-Lipiński 2005). According to the liberal one, a citizen is someone who is free and morally autonomous. By definition, citizen's interests and needs should be prioritized over the interests or requirements of the group/community. A citizen has a number of inherent rights by the very fact of „being human”. These rights cannot be subordinated to a society, understood as an intrinsic, real social being with its own developmental goals, and guided by an ethics that is superior to individuals. All forms of top-down organization of the society should be designed to ensure maximum freedom for every citizen. Whereas, according to the communitarian model, the individual is rooted in a social group and cannot exist without being embedded in a community. A person deprived of the norms, values, language and culture of the community would only be an indefinite biological entity. Community is primary to the individual because it shapes the personal identity. Society as a whole should be oriented towards the realization of the common good, which is primary to the good of the individual. Communitarians believe that the condition of individual freedom is freedom of the community. Citizens should not only accept community values and norms, but should also take care of the common good.

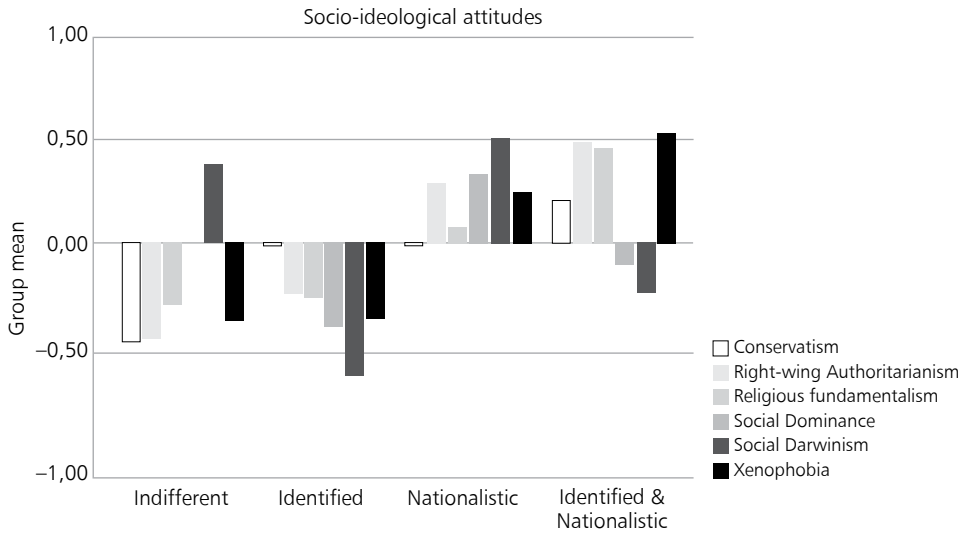
In previous studies, it turned out that in people's minds liberal and communitarian orientation are not only contradictory, but even connected by a clear positive correlation (cf. Radkiewicz 2019). This means that a significant proportion of respondents quite harmoniously combine various elements of both orientations.

However, there is no doubt that in the prototype form these orientations are antagonistic to each other. In the first case, the priority of a democratic state should be the concern for individual rights and well-being, and the community has the characteristics of a procedural/legal contract; in the second, the construction and strengthening of the community comes to the fore, because the individual existence can go beyond its biological sense only in a community.

Whether democratic orientation is marked by liberal or communitarian thinking seems crucial for national identification. Simply put, a political community based on liberal orientation does not need strong national identification, and even refers to it with great suspicion (for reasons that will be discussed in the next section). On the other hand, for communitarian orientation, national identification is a key element in building and strengthening the community. This was confirmed by the results of a study conducted on a nationwide sample of adult Poles ( $N = 850$ ), in which national identification and both orientations – liberal and communitarian – were measured. National identification turned out to be a clear positive correlate of the communitarian orientation ( $r = 0.51$ ), and equally clear but negative correlate of the liberal one ( $r = -0.38$ ) (Radkiewicz, 2019).

### ■ ON SOME UNOBTAINABLE BENEFITS OF NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

The results cited in the previous section clearly show that the strengthening of liberal orientation and its cultural values is accompanied by the devaluation of national/patriotic identification. This happens both in the utilitarian (as a socially dysfunctional phenomenon) and the moral sense (as a source of hostility and intolerance) (see: Figure 3). Social sciences have greatly contributed to this for decades, by reinforcing the belief that national identification is a breeding ground for nationalism and xenophobia. Of course, the main reason for such belief was the experience of World War II. The reflection on the roots and consequences of Nazism led to a fundamental change in the way of looking at broadly understood national attitudes, and the potential of ethnic-national identities was recognized as particularly dangerous (e.g. Adorno et al. 1950). In psychology, the belief in negative consequences of the identification with the national group remains vivid, despite the fact that it has been falsified by the vast majority of studies (e.g. Brewer 1999; Cashdan 2001; Bizumic, Duckitt 2012). Moreover, in recent years there have been many reports indicating the positive impact of a group identification (including national identification) on psychological well-being and satisfaction with social interrelations (e.g. Asbrock, Fritsche 2013; Greenway et al. 2015; Błażewicz 2018).



**Figure 4.** Socio-ideological attitudes of people differing in the level of national identification and nationalist attitudes (*bars represent mean values in units of standard deviation*)

The view of a strong national identification as the main breeding ground for nationalism and xenophobia became widespread in the Polish debates after 1989. As noted by Piotr Radkiewicz (2019), in some areas of public discourse, this seems to be a kind of dogma, resistant to even the hardest empirical arguments. The author, referring to the results of the aforementioned study on a nationwide sample of adult Poles, presented extensive analyses of several psychological profiles. Applying the measurement of national identification (Cameron 2004) and nationalistic attitudes (Skarżyńska 2005), he compared four groups: „identified” (high identification and weak nationalism), „identified & nationalistic” (high identification and high nationalism), „nationalistic” (weak identification and high nationalism), and „indifferent” (weak identification and weak nationalism). Intergroup comparisons concerned: 1) basic human values described by Shalom Schwartz (cf. Schwartz 2006; Schwartz et al. 2012); 2) preferred moral judgments described in the Theory of Moral Foundations (Haidt, Joseph 2007; Haidt 2012); and 3) a wide range of social, political and ideological beliefs and attitudes.

According to the author, people with a strong identification and a low level of nationalistic attitudes („identified”) deserve special attention. It turns out that in terms of motivation and important personal values, they have, on the one hand, the strongest inclination to individualistic autonomy and self-direction, and, on the other hand, the highest level of community characteristics, such

as: striving for the safety of loved ones and the country, benevolence, care for others (all this with a low need for power and exercising control). In the sphere of moral judgments, the „identified” people, in contrast to „indifferent” and „nationalistic”, put the greatest emphasis on moral judgments based on concern for other people and on justice. In addition, against the background of other groups, „identified” people treat violating an individual’s personal freedom as particularly morally reprehensible. All these axiological and ethical properties are clearly reflected in the area of socio-ideological attitudes (see Figure 4). The most characteristic of the „identified” people is a strong rejection of social Darwinism and social dominance orientation (anti-egalitarianism), i.e. the beliefs and attitudes that are quite widespread in „indifferent”, and seem to be the distinguishing feature of „nationalistic” people. In addition, the group of „identified” strongly reject attitudes and beliefs that are quite typical for „identified & nationalistic” people, i.e. traditional conservatism and xenophobia.

The results described above contain enough data to verify statements about the close relationships linking national identification with nationalism and xenophobia. The correlation between national identification and nationalism, as in most other studies, turned out to be rather small ( $r = 0.18$ ;  $R^2 = 0.03$ ). This means that the numbers in the four compared groups are quite similar, and the likelihood that people with a high national identification would have a high level of nationalistic attitudes is very close to the probability that their level of nationalism is low. Strongly „identified” people can either adopt or reject a wide range of nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes with a comparable probability. What’s more, compared to other groups, people who are „identified” but have a low level of nationalistic attitudes reveal the most (relatively) pro-democratic characteristics. On the one hand, they strongly emphasize their strive for independence, intellectual autonomy and creative life; on the other hand, they highly value close social relations, loyalty to others and solidarity. All these functional and prosocial properties of national identification are probably largely a manifestation of a more general tendency to identify with the group. For example, studies by Sam McFarland and colleagues systematically show that both, one’s identification with the nearest social group and identification with all humanity, are positively correlated with national identification (cf. McFarland et al. 2019). Therefore, national identification can also be seen as a part of the generalized need for identification with wider social entities.

The description of „identified” people changes radically when accompanied by a strong component of nationalistic attitudes. Compared to the „identified”, „identified and nationalist” people are much more motivated by the values of tradition and conformism, and in the sphere of moral judgments they rely more

heavily on the ethics of the good of community (in-group loyalty and respect for group authorities). In particular, as Figure 4 clearly shows, „identified and nationalistic” people exhibit far more right-wing authoritarianism (traditionalist and anti-democratic conservatism), religious fundamentalism, and xenophobia.

In the psychological sense, nationalism is primarily a national megalomania, a desire to exalt and dominate over others. In addition to „identified & nationalistic”, we can distinguish a large category of „nationalistic” people (with a tendency to xenophobia) who do not feel a particular sentiment for Poland and Poles. This distinction is worth remembering, because nationalistic attitudes can develop in two ways: at one time cultural motives seem to be decisive, and at another time egocentric motives will be crucial. The nationalism of „identified & nationalistic” people is mainly cultural; it is an integral element of a much broader, conservative-traditionalist vision of the society and Polishness (and as a part of this overall vision is incorporated into the mind). In turn, the nationalism of „just” nationalists seems to be primarily motivated by the need for power and domination, and the Darwinist cult of competition. In this form, it can spread without major obstacles, with relatively weak national identification.

## ■ CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

The post-war diagnosis of the mentality of Western societies consequently led to the conclusion that a strong national identity includes natural susceptibility to anti-democratic political doctrines and visible inclinations to provoke intra- and inter-group conflicts. As a result, identification with a national group, in its „traditional” form, began to be perceived in a very ambivalent way. On the one hand, as a manifestation of natural psychological needs, an effective component of social bonds and a basis of social mobilization around important collective goals. On the other hand, as a nourishment for ethnocentrism, quite easily ideologized and transformed into the form of political doctrines, which invariably led to two consequences: a cultural-ethnic homogenization of the society and defining intergroup/international contacts on the antagonistic principles of maximizing national in-group interests.

The inevitable result of the above diagnosis had to be a reevaluation, and then an attempt to redefine national identification. In the research perspective that dominates today, civic identification refers primarily to the citizen-state relationship, and is based on the democratic rules of the civil society (e.g. Schatz, Staub, Lavine 1999; Blank, Schmidt 2003; Schatz, Lavine 2007; Theiss-Morse 2009). Undoubtedly, the most characteristic and promoted (by contemporary social sciences) feature of a group identification is the shift of focus from the sphere

of emotional and spiritual-symbolic experiences to the sphere of psychological phenomena, which are subject to a rational and critical reflection. Contemporary patriots do not experience community through passionate worship of national symbolism, collective celebrations of national holidays and heroes, unreflective loyalty to the in-group, uncritical adoration of the national history and culture, etc. Their patriotic identification is very practical and matter-of-fact, because they consider the political community (the state) to be utilitarian creation that is designed as part of a social contract to serve the interests of citizens. In the redefined form, the usefulness of a patriotic identification does not stem from the mobilization of citizens and dedication of their individual fate to achieving designated national goals. The good of the community is instrumentally connected with the private good of the individuals, and patriotism takes on the nature of an ethical duty based on individualistic moral codes of personal freedom, concern for individual citizens, and equality. As a commitment to the community, such a modern patriot is primarily expected to implement certain universal human values and ideals (human rights, justice, equality, group security, peace, etc.). The national/political community has no autonomous goals in itself. It exists in order to make it easier for citizens to achieve their own life goals in accordance with the consensual principles of equality and fairness. Thus, civic identification requires people to be critically involved in public affairs, to actively control whether, and how, the state, which is the emanation of the community, fulfills what it is called to do, i.e. the implementation of democratic principles of coexistence in the society of free individuals. There is no doubt that civic identification, understood as the core of non-ethnocentric and inclusive patriotism, is genetically embedded in the liberal model of society.

The liberal pattern of patriotic identification is certainly a tempting concept, as it shows the picture of a citizen who has been freed from the traps and restrictions of the collectivist culture, not willing to reproduce ethnocentric intra- and intergroup patterns, and well immunized for the excesses of nationalism. This citizen locates hope for its own well-being and the well-being of fellow citizens in a well-functioning democracy. And, last but not least, they are someone who perfectly fit in with the republican ideal of a citizen who actively participates in the public life. However, and we cannot forget about it, liberal forms of identification with the political community mean that the state is treated as a kind of social contract made by citizens, and the durability of the contract is determined by the current benefits resulting from how well it delivers. But what happens if there are no special reasons for the contract to last longer than is justified by the rational balance of the benefits and losses? This question expresses concern for the quality and quantity of the system-generated bonds that integrate the liberal society. As Charles Taylor notes:

„A modern democratic state needs a ‘folk’ with a strong collective identity. Democracy obliges us to much more solidarity and a much greater commitment to each other in a joint political project than it was required by hierarchical and authoritarian societies in the past” (Taylor 1998: 144). In other words, it is difficult to count on the solidarity or commitment of people who are deprived of collective identity and basic group bonds.

The global rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies, as well as the growing conviction about the crisis of Western democracy, provoke a fundamental question about the sustainability and effectiveness of the social synergy contained in the liberal model of identification (e.g. Levitsky, Ziblatt 2018; Mounk 2018). However, assessing the extent to which this model works well in the contemporary world of liberal democracy goes far beyond the scope of this publication. Instead, I will focus on two issues that can be seen as the source of the biggest problems with the liberal model of patriotism in Poland.

First, in the Polish socio-cultural realities, the dogmatic implementation of this model has a very conflicting potential. It is worth remembering that Poland is one of the very few European countries in which the so-called traditional values still play an authentic, culture-forming role (see: WVS – Cultural Map, 2010–2014 by Inglehart and Welzel). Polish liberals often forget that, apart from the liberal, there is also a communitarian understanding of a democratic society. Just like in the liberalism, in the communitarian vision the postulate of patriotism is a logical consequence of the adopted worldview. It is not only an ethical duty towards other individuals, but also - or perhaps above all - an ethical duty to the entire community (cf. Shweder et al. 1997; Haidt 2012). The communitarian vision may take forms more friendly to the liberal model or more conservative, but invariably it is based on the belief that the individual cannot exist without being rooted in various types of communities (with a key role of the national community), and without a strong social identity one becomes something like an undefined biological entity. The more uncompromisingly liberals force their patterns of „good” patriotism, the more they push the patriotism of communitarians to the ghetto of „blindness” and old-fashioned traditionalism.

Secondly, based on the previously cited research (Radkiewicz 2019), one should be aware of the rather disturbing fact that liberal orientation predicts a significant decrease in national identification. This is all the more surprising because national identification (as it was measured) does not apply to nationalistic, chauvinistic or xenophobic attitudes. We asked respondents about the strength of identification with Poles. A correlation coefficient close to the value of  $r = -0.40$  shows the following regularity: the stronger the liberal orientation, the lower the centrality of Polishness („I don’t have much in common with them”), the weaker the relationship with compatriots („I don’t

feel a strong bond with them”), and the more dissatisfaction with being Polish („I’m not happy with being one of them”). It is hard to find a better argument for those who raise concerns that the Polish liberal culture has generated a fairly clear norm of shame for the country, compatriots and one’s own origins. It is also difficult to understand what social benefits such attitudes can provide, and what it can bring to the common good.

To understand this phenomenon of shame, it may be best to identify the fundamental differences in psychosocial profiles supported by communitarian and liberal orientation. Polish communitarians much more strongly want personal and group security, affiliation and social harmony (e.g. by rejecting Darwinist beliefs about the social world). In contrast, Polish liberals value above all freedom, power and self-expansion, combined with the approval of social Darwinism (the social world as a „competitive jungle”) (cf. Radkiewicz 2019). As we know (cf. Sidanius, Pratto 1999), a strong orientation on social dominance makes the strength of identification with one’s own group dependent on its status. The higher the group status, the stronger the identification, and vice versa. This would unfortunately mean that for a typical follower of the liberal orientation, Poland and Polishness appear far too low in the inter-group/international status hierarchy.

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Piotr Radkiewicz

#### NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. A VIEW FROM THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

As some researchers note, national identity is probably the only form of identity for which people are ready to give their own lives. Deprived of the experience of personal contact, the strong sense of belonging to the national group must consist of imagining oneself as entwined with crowds of anonymous compatriots in an invisible, but realistically experienced bond. Though, the concepts of national identity and national identification are often treated interchangeably, they are not equivalent. Group identity means the fact of belonging to a specific group, combined with having its cognitive representation. Identification refers to the individual-group personal relationship, and describes the strength of the emotional bond felt with other members and the importance of a given group identity. This paper presents psychological origins of national identification, linking them to the deepest and most basic epistemic, motivational and existential human needs. Awareness of identification with the national group determines the whole range of psychological phenomena from various levels of analysis. From relatively simple manifestations of affect to complex ideological orientations – they all have specific relationships with how people understand democracy and what type of democracy they prefer. The empirical evidence cited in this text proves that the strengthening of the liberal democracy and its cultural values is accompanied by the devaluation of national/patriotic identification in the utilitarian (as a socially dysfunctional phenomenon) as well as in moral sense (as a source of hostility and intolerance). However, other empirical results show national identification as a necessary component of social bonds, and a basis of social mobilization around important collective goals.

**Keywords:** national identity, national identification, democracy, liberalism