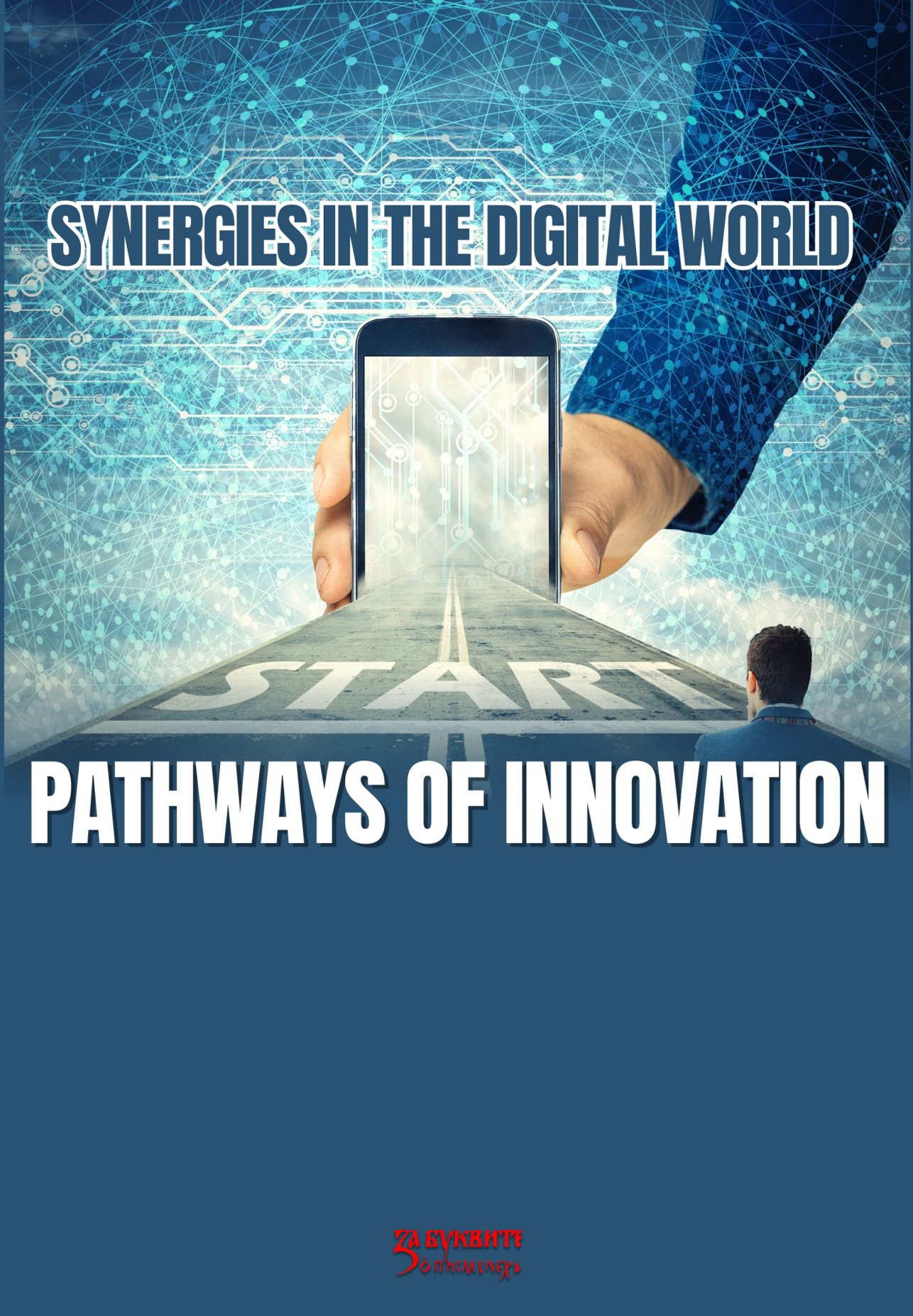




SYNERGIES IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

PATHWAYS OF INNOVATION

ЗА БУДУЩЕ
СОПРОВОЖДАЕМЫХ

ROUND TABLE
“SYNERGIES IN THE DIGITAL WORLD –
PATHWAYS OF INNOVATION”

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ЗА БУКВИТЕ
ДОПИСМЕНЕХЪ



The collection “Synergies in the Digital World – Pathways of Innovation”, the result of a scientific symposium (round table), includes scientific work (papers, articles, scientific communications) that present various aspects related to international business, socialization of cultural heritage, cultural tourism, innovations, new technologies, aspects of national security in the context of globalization.

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NATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY AS THE BASIS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE STATE AND STATEHOOD

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Abstract: *The article explores the fundamental concepts related to the building of the state and the process of constructing the nation's identity. These concepts encompass not only the history and culture of the people but also their values, beliefs, and social structures, which form the foundation of modern statehood. On the other hand, nation represents a united group of people connected by shared cultural, ethnic, historical, and social characteristics. National identity is the internal sense of belonging to a particular nation, based on shared experiences, traditions, language, symbols, and history. These are fundamental elements in the formation of modern statehood, as they provide citizens with a sense of community and purpose, which is essential for the stability and resilience of the state. To illustrate the connection between nation and national identity, ideals for developing the state and statehood, a system approach has been employed, utilizing a cyclically reversed application of analysis and synthesis methods, grounded in systematic decomposition and aggregation.*

Keywords: *nation, national identity, state, statehood*

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world consists of more than one hundred and fifty political entities that are recognized and perceived as nation-states. Therefore, the construction of the state is increasingly associated with the formation of new governing bodies and the further functional development of existing ones. Despite the fact that the structure of the state has been a subject of study since ancient times, it continues to be a focal point for contemporary scholars. Today, the public “wandering” in search of a solution to stop the process of state dissolution in failing and developing nations, and how to establish strong state institutions in these countries, occupies the minds of many statesmen and researchers. Often, the question arises of forming or restoring statehood in these countries. Therefore, it should not be considered strange or surprising that the development of the state and statehood continues to occupy a significant place in the governance of the modern state globally.

Bulgaria is no exception to the processes of state-building, especially after forty-five years of totalitarian rule and the democratic changes initiated after November 10, 1989. The changes, made over nearly thirty-five years, have mostly been marked by wandering and the search for “its national identity.” Bulgarian society desperately needs to find a way out of the endless discussions about what our homeland, the Republic of Bulgaria, should be, from the populism of local politicians who toy with the deepest values of the Bulgarian people while driving away the future and the soul of the nation.

Moreover, throughout all these years, politicians, political parties, and coalitions

have promised a bright future and prosperity, yet instead, society, and we as members of it, continue to witness the absence of common sense and unity on issues concerning the nation's unity and prosperity. For nearly thirty-five years, Bulgarian politicians have used the language of hate instead of finding ways and mechanisms to overcome the permanent crisis: political, economic, value-based, social, and so on. For all those years every action concerning the prosperity of the nation and the people, taken by political parties and their leaders, fails to align with Article 11, Paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, which states: "No political party or ideology can be declared or affirmed as a state one."¹ In order to overcome this conflict and the desire for one political force to dominate another, it is essential for the leaders of the leading political parties to unite around a common goal: to overcome the growing division of the nation and end the decades-long wandering in search of "new" democratic values. Furthermore, the education and training of political and administrative elites are crucial and would lead to avoiding the use, as mentioned earlier, of terms without knowing their meaning and/or their legal regulation.

NATION AND NATIONAL STATE

The emergence of the nation is closely connected to the development of production relations, the creation of a common market, a shared culture, and language. This process develops differently and at different speeds in various places, depending on specific conditions. The very concept of "nation" emerged in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment and developed further after the French Revolution. It evolved as a "counterbalance to the clerical-aristocratic order," opposing it with the democratic unity and equality of all citizens. The concept of "nation" is solely aligned with the idea of a free society, though throughout various periods of history, it has been imbued with different meanings and definitions.

In the Middle Ages, the unifying factors that bind together diverse ethnic groups are the state, religion, and ethnic culture. Later, regional communities are formed, coinciding with specific geographical areas that have some political distinction and unique cultural values. Within these rapidly forming communities, a sense of belonging to a common group, bound by shared and specific identities, gradually emerges – what is essentially the nascent nationalism. The concept of "people" emerges, based on kinship ties, according to which a person is born as part of a particular people, tribe, or race, and this does not change. The members of a people have distinguishing external features – skin color, facial traits, height, body structure, and so on.

The formation of every nation can be seen as the structuring of a bound social community, based on shared history, language, culture, traditions, and beliefs, in which all share or have similar views on the social, cultural, and spiritual culture of the community. Typically, in its development, it forms its national ideal and national interests. Therefore, the term "nation" can be identified with a community of people who are characterized by a well-established awareness of common historical and

cultural belonging, living on the same territory, united by a common language, and usually organized into a state. Thus, from the perspective of national states, nations can be seen as their product – politico-territorial communities that states intentionally shape to unite their citizens through national legislation and state policies. In 1999, Ernest Gellner defined the nation in terms of the individual citizen: “A person belongs to a nation only when all other members of that nation recognize them as such.” (Gelner, 1983)

In the search for a correct approach to defining the nation, it is evident that in line with its semantics in the Bulgarian language, it can overlap with the word “people,” and could also form a particular theory before a national state is created. Moreover, according to historical experience, a nation could continue to exist even after losing its state. An example of the existence of a nation without a state is Bulgaria. In the 14th century, Bulgaria was conquered and lost its statehood, but it continued to exist as a nation.

From a historical perspective, the ethnic group precedes the formation of the nation and is a “collective term for designating any racial, tribal, linguistic, and ethnocultural community and represents the tribal (kinship) substratum of the nation. Ethnic self-awareness is self-determined by origin.”

The ethnicity is another predecessor of the nation. It is an intermediate state that distinguishes the tribe from the nation. Ethnicity can be viewed as an initial and unrefined consolidation of a group of people (communities) with an aware origin and recognized cultural attitudes and national-level needs. When analyzing the concept of “ethnicity”, it is important to note that “it was introduced by Soviet ethnography to fix this intermediate state.”

Other characteristics of the nation include: belonging to a common religion (not obligatory), the degree of self-awareness of the community, shared or common ideals, interests, national causes, etc., due to which each nation possesses its distinctive, specific, and unique spirit, escalating into nationalism.

The characteristic features of the nation are identified with its national identity and are unified around a common territory, language, traditions, and customs. Therefore, the criteria for national identity can be derived from the origin, language, religion, cultural traditions, and other parameters of a given social community. Anthony Smith defines national identity as the foundation for the existence of any nation, consisting of the cultivation of its unique cultural values, and ethnic distinctions – as conditions without which it is impossible to define national identity: shared myths, common history, unique cultural markers, and a sense of distinctness from others.

Therefore, the nation can be considered as a historical product of the influence of political, economic, and cultural factors, with the national state being seen as a form of political organization of the nation. Consequently, the modern state is national, regardless of whether it is a product of modernization or constituted as national with its own institutions, universal legal norms, and relationships between citizens. These are accepted as common principles for the structure of every national state,

regardless of the uniqueness of cultural traditions. At the same time, in the modern national state, a multicultural society is formed, where national language, education, and upbringing make cultural traditions and products widely accessible.

The right to self-determination of each nation is a fundamental principle of contemporary international law, as contained in the UN Charter², and mutual recognition and respect for borders and political equality between nations is a key condition for cooperation. Sovereignty—the main characteristic of a national democratic state – could also be accepted as the sovereignty of its nation or people. Under these conditions, an acceptable model for the participation of the modern national state in international cooperation would be one that does not require the sacrifice of state sovereignty and provides equal conditions for all participating free and independent nations/sovereign national states.

There are also a number of “objective” components that play a crucial role in the formation of the nation. Among the most important of these are territorial and economic connections, as well as the presence of a common language, culture, and religion. It is clear that the first requirement for the existence of a nation is the presence of a geographical foundation, its own territory. However, this does not necessarily mean that attachment to the homeland’s land explains national unity. Social psychology suggests that an individual may remain attached to a much more specific and limited place, such as the place of birth or the rural area where they grew up.

Another key element in the formation of nations is nationality. Analyzing it, it can be defined as the people’s sense of collective destiny through a shared past and a vision for a common future. In a very real sense, the “personality” of a nation is its common past, or history, which shapes its collective identity.

Empirically, a nation can be viewed simply as a group of people inhabiting a specific geographical space – territory. In the broadest sense, nationality can be defined as the feeling of collective destiny shared by people through a common past and a vision for a shared future. In reality, the “essence” of a nation is rooted in its common past or history. Essentially, a nation is a group of people occupying the same geographical space. However, nations exist for a much longer period in time than in space. The shared history of these groups of people, shaped by collective triumphs and sufferings, victories and losses, creates strong bonds of solidarity and feelings of empathy. The phenomenon of the nation and the legal institution of sovereignty are foundational to the concept of a nation. It is important to note that nations certainly exist for much longer in the temporal continuum than in the geographical one. Therefore, ethnicity and the ethnic groups based on it form the foundation for the creation of nations. As mentioned earlier, nations can be seen as formed based on a single ethnicity or several ethnicities, with one being dominant.

The vision of a common future is another essential element in the formation of national identity. Here too, the aspirations of individuals as human beings are often projected onto the larger political and international stage. The unconscious awareness that a person’s personal future might be bleak and lacking greater significance is often unbearable. Thus, as Erich Fromm brilliantly demonstrates in his book *Escape*

from Freedom, “a person may seek compensation for the lack of a personal future in the reflected glory of the collective future of the nation.” (Erich Fromm, 1941)

According to Professor Myumyun Tahirov, “Nations should not be equated with societies. Historically, societies are organically developed forms of social organization, and the concept of a common culture applies more to societies than to nations. However, many nations form historically developed wholes, even if they consist of clearly distinct groups and include unintegrated minorities.” (Tahirov, 2016) An example of such a configuration is Bulgaria, where the nation is formed by several ethnic groups, and there exists one that contains an unintegrated minority. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the definition of ethnicity given in the Bulgarian National Doctrine, Part One: Foundation of the Bulgarian National Doctrine, which states that ethnicity is a collective term used to denote any racial, tribal, linguistic, and ethnocultural community and represents the tribal (lineage) substrate of the nation. (Velev et. all, 1997)

When attempting to establish definitions for nation and ethnicity, the term *narodnost* (nationality) cannot be overlooked because in order to create models for national strategy and doctrine, it is necessary to clarify almost all (as far as possible) relevant concepts. ***“Narodnost” is a Slavic term that translates into “nationality” or “ethnicity” in English, depending on the context. In Bulgarian, this word generally refers to the concept of ethnic or national identity, denoting the cultural, historical, and social characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another and can be considered an “intermediate state” that distinguishes a tribe (clan) from a nation. It represents a community of people who have a conscious sense of common origin and cultural identity but have not yet reached the stage of full “national consolidation.” The term “narodnost” was introduced in Soviet ethnography (Velev et. all, 1997) to describe this transitional state, while in the Western world, such terminology does not exist, and therefore the term narodnost is not used. (Velev et. all, 1997)***

The concept of the nation emerged during the Enlightenment period in Europe and continued to develop in the years following the French Revolution. It emerged as a counterpoint to the clerical-aristocratic order (Velev et. all, 1997), representing democratic unity, civic engagement, and social equality for all citizens of the state. The nation is a collective term that precisely describes our idea of a free society.

The nation is a collective concept, precisely describing our shared idea of a free society.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATION

Another key feature (characteristic) of the state is national identity, which is fundamental to the formation of the nation and the state. Moreover, national identity could be associated with the phenomenon of nationalism, which is a key component in the formation of nations. It is used as a collective concept reflecting the feeling of collective fate among citizens, provoked by a shared past and a vision for a common future. The “personality” of a nation is deeply connected to its history, which binds

its members. Empirically, a nation may seem like just a group of people inhabiting a geographic space, but in reality, nations exist much more in time than in space.

Shared experiences of victories and hardships play a significant role in uniting and strengthening the nation, as common difficulties often create stronger bonds than the victories achieved. For example, the American Civil War, despite being one of the most tragic periods in U.S. history, is seen by both the North and the South as a defining moment of shared glory. A similar example can be given with Israel, where the population of the country cannot be called ethnically or culturally homogeneous, and their religious beliefs vary from strict orthodoxy to outright agnosticism. Still, what unites Israel as a nation is the shared historical memory of the suffering experienced by Jews throughout the centuries of the Diaspora.

This phenomenon is universal in the formation of a nation, as the shared vision of a common past plays a crucial role. It allows citizens to connect with the collective sense of greatness and merge their personal, often uncertain, identities with the broader identity of the nation. This idea is summarized in the famous definition of the nation by Ernest Renan, formulated in 1882 at the Sorbonne: "What constitutes a nation is not the speaking of the same language or belonging to the same ethnic group, but doing great deeds together in the past and desiring to do them together in the future." (Renan, 1882)

The vision of a common future is the second essential element in the formation of national identity and the nation. It enables individuals to project their personal aspirations onto the larger stage of politics and international relations. Often, the unconscious awareness of a bleak or insignificant personal future causes people to find meaning in the collective fate of the nation (Erich Fromm, 2006). As Erich Fromm examines in *Escape from Freedom*, this desire can manifest in socially constructive ways or take a destructive form, as it did with nationalism in Nazi Germany. The process of forming the national identity of the nation often develops in the "illogical, irrational, and fantastic world of the unconscious." Therefore, insights from social psychology and psychoanalysis are essential for understanding how nationalism influences both individuals and international relations" (Louis). Therefore, insights from social psychology and psychoanalysis are essential for understanding how nationalism influences both individuals and international relations.

When discussing issues of the nation and national identity, the formation of the Bulgarian nation cannot be overlooked, as it emerged during the Ottoman rule, with the basis being the "Bulgarian ethnicity." (Velev et. al, 1997) On this basis, the "Bulgarian national consciousness" (Velev et. al, 1997) began to emerge and develop, which manifested in the ambition of the Bulgarian people to create an independent Orthodox Church and state. These aspirations of the Bulgarians can be considered the first national ideals of the Bulgarian nation. Furthermore, for the first time, uniting the ethnic and religious factors became a serious statement and laid the foundation for the formation of the Bulgarian nation.

All attempts to define the term "nation" after the liberation from Ottoman rule are unified around and include: "ancestral root," "Bulgarian blood," "Orthodox Chris-

tian faith,” and “Bulgarian faith,” (Velev et. all, 1997) regardless of the fact that, at the time, more than twelve ethnic communities lived within the borders of the state, such as: Bulgarians, Turks, Tatars, Gagauz, Vlachs, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Gypsies, Karakachans, and others. According to Vasil Levski, the issue of ethnic groups is of great importance for the future of the Bulgarian state formed by all these ethnic groups, as he wrote in his letter to the wealthy merchant Ganko Milyov: “Whatever they may be, it will be the same for all” (Velev et. all, 1997)

After the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule and the establishment of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom, during the years of governance by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), and lastly, but not least, Bulgaria has never become a stage for interethnic tensions and conflicts. Moreover, during the time of the Unification and the subsequent Serbian-Bulgarian War, the Balkan Wars, and World War I, representatives of all ethnic groups fought side by side, united by the resolution of the Bulgarian national question, which meant the unification of all Bulgarian lands into one state. This is a testimony to the awareness of the mentioned ethnic groups of their belonging to the Bulgarian nation. A testament to the awareness of belonging to the Bulgarian nation among Turks of Bulgarian descent is also the fact that, despite the created tension and challenges for disrupting the ethnic peace at the dawn of the democratic changes in Bulgaria.

Despite all the challenges that the Bulgarian nation faces today, it can be viewed as a “historically established, stable, self-developing community, emerging and functioning on a territory that represents a unified political, economic, social, and spiritual space.” (Velev et. all, 1997) This space encompasses both material and spiritual values, which are the result of the unique collective identity of its members, regardless of their ethnic, religious, racial, or other origins. It continuously develops, transitioning into new qualitative states.

From everything discussed so far regarding the Bulgarian nation, the conclusion can be drawn that it (the nation) consists of all its citizens:

- ▷Regardless of their ethnic and racial origin;
- ▷Regardless of their class or social status;
- ▷Regardless of their political views;
- ▷Regardless of their religious beliefs;
- ▷Who preserve and pass on to future generations the spirit of Bulgaria’s historical karma;
- ▷Who consider Bulgaria their homeland;
- ▷Who possess the necessary knowledge of the Bulgarian language to participate equally in the political and social life of the country;
- ▷Who do not seek a foreign national identity. (Velev et. all, 1997)

All of the above testifies to the ***mono-national essence of the Bulgarian nation*** on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the formation of a stable system of values: cultural, material, intellectual, and emotional, which contribute to the formation of national identity.

Today, along with the changes resulting from the globalization of society and the

processes that govern it, a shift in the subject of national identity is observed. In our contemporary era, the focus has shifted from class, religion, and party affiliation to that part of the nation which, regardless of its historical development stage, possesses the ability to unite around a certain set of basic ideas, principles, interests, and ideals, whose sum forms the national identity and helps in its practical realization.

NATIONAL UNITY

We cannot discuss the nation and national identity without addressing a very complex and multifaceted issue, namely the issue of national unity. In contemporary times, this issue is regarded more as a political one, and various political methods are employed to resolve it. An example of such a model is:

The unification process, which is voluntary, allowing two or more ethnicities and cultures to merge, resulting in the formation of a new ethnicity. It is important to emphasize that unification is a voluntary process, not a forced one. An example of such unification is the Bulgarian ethnicity, formed as a result of the merging of Thracians, Slavs, and Proto-Bulgarians. On the other hand, ***unification is also a process that integrates different ethnic groups while preserving their ethnic and cultural identity***. The goal of unification as a process is to:

- ▷ Eliminate all conditions that could lead to the division of the nation based on ethnic reasons;
- ▷ Guarantee equal rights and provide equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their differences in race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or any other characteristic.

Integrating different ethnic, social, religious, and other groups provides an opportunity to build the nation as a socio-cultural community. Therefore, this approach gives all members of society the chance to perceive themselves as compatriots, representing a significant part of the nation, possessing common interests, and self-identifying as members of the same group.

On the other hand, the integration of the nation confirms that the existing ethnic, religious, and other groups within a given state did not emerge through conquest and annexation of other countries, but through the settlement of various groups on the territory of that state. An example in this regard is Bulgaria, where, in addition to the initial three ethnic groups that formed the Bulgarian state, the Turkish, Armenian, Roma, and other groups joined, later becoming an integral part of the Bulgarian state and gaining equal rights as citizens of the country.

Another fundamental principle in the formation of national unity is ***assimilation***[4], which manifests itself in the dominance of one of the ethnic groups (usually the dominant one, especially in cultural terms). The primary aim of this group is to achieve homogeneity within the state, regardless of the methods employed, whether voluntarily or forcibly. The goal of the dominant ethnic group is to force the others to abandon their ethnic affiliation and culture in favor of their own. Examples of this include:

- ▷ The assimilation of the Bulgarian population in North Macedonia, Aegean

Thrace, Eastern Thrace, and Western Thrace.

▷ The Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

▷ The Azerbaijani people in Nagorno-Karabakh, etc.

Segregation is another principle that influences the formation of national identity, which is fundamentally based on the use of “the superiority of the dominant ethnic group and culture over smaller groups.” (Velev et. all, 1997)

LANGUAGE, RELIGION, NATIONAL CHARACTER, AND CULTURE

When discussing the features that characterize a nation and are fundamental in the formation of the state, the role of a shared language cannot be overlooked. Its role is difficult to summarize in the process of nation-building. In many countries, such as Bulgaria, the United States, Russia, and others, a common language is an important integrative factor. However, in other countries, the fact that the same language is spoken in different variants can have a divisive impact on the nation. Therefore, the role of language in the existence of nations can clearly be viewed in two ways: as a unifying or a dividing factor.

Certainly, one of the most confusing concepts is that of *national character*. Few social scientists would deny that certain cultural patterns are more common and valued higher in one nation compared to another. But it is almost impossible to reach an agreement on what exactly these common patterns are. In other words, we face the paradox that “*national character*” seems to be an indisputable factor, but no one really knows what it actually is.

This ambiguity likely arises from the fact that cultural patterns continue to exist in the form of stereotypes. For example, the stereotypes of the “impulsive Frenchman” and the “materialistic American” are strictly tied to specific historical periods. Just a century ago, almost opposite images were popular. Furthermore, these patterns can vary from region to region within the same country. And it is never difficult to find exceptions to the prevailing stereotypes.

Thus, it can generally be argued that although the patterns of national character are a reality, their uniqueness and importance for maintaining national unity vary from nation to nation.

Overall, it seems that although patterns of national character do exist, their uniqueness and significance for maintaining national unity vary greatly from one nation to another.

The Role of Religion

The role of religion is also twofold. In the United States, for example, religion neither significantly contributed to nor hindered national unity. In other countries, such as Israel, religion has proven to be a significant factor in achieving national unity. At the same time, in some other cases, religion has played a key role in preventing national unification.

In summary, what characterizes the nation-state in our time can be defined as follows: First and foremost, it is a sovereign political unit. Second, it represents a population that shares, to a greater or lesser extent, a sense of nationalism through

a common vision of the past and future. And finally, it is a population that inhabits a defined territory, recognizes a common government, and typically – though not always – demonstrates shared linguistic and cultural patterns.

Ethnocentrism and Nationalism

In conclusion to this analysis of the structure of the nation-state, it is appropriate to examine ethnocentrism, a phenomenon that, with its far-reaching consequences for intergroup relations, can significantly affect both the strength of national sentiment in a given state and the character and tone of relations between nations. Ethnocentrism is defined as “a viewpoint where one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are evaluated and classified according to it.” (W. G. Sumner, 1906) Therefore, when used with the meaning of a sense of group belonging and superiority, the term is associated with the synonym “cultural narrow-mindedness.”

In some nations where the entire population adheres to a common culture, ethnocentrism can be used as a powerful force for strengthening and developing nationalism. A vivid example of this is Japan in the 1930s. In contrast, in states with diverse groups with conflicting interests, ethnocentrism hinders the formation of broad-based nationalism in all its forms. For example, the antagonistic ethnic groups in Yugoslavia impeded the emergence of widespread nationalism in the country. Furthermore, strong ethnocentric tendencies could seriously complicate the establishment of an effective system of governance in a state and create significant difficulties in developing national policies and programs.

In the field of foreign policy and national strategy, ethnocentrism can be an important factor that hinders a nation from fully utilizing its potential. This is because when a nation places itself at the center of everything, disregarding or evaluating other nations and cultures according to its own criteria, it can create barriers in international relations. These barriers may hinder cooperation and the development of strategic partnerships that could bring significant benefits to the nation.

Ethnocentrism can lead to a limited perception of the outside world and block the opportunity for full participation in the globalized economy and political processes. This may manifest as prejudice against other nations or cultures, which in the long run can obstruct the economic, political, and social integration necessary to strengthen national security and global influence.

To overcome this problem, it is important for the nation to develop a broader and more acceptable foreign policy strategy that takes into account the diversity of the global context and creates conditions for constructive and mutually beneficial relations with other countries and cultures.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as mentioned in the introduction of the article, in recent decades, Bulgarian political elites have been trying to find the right formula to escape the permanent crisis (especially the political one) in which the country has found itself, by copying various models of state-building and experimenting with numerous political projects.

All of this, along with the inability of these so-called elites to unite the nation and society, as well as the continuous use of different terminology, including when it comes to concepts such as:

- ▷Nation;
- ▷Nationality;
- ▷Ethnos;
- ▷Minority groups;
- ▷National interests;
- ▷National ideal;
- ▷National goals, etc.

The need for a unified understanding of the mentioned terms arises from the fact that each citizen may have a different interpretation of their essence. However, to build an informed and consolidated society, it is necessary for the entire population of the country to use unified terminology and have a common understanding of it.

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NOTES

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