SEMIOTICS IDENTITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: This paper analyses the relationship between identity and level of socio-economic development and security in contemporary world system. In this context, we will demonstrate the hypothesis that the degree of socio-economic development is directly proportional to the consistency and visibility identity for each country in the world. The impact identity assessment pursues one main objective: quantifying the degree of convergence between propensity identity, security and socio-economic development. This work is an empirical study which uses original data on the national mottos, economic parameters and socio-economic complexes indicators disaggregated by states of the world. Our findings suggest the existence of a spatial interdependence between the consistency of national identities, socio-economic development and security status. We attempt to demonstrate that their arrangement with each other maps out a community-wide asymmetry, resulting in a segregated organization of the international system, generating an asymmetric World with more identity-development-security speeds. At the same time, the deficit identity converges with development and security deficit.

Keywords: national identities; semiotics; stability and security; socio-economic development

JEL Classification: O15; O35; O57

1. INTRODUCTION

The condition of identity represents one of the most acute social needs manifested at all levels of human organization, which means that identity projects are assumed on a competitive dimension similar to the competition for access to resources, development and security or for power. For this reason, at the level of the international system, a certain osmotic symbiosis functions between national identities, development and security. The symbiotic relation between these three elements succeeds in transcending the shortcomings caused by the anarchy of the system and the huge variety of systemic elements.

The international system consists of state and non-state actors (Buzan, Albert, 2010:334) which establish rules and institutions for managing their mutual relations and preserving their arrangements (Buzan, 1993:330). Each of these entities represents different identities. Therefore, the current international society can be defined as a collection of unique entities with their own identity characteristics, specific security conditions and particular development patterns. In this epistemic context, it is important to analyze the relation between national identity characteristics, the level of development and security status, in order to establish the place and "weight" of each state actor in the international society.

For quantifying the three categories, we have used a series of associated proxy parameters: the national mottos (as proxy for the semiotics of national identities) and a set of economic and social indicators (as proxy for development and security).

The objective of the research is to evaluate the correlation between self-assumed identity values, the security status and the level of development of states within the current international system. *The working hypothesis* underlines the point that relations between the three categories of values indicate an unequal distribution of convergences and divergences in the system, responsible for maintaining the poor cohesion and the volatility of the anarchic system.

The paper is modular structured and divided into several parts: introduction section, evaluation of the state of knowledge and identification of the appropriate epistemic context, description of the methodology, presentation of the results, conclusions and bibliographical references.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Politically, the foundations of the contemporary international system were established to a great extent by the UN Charter (1945) and the Paris Peace Treaty (1947) and economically by the rules set out in the Bretton Woods Agreements (1944) and the Uruguay Round/ the Marrakesh Agreement (1986-1994). On the roadmap created by the aforementioned arrangements, the dynamic of the contemporary world is known for the multiplication of both socio-economic and security problems and issues related to culture and identity. The latter should not only be interpreted from a Huntington-esque point of view. Instead, they should be analyzed in a combined, neorealist and constructivist manner, emerging from the ambitions of each state actor to become more visible in order to legitimate its economic and security claims. In this context, understanding the identity phenomenon is a key element in explaining the dynamics of security and development in the international society.

Although the study of identities and their imaginary has a long tradition, it became really popular after the collapse of the colonial systems and the communist regimes respectively. The postcolonial and post-communist systemic reorganizations, accompanied by conflictual phenomena that shared a background of identity issues, developed in an effusive manner and raised (again) the academic interest for this field of investigation. In this context, Moïsi and Rupnik believe that the precipitous rediscovery and reevaluation of identities in areas lacking development and security proved to be a cause for major and tense crises (Moïsi and Rupnik, 1991:122). But even in the middle of the stable and developed world, some tense situations shared a background of identity cleavages related to ethno-linguistic and religion aspects (rifts between communities in Belgium, Spain, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Quebec). For this reason, understanding the creation of state identities and their semiotics is essential for shaping the current global architecture and responding to ultimate goal of effectively managing the common cohabitation in a world of equilibrium and stability.

For over a century, the representatives of the French school considered that nations are entities and identities proclaimed unilaterally by the elites at a given moment in time (Renan, 1947:41; Thiesse, 2000:114). They also argued that nationalism manifested itself after the creation of nations, acting as their corollary (Armstrong,

1982:36). From this point of view, Rumford argued that in the last two centuries we witnessed the continued multiplication of facets belonging to the national phenomenon in Europe (Rumford, Buhari, 2014:121). These transformations and their identity accents are analyzed by Holsinger and Kobrin using the theory of neomedievalism, in which current national states are defined as the next stage of Westphalian statehood (Holsinger, 2007:72; Kobrin, 1998:362).

Approaching the EU as an intergovernmental entity, Morin asserts that its evolution imposes the gradual rethinking of the European identities (Morin, 1987:47); as stated by Mattera, the crystallization of identities within the European community should be perceived in accordance to the historicist conception, consolidated over the last two millenniums and a half (Mattera, 2008:32). Wolton believes that Europe should build its own identity format, in which national identities are mixed in the shape of a "European globalization", just as Europe is part of the "world globalization" (Wolton, 2003:94).

National identities can also be highlighted using the functional differentiations of the international system, as they result from Waltz's realist conception. In this context, the differences of potential between European states can explain the concept of multi-speed Europe, which would also associate the subsequent identity differentiations. Starting from the aforementioned Waltzian assumption, Buzan and Albert accept the political and identity differentiations of the system as an explanatory source for the stratified differentiation (Buzan, Albert, 2010:316), while Ivan assigns an identity level for each level created by the multistratified organization structure of the EU (Ivan, 2009). Identities show a certain kind of plasticity and are able to withstand transformations caused by the interactions and circulation of ideas (Legro, 2009); in the EU, this fact is highlighted by the numerous legislative, political, economic and social operated at the level of member states and imposed by the acquis communautaire.

One of the most popular present-day currents of thought in identity/ security studies highlights a two-way relation between the formation of collective identities and the recognition of the "other". Nevertheless, Greenhill considers that the lack of a rational and credible procedural mechanism can affect even a well-integrated body such as the EU, implying that the recognition does not necessarily guarantee the identities in a peaceful manner (Greenhill, 2008:344). Another instrument used in the literature for consolidating the identities

is the appeal to affective and emotional memory of lived events (also found in the national mottos). However, Ross argues that the constructivist approach of the topic does not offer all the necessary clarifications, not even for the internal identities found in the EU (Ross, 2006:199). Boia asserts that national identities should not be the result of synthesizing particularities through a process of essentialization and abstraction (Boia, 2013:10), capable of offering the identity indicators used in our research (national mottos) for the semiotic representation of identity.

In the context of ubiquitous globalization in the anarchic global environment, Anholt argues that we are witnessing a competition of identities, alongside a socio-economic competition in which competitive national identities are paired with governmental social responsiblity (Anholt, 2011:4). Berens asserts that the competitiveness of identities can be ensured by standardizing them through measureable and/or codifiable country brands (Berens *et al.*, 2011), in the same manner as the national mottos. These identity characteristics are used to provide positive national reputation through events with a desirable image impact which is able to offer identity values to certain places (Braun, 2011) or to create a certain topophilia based on hedonistic perceptions. (Tjøstheim, Go, 2011).

Linking the issue of national identities with state security is a big part of contemporary analyses. Mitzen considers that tensions between states (an effect of their competition) provides them the desired security status, because the competition based on (neo)realist principles consolidates their individual identity particularities (Mitzen, 2006:342). This paradigm is capable of explaining, for instance, the difficulties of the EU in organizing a coherent system of security and defense.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to define the semiotics of national identities, we have used the category of national mottos, namely the slogans self-assumed by states, which concisely reflect their desires and ideals. The promotion of the identity semiotics in the public agenda is ensured through social technologies (media networks, infrastructures of information etc.) responsible for their diffusion and preservation (Dumitru, Ciupercă, 2014).

The evaluation of correlating identities, the level of development and the global security status was achieved by using the method of comparative interpolation between different keywords promoted by national mottos (Work, Progress, Freedom, Peace, Unity etc.) and quantitative values of the socio-economic indicators (GDP/capita, GDP/person employed, Freedom Score, Global Peace Index-GPI, Social Progress Index-SPI, Bloomberg Innovation Index-BII). Next, we have analyzed the distribution of keywords in relation to different values of the indicators. The data used is taken from databases and reports of relevant international institutions (World Bank, UN Development Programme, Freedom House, Institute for Economics and Peace) and specialized international projects (World Heritage Encyclopedia, Bloomberg L.P., Social Progress Imperative).

For evaluating *the correlation between identity essences and the level of economic development of states*, we have selected the keywords relevant for the economic dimension (Work, Progress, Prosperity) and we have used the GDP/capita and GDP/person employed as parameters for development (Table 1).

Table 1. The correlation between the socio-economic items provided by national mottos and values of some economic indicators by countries (GDP/capita, GDP/person employed)

Items provided by national motto	GDP/capita & GDP/ person employed	
	High Income (>30000 \$/capita; >50000 \$/person employed)	*Medium and Low Income* (≤30000 \$/capita; ≤50000 \$/person employed)
WORK	–	Gabon, Central African Rep., Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, D.R.Congo, Guinea, Niger, Rwanda, Togo, Zimbabwe, São Tomé&Príncipe, Costa Rica
PROGRESS & PROSPERITY	–	Brazil, Laos, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Comoros, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan, Kiribati
Legend: ▮ - optimal level; ▮ - deficient/critical level		

Source: Authors' own representation using data from The World Heritage Encyclopedia (2016) & The World Bank (2017)

For evaluating *the correlation between identity essences and the level of social emancipation/ development*, we have selected the keywords relevant for the socio-political dimension ("Freedom", "Justice/ Democracy/ Equality", "Divinity" and "National Leader") and we have used the Freedom Status, Social Progress Index (SPI) and Bloomberg Innovation Index (BII)

indicators as parameters for social emancipation (Table 2).

For evaluating *the correlation between identity attributes and the security status*, we have selected the keywords relevant for the security dimension ("Peace" and "Unity") and we have used the Global Peace Index (GPI) as an indicator for security (Table 3).

Table 2. The correlation between the socio-political items provided by national mottos and values of some social indicators by countries (Freedom Status, Social Progress Index, Bloomberg Innovation Index)

Items provided by national motto	FREEDOM STATUS	
	Free (Aggregate Score >70)	*Partly Free and Not Free* (Aggregate Score ≤70)
FREEDOM	Argentina, Ghana, Salvador, Latvia, Namibia, France, Germany, San Marino, Greece, Poland, Hungary, Uruguay, Tunisia, Micronesia	Macedonia, Guatemala, Honduras, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Zimbabwe, Colombia, Dominican Rep., Ecuador, Syria, Vietnam, Western Sahara, South Sudan
	SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX (SPI)	
	High Social Progress (Aggregate Score >75)	*Middle and Low Social Progress* (Aggregate Score ≤75)
JUSTICE & DEMOCRACY & EQUALITY	Czech Rep., France, Germany, U.K., St. Vincent&Grenadines	India, Laos, Benin, Ghana, Namibia, Tunisia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Burkina Faso, Uzbekistan, D.R.Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Mauritania, South Sudan, Western Sahara, Paraguay, Suriname
	BLOOMBERG INNOVATION INDEX (BII)	
	High Level of Innovation (BII >70)	*Medium and Low Level of Innovation* (BII ≤70)
DIVINITY	Denmark, U.K., U.S.A.	Hungary, Poland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Cambodia, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Philippines, Pakistan, Thailand, U.A.E., Yemen, Ecuador, Dominica, Dominican Rep., Grenada, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Salvador, Mali, Morocco, Senegal, Uganda, Fiji, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Nauru
NATIONAL LEADER	–	Liechtenstein, Cambodia, Jordan, Thailand, U.A.E., Morocco, Fiji
Legend: ▭ - optimal level; ▭ - deficient/critical level		

Source: Authors' own representation using data from The World Heritage Encyclopedia (2016), Freedom House (2018), Porter *et al.* (2017) & Jamrisko, Lu (2018)

Table 3. The correlation between the items of security significance provided by national mottos and values of a security indicator by countries (Global Peace Index)

Item provided by national motto	GLOBAL PEACE INDEX (GPI)	
	High Peaceful Spaces (GPI <2000)	*Medium and Low Peaceful Spaces* (GPI >2000)
PEACE	Laos, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Madagascar, Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, Micronesia	Turkey, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Djibouti, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Niger, Burundi, Chad, D.R.Congo, Comoros, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan
UNITY	Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Malaysia, Indonesia, Argentina, Grenada, Namibia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Micronesia	Georgia, Bolivia, Salvador, Peru, Haiti, Trinidad-Tobago, Gabon, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Rwanda, São Tomé&Príncipe, Zimbabwe, Laos, Papua-New Guinea, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Central African Rep., Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Western Sahara
Legend: ▭ - optimal level; ▭ - deficient/critical level		

Source: Authors' own representation using data from The World Heritage Encyclopedia (2016) & The Institute for Economics and Peace (2017)

4. FINDINGS

The analysis done in the previous section enabled us to create a model for the relations between identity, security and development in the current international society.

The relations between identity and economic development highlight a complete divergence: all 16 states which claim "Work" as one of their identity essences are actually underdeveloped countries with a low level of productivity and low incomes. Similarly, all 15 states which claim "Progress" and "Prosperity" as desired identity characteristics are actually some of the countries with the lowest levels of productivity and incomes. Thus, for the undeveloped world, the propensity for claiming identity values absent from its tarnished universe ("Work", "Progress", "Prosperity") relies on unrealistic semantics. The failure to satisfy the essential material needs led to the inversion of perceptive approaches in the hope of fulfilling their expectations, although there was not any realistic time framework. Basically, in undeveloped areas the material absence was converted into a virtual identity, in a process meant to encourage the minimum eschatological expectations which barely avoid the collapse of the state (as in the case of failed state entities such as Somalia, Western Sahara, Burundi or Rwanda).

The relations between identity and the level of social emancipation/ development enter a more balanced area of convergences and divergences, an aspect confirmed by the relation between the desired identity values and the facts proven by the appropriate indicators. The libertarian condition assumes a convergence of the binomial «affirmed freedom-real freedom» for less than half of the states that claim freedom as one of their identity traits. Only 14 of these states are indeed free according to Freedom House (2018), while for the other 17 state entities, considered to be unfree or partially free, "Freedom" only remains an unfulfilled desideratum instead of a real identity. The public emancipation shows a significant divergence between the extent of social equity claimed as an identity and the real level of social progress. Out of 26 states which claim "Justice", "Equality" and "Democracy" as part of their identities, only 5 of them (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic and St. Vincent&Grenadines) are validated by a high level of social progress, shown by the value of the Social Process Index, exceeding 75 units.

Therefore, less emancipated societies try to claim the identity of their coveted and yet absent social values ("Freedom", "Justice", "Equality" and "Democracy") in order to preserve their horizon of eschatological expectations just as in the case of unsatisfied material needs. It is noticeable that socio-political shortcomings are less painful than economic needs, a fact supported by the less significant divergences between social identity claims and the social reality, compared to the total divergence between the economic identity items and the economic reality.

One of the most relevant comparative interpolations involves the relation between identity brands, which pay tribute to "Divinity" and "The National Leader", and the level of innovation/knowledge, quantified by the values of the Bloomberg Innovation Index - BII (Jamrisko, Lu, 2018). In this relation, divergence is the rule of the game: out of 36 states which mention God as an identity element, 33 of them have a serious deficit of innovation/creativity. Only 3 entities which assume God as part of their identity (USA, the United Kingdom, Denmark) are innovative countries based on discovery and rational knowledge (defined by a BII value of over 70 units). In the case of Great Britain and Denmark, having Divinity as part of their national identity seems to be in complete opposition to their high level of emancipation and rationalism, a fact that can be explained by a historical remanence of inertial identity. The case of USA should be perceived differently, as an exception for the Western world, especially if we consider the point that their current national motto was established in 1956. The same kind of divergence is also highlighted by the relation between the leader's cult of personality and the innovative development. All 7 states which allocate their leader national identity valences, as indicated by the national mottos, are also lacking in innovative contributions, although some of them are developed countries (Liechtenstein, UAE, Thailand).

The relations between identity and security status illustrate a more moderate asymptote, as shown be the distribution of relations between identity characteristics related to security and the actual reality described by indicators. The relation between identity and security is also divergent for the most part, but this divergence is more balanced: out of 25 state entities which claim "Peace" as an identity item and out of 45, which assumed "Unity" as a referential element of their identity, one third of them confirm the convergence between the assumed pacifism and the real security status (as shown by the GPI value of under 2000 units). In this context, the fear of insecurity is more powerful than the fears of

poverty or lack of social emancipation. This can serve as an argument for a more objective choice of representative identity items related to security/stability. We may be led to believe that this phenomenon is related to the human instinct of self-preservation and therefore security would have priority over development. This assumption seems to be desirable, if we consider the fact that some components of identities act as support for development, while others are more hidden in their mechanisms of stimulating conflicts in the international system.

The reduction of identity consistency is also significant for the analysis of the development and security status. For most of the 37 states with no identity inscription (which lack a national motto), the concealment of identity semiotics is usually convergent to poor socio-economic development and a precarious state of security. Divergent exceptions are found in some developed areas of the EU (Finland, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, Croatia) and Asia (Israel, Japan), though their number is different on various levels of evaluation.

Therefore, the relations between identity, development and security illustrate a geographical segregation on the map of the contemporary global system, over various areas with different levels of identities, development and security. The contribution of various factors is also different from one state to another, in structuring the relations between identity, development and security. For instance, the influence of ideas was stronger in communist countries, where ideology served as a legitimating element for the elites, playing a bigger role than sources of economic and military power (Shearman, 2015:23). In other situations, the psychocultural background was powerful enough to influence the options for identity, security and development. For instance, Baltic states were strongly linked to the Western solidarities (Pettai, Kallas, 2009:116), on which they based their claims for belonging to the Western areas of identity and security.

4. FINDINGS

The evolution of relations between identities, development and security underlines both their symmetry and asymmetry. In the case of states which assume identities linked to development values, the dichotomy between them and actual socio-economic development is total; their alleged identity is more likely to represent their desires rather than the facts of the reality. Concerning identity claims related to security, the approaches are more convergent to the reality, since the fear of insecurity is determined by powerful instincts that surpass the fear of poverty or social dysfunctions.

The issue of national identities at global level is just as complicated as the anarchic structure of the international system, without following the same networks of concentric circles found in the organization of the system. In some cases, the consistency of identity brands is convergent to the levels of development and security of the system actors, while in other situations the diagrams of the three parameters are even divergent. The contemporary international system is, without doubt, not only providing multi-speed development, but also multi-speed identities and security. Since disparities of development and security exist worldwide, along with permanent metamorphoses in the evolution of the international system, the identity ambitions can offer positive valences for development, but also dangerous valences for security if they are involved in building intolerant attitudes.

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