

## THE ROLE OF STATE IN SUPPORTING NATIONAL IDENTITY

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**Abstract:** *Securing the concept of national identity is one of the wishes of any state that is currently trying to secure its situation for the future. The community must be aware of its shared values, of the elements that define it, which it has the duty to preserve and pass on to future generations. Each member of the community is part of a whole. This whole has value from the perspective of the unit it represents, as well as from the perspective of its uniqueness. The need to function as a whole for those who have developed a group identity, a national identity, finds its answer in actions taken by the state to protect, support and develop the national identity. The speech present in the public space and promoted by personalities of the public life has a major impact and is a former of opinions and attitudes. In the material we will make, we propose to highlight the active role that the speech of certain public persons, representatives of emblematic institutions, plays in protecting and promoting the national identity.*

**Keywords:** *communication identity, national identity, motivational discourse, discourse arguments, concepts and values, security*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The identity is a concept that has been approached from different perspectives, it has been the subject of numerous debates and the more it has been explored, the more it has proved to be more ambiguous and difficult to define, due to the large number of contradictory meanings.

The national identity is a valuable topic in terms of the connection it makes with notions that are inseparable from the national state, such as the nation, the nationalism, the ethnic and the ethnicity. The elements of national identity, which help to differentiate between national groups, but which also help in the recognition from within, between community members, as belonging to the same national group, are a valuable asset, which the state is obliged to preserve and pass on to the generations to come. The preservation of the national identity is the assurance for the future of that state, it is the guarantee that as long as the population will identify itself as belonging to this state, it will exist.

The national identity is constantly undergoing transformation; it is fluid and evolves with the society. The study of identity has been approached in a variety of theoretical models, but the most representative approaches are those that the essentialism and constructivism have explored,

because they place identity at the centre of their analysis and have diametrically opposed perspectives.

The essentialism promotes the idea that objects possess certain essential properties that make them what they are, which determine their characteristics. From an essentialist perspective, the identity is a static, essential, permanent and collective characteristic, which is found in the same degree in all members of the group (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000:10), (Cerulo, 1997:86-387). The collective identity "pre-exists in the social actors", who have a determined social experience (Rusu, 2009:31- 44).

On the other hand, the constructivism approaches identity as a fact constructed by states, in relation to the interests of each one of them and to the existing power relations. The constructivism provided a critical perspective and assumed the fact that identities are constructed, multiple and fluid, which represented an evolution from the existing theories in the field of international relations up to that time, and facilitated research and clarification of underappreciated phenomena. The constructivists "were concerned to prove that identities can be changed through interaction and that this matters", but also that the definitions of identity can be changed, which "influences the security practices and ultimately the type of

anarchy" (Zehfuss, 2001: 323). One of the main constructivist authors who analysed in his articles topics such as: anarchy, national identity, the interests of the states, the relationship between state actors is Alexander Wendt. An important role in the constructivist approach is also given to the social actor, because, from the perspective of this theory, the world in which we live is a world created through the interaction of all social actors (Wendt, 1992: 399).

The concept of security traditionally refers to the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states against external military threats. Until 1990, the concept of national security had as its essence the military defence, so that, the concept would subsequently be extended to a wider range of threats, which concern areas such as politics, economy, culture, environment etc. By definition, the national security protects the concepts that refer to the defence of aspects of national interests and is closely related to the national state to which it offers protection. In this context, the national identity, this fluid and constantly evolving notion, which represents one of the central elements of the national state, needs to be defended by the fact that it is supported and promoted.

Taking as starting point the constructivist perspective on the concept of identity, in this article, we propose to identify the way in which the state plays its active role in protecting the identity, by identifying the motivational speech that exists at this moment in the Romanian society, motivational speech promoted by the state, through the institutions under its subordination.

We will try to identify what drives people identify themselves as Romanians? What is the motivational speech that is being promoted? And let us do an analysis of the speech from the perspective of the logic of the speech, but also from the perspective of the rhetoric of the speech.

## **2. CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY AND THE WAY THIS INFLUENCES THE IDENTITY**

The constructivist conception focuses on the principles according to which the reality is constructed; it is a result of the interaction of the state actors and of the way in which they defines themselves.

From Wendt's perspective, the international relations are described as a social scene that enjoys communication and interaction between its units. The social context in which international relations are seen is precisely the one that supports the

interaction and does not allow the analysis of its institutions out of context. The structure of the system is in a clear dependence with the structure of its units, since the system and the units are constructed mutually.

One of the assumptions from which Wendt starts is that the structure of the system and the structure of its constituent parts are one and the same; as the system and its units are constructed mutually; complement each other to form the whole.

The constructivist theory is approached by Alexander Wendt in contrast with the theory that, at the time he published the article "*Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics*", was majority in the field, namely the neorealist theory or the theory of structural realism. The author considers constructivism as a theoretical framework in which the fundamental elements of international politics are conceived as social structures. The identity is regarded as a constant fact that determines the behaviour of the international actors, although it can be partially modelled by this behaviour. Alexander Wendt has departed from the reasoning according to which the reference system is actually a constructed system. He argued that anarchy is not a constant structure that determines the behaviour of states, but it is a condition whose significance is itself conditioned by the aid relationships. The self-aid that states can provide for themselves is not the only possibility they have in international relationships, but only one of many forms of state identity and possible interest.

One of the issues to which the author draws attention is that social theories are not the ones that determine the content of theorising itself, but they are the ones that structure the "questions we ask about world politics and approaches ... to answer these questions". The manner in which the questions are asked, the perspective from which the answers are given, put the problem in a certain light.

The classification of research problems and strategies should be question-based, rather than method-based, and if we are not interested in forming identity and interests, we could find the assumptions of a perfectly reasonable rationalist speech.

Its objective should be to assess the causal relationship between practice and interaction (as an independent variable) and the cognitive structures at the level of the individual states and of the systems of states that constitute identities and interests (as a variable) - that is, the relationship between what actions do and what they are (Wendt, 1992: 423-424).

The criticism that Wendt brings to the constructivist researches up to him refer to the fact that they focused on issues related to ontology and construction and only on the secondary plane on the causal and empirical questions of how identities and interests are produced in practice, under anarchic conditions. The theoretical aspects were prioritised, and the practical aspects were of little interest, proved by point demonstrations, which answer the different questions which in turn involve difference standards of deduction. The importance of epistemology in positivist studies, of scientific realism or of post-structuralism has not been justified because it does not reach important aspects such as the structure and dynamics of international life. "The philosophies of sciences are not theories of international relationships". However, modern and postmodern liberals and constructivists had a different approach. They have raised a number of questions regarding the substance of international relationships (Wendt, 1992:425).

The neo-realists believe that the key variable that determines the main actions of the states is the distribution of power between states. Thus, from the perspective of the neo-realists, in the context of anarchy, the international politics is directly determined by the way the power is divided between states. However, from Wendt's perspective, the international relationships cannot be studied on the basis of the distributions of power between states, because the meaning of the international relationships is based on ideas, norms and practices. "There are collective meanings that constitute the structures that organise our actions" (Wendt, 1992: 397), as most of the aspects regarding the system of international relationships are socially constructed, being the result of ongoing processes of social practice and interaction. The anarchy and the self-aid are not caused by the structure of the international relationships, but are determined by the existing interactions between states and the way states perceive themselves and other states. The anarchy and the self-aid may or may not exist depending on these variables that relate to states. And if one of the important variables to which the state refers is its perception of itself, then one can conclude that the identity of each state is at the heart of Alexander Wendt's argument.

Although one of the constructivist assumptions is that the identity is constructed, through a long series of interactions, constructivism does not undermine the national state, despite the increasing importance of the non-state actors in world politics,

the constructivists assert that states remain masters of their sovereignty, and so they can resist collective identification more than other actors can. The basic assertions that constructivism makes as a structural theory of the international systems are: "(1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are mostly constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics" (Wendt, 1994:384).

The assertion that states are socially constructed can take different forms. From a security perspective, it is reaffirmed that provision of security is a key function of the state. The modern forms of security go beyond the state borders and no longer refer to the control exercised by a single actor, but end up referring to the control carried out by several actors, provided that they are not rivals and engage in collective institutionalised actions. "A collective security system is just that-joint control of organized violence potential in a transnational space" (Wendt, 1992:392). Such a system with regard to the exercise of collective security is represented by NATO. This system of collective security has a high degree of legitimacy among its members and a high capacity to implement its policies on them. The alliances are temporary coalitions of the states that have general interests, which come together to pool their means, in order to increase their defence capacity. The question that arises is what is the reason that justifies the coalitions after the threat disappears, why are they not abolished and how can their maintenance be legitimised if they were left without the purpose for which they were set up? The explanation is that, "in collective security systems, states make commitments to multilateral actions against non-specific threats" (Wendt, 1992: 394).

From a constructivist perspective, the concept of authority covers two primary aspects: the legitimisation concept, and the constraint concept. The first aspect involves the construction of the rhetoric that justifies the actions of the state and it is a preliminary step, and the second one, the constraint concept, intervenes in the situation where the first one was not effective and involves the firm action of the state, meant to impose the rules and restore the order. The two qualities are essential for the internationalisation of the state, on the one hand the identification of the state with regard to a certain function, which is most often the military or the economic security, and on the

other hand, an action to sanction all actors who "disturb the fulfilment of that function" (Wendt, 1992: 392). The result of the internationalisation of the state through such collective actions is that both the state actors, as well as the individuals that make up the state, will appreciate that it is normal for certain problems to no longer enter the sphere of action of the state, but to be solved at the international level. The external security has completed such a patch and alliances such as NATO enjoy full legitimacy, and the paradigm of the security is substantially changed, with states getting to play a much diminished role, for non-state actors to take over the world security scene.

The constructivism supports the idea that reality is constructed as a result of the interaction of the state actors and that social reality needs to be made aware, to undergo an internalisation process, in order to be finally communicated through language. As a result, the identification of people as Romanians and the elements that they consider to be defining in order to consider themselves Romanians are a way of constructing the reality in which they live and of self-identifying.

The state is that form of organisation of the society, which manages the legal rights and interests of the individuals, owns the sovereignty and is structured in the form of a combination of institutions that it coordinates and which exercises the state power in different forms.

### 3. ASPECTS THAT IDENTIFY PEOPLE AS ROMANIANS

A first direction that this paper proposes is to identify which are the most important landmarks that those who identify themselves as Romanians have, when do they consider themselves to belong to this people and how this is found in the motivational speech that the authorities promote in the public space. We intend to submit to the analysis what is it that determines the Romanians to consider themselves Romanians, their image about themselves, an image that determines them to identify themselves as Romanians.

Authors such as Bostock and Smith (2001) considered that national identity is closely linked to the following indicators: the collective perception on one's identity, namely the concept of "who are we?", approached on media channels; the continuity in time and space, confirmed by the elements related to the history of that nation; the existence of objectives, targets, precise and common goals that a nation proposes to achieve

and the existence of geographical, linguistic, cultural and religious limitations;

Anthony Smith (1991) also considers that identity refers to territory, culture, social and religious environment, traditions and language.

There is a relatively recent study on the perception of Romanians on their identity, carried out by a team of researchers under the coordination of Professor Luminița Nicolaescu, from the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, which helps us to extract what are the elements considered to be those that the Romanians consider the definers for what they are, so that later we can observe how they are found in the speeches promoted in the public space.

The study, conducted during 2007, entitled *The Image of Romania under a magnifying glass! Country Branding and Rebranding*, analysed the internal image of Romania and identified the main elements associated by Romanians with national identity, a fact achieved with the help of 6 focus groups organised in Constanța, Iași, Brașov, Cluj, Craiova and Bucharest, followed by a sociological inquiry, which had the role "to identify the degree of generalisation of the focus groups results regarding the national identity of Romanians"; The sample chosen for the application of the research methods was made up of young people with a higher degree of education, starting from the premise that they have an increased interest in what the national identity means, have a greater awareness about their responsibility and have a greater motivation from the perspective of creating one's future in the country.

The results recorded in the research showed that the elements considered defining for belonging to a particular country are considered as "the national borders that administratively define the country, the inhabitants of a country, the traditions, the customs, the history, the achievements of a nation, the system of values that governs the country, the style of life, the status that implies belonging to a country and a language". The elements that were associated with the national identity were visual elements (coat of arms, flag), auditory elements (anthem or other traditional songs, language) and cultural elements (Nicolaescu *et al.*, 2007:4-10).

As a conclusion of the foregoing, people identify themselves as being Romanians for being born and living in a certain territory, because they speak a certain language, because they share certain traditions and customs, they have a common history, they associate certain common

elements of visual, auditory and cultural identification, and they have a similar style of life.

Having these elements of identification, the question must be asked, how they are explored at the discursive level in order to be able to promote national identity, to increase the positive perception, as opposed to the negative one, in order to value the self-esteem and satisfaction of a person how is Romanian.

#### **4. THE SPEECH REFERRING TO THE IDENTITY ELEMENTS CURRENTLY EXISTING IN THE ROMANIAN PUBLIC SPACE**

In an attempt to identify a series of representative speeches existing in the Romanian public space, which promote the Romanian identity elements, we analysed part of the messages communicated in 2019 by certain prominent personalities of the Romanian public and political life, as representatives of some emblematic institutions in Romania, in order to see how the elements we bring to attention are found in their communiqué.

Considering that each speech is prepared to be first and foremost appropriate to the event in which it is spoken, we made the selection of the speeches we analysed depending on the event in which it was delivered, events that are in themselves resonant and connected to the subject addressed.

In a first stage, we will pay attention to fragments from the speeches of the President of Romania, which refer to moments in history, talk about unity, about the need for a favourable image of Romania, about the value of the Romanian society, about the memory of those who have given their lives for independence, the sovereignty and the unity of the Romanian state, about the Romanian flag, as a symbol of our state, about the awareness of belonging to a set of nationally charged values.

The message of the President of Romania, Mr. Klaus Iohannis, transmitted on the occasion of the Day of the National Flag, held on 26.06.2019, is very emotionally charged and refers to essential elements, symbols and values for the Romanian national identity.

We celebrate, on this day, the National Flag, which, for over 170 years, represents for Romanians everywhere the symbol of our national identity, independence, sovereignty and unity (...) Our flag represents a binder of the past, present and future and reminds us of the sacrifices made by the whole

nation to have, today, a democratic and pluralistic state, in which the fundamental human rights are protected and the principles of the state subject to the rule of law are respected.

The flying of the Tricolour is, every time, an emotional moment, in which we live the pride of belonging to our nation. We identify the flag with peace, security and freedom, but we must not forget that this is also a symbol of the responsibility we all have for the development of our society.

By celebrating the Day of the National Flag, we have the moral duty to transmit to young generations, through our personal example, the awareness of belonging to our national values, as well as the fact that patriotism does not only mean the emotion of a holiday, but also taking responsibility to contribute to the progress of Romania.

Other occasions for communicating a message peppered with elements that refer to historical moments from the past was the Day of the Romanian Army when the President of Romania delivered, during the ceremony organised on 25.10.2019, an address with a strong patriotic content and the Speech of the President of Romania, given during the joint solemn meeting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate dedicated to the ceremonial of swearing in as President of Romania, from 21.12.2019, both events being exploited from a communication perspective.

We celebrate here, in Carei, 75 years since the liberation from foreign occupation of the last swath of Romanian land.

It is a cherished holiday, a special day in which we honour the blood offerings and sacrifices of all our heroes, who over time have fought and contributed to the defence of the national being and the independent, sovereign and unitary Romanian state.

101 years ago, the parents of our nation - the brave Romanians who dreamed, worked and died for unity - gave birth to the most beautiful and great Romanian project of our hardened history. The road was not easy at all in the century that has elapsed since the Great Union of 1918 (...).

When it will be difficult for us, let us to find support in each other, because we, the Romanians, wherever we are, we are a big family, united forever by the love of the country that gives us the strength to overcome any obstacle.

In order to continue the analysis of the speeches given by key personalities of the state, we selected the speech of the President of the Romanian Senate, Calin Popescu Tăriceanu, at the Annual Meeting of the Romanian Diplomacy - the

2019 edition, from August 2019, an opportunity for analysis and retrospection, used to praise the beauty and spectacularity of Romania, to underline the authentic Romanian narrative and to raise the value and ideals of the Romanian society.

Perhaps the most important bet I would have wanted to win in the next period is in another area, in the external image plane of Romania. It is enough to look at the reactions of those who visit us - this year we welcomed thousands of officials and experts from all over the world, not only from the EU and not just me, everyone. I often see them surprised to discover the spectacular realities, far beyond the image they had in their mental baggage upon arrival.

The solution of the image deficit that burdens the authentic achievements of our country does not, of course, consist in the construction of a country props made of pastel cardboard, located in a utopian and timeless space. However, the solution is to promote tactfully, but also firmly, the authentic Romanian narrative, while simultaneously accepting the good faith dialogue about what is, as everywhere, still to be corrected or to be transformed(...). Which is natural and beneficial, as long as the benchmarks and perspectives in the medium and long term are carefully, correctly, wisely chosen, but not in insulation from the ideals and values of the society.

The day of December the 1<sup>st</sup>, by itself a reference moment, was marked by celebratory events and representative speeches that marked the moment, and in this context, the speech of the President of the Romanian Senate, Mr. Teodor Meleşcanu, at the joint solemn meeting of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies, called for the reconnection with the past, national consciousness and unity.

I am glad that we can also celebrate today together the National Day in the Parliament of Romania, the supreme forum of our democracy. It is a day of memory that determines each Romanian to reconnect with history, with all that means our glorious past, with the heroes of the nation, with the sacrifice and courage of the Romanian Army and, not least, with the efforts of the entire Romanian intellectual and political elite, who contributed to the realisation of the ideal of national unity and dignity(...). But this day is not just about the past. It is also about our present and future as a powerful nation of the world map. The time has come to look at the present with the confidence that our powers can determine a great destiny for Romania. (...)

The same national consciousness in a common ideal could be noted 30 years ago when, in the face of

tyranny, we all brought to the knees the communist regime, first and foremost the contribution of the revolutionaries. We notice the same determination and the same momentum in recent years, when, in the face of economic and political crises, only united we could think and make the best decisions. I am very happy to see that citizens are increasingly active and involved in the life of society and, implicitly, in the future of our country.

The Annual Meeting of the Romanian Diplomacy - the 2019 edition, which took place in August 2019, was an opportunity also exploited by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ramona Mănescu, to give a speech peppered with elements that refer to the image and the prestige of Romania, meant to create a certain type of feeling. The speech refers to the need to defend the image, identity and national values, emphasising two defining elements for the national state, namely language and history.

It is also an opportunity to examine our image in the perception of others: foreign guests, other institutions, the media, the business environment and even the general public(...)

We wish for Romania and its citizens, economic development, social peace, cultural wealth. (...)

In this respect, the need for an activity to defend our image, identity and values, the language and history of Romania, the vision between the place and the role of our country in the contemporary world, between allies and partners is added to the traditional duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all through a better and more effective strategic communication.

Because the information war becomes one of the powerful weapons of our century, we must develop the mechanisms of evolution and preservation of the image and prestige of Romania. (...)

The consular activity in the service of the Romanian citizens, together with the creativity of the cultural projects you propose, aimed at maintaining the connection with the Romanian citizens from abroad, must remain a priority.

Last but not least, we will bring to the fore two speeches from 2019, given by the historian Ioan Aurel Pop, President of the Romanian Academy, whose public speech is general confined to the area of history, scientifically arguing the formation and solid foundation of the Romanian state. Probably all the speeches of the historian Ioan Aurel Pop would be justified to be given as an example of a speech supporting the Romanian national identity elements, because they have, to a greater or lesser extent, related to the context, references to the

national symbols. In the speech delivered by the President of the Academy, the historian Ioan Aurel Pop, on 24 January 2019, at the Patriarchate Palace, on the occasion of 160 years since the Unification of the Romanian Principalities, titled suggestively, *The Political Union or since when are the Romanians Romanians*, the author put the focus on group consciousness, the one that made the Romanian nation identity itself as one and justify political unity. The main arguments are the language spoken by the groups of people, their Latin origin, their common Christian faith.

In the matter of the Romanian nation and of the conscience of the Romanians belonging to their people, things seemed to be cleared a long time ago, but - as you can see - they are not. However, you don't need to be a historian to reach some simple conclusions, without being misled. The groups of people are different from each other since the world was until now, and a reason for these differences has been - also from ancient times - the language. From the moment some people have realised that they speak another language in relation to other people and they have been aware of this, at the group level, there have been led the foundations of ethnicities, tribes or nations, as they are also called in the Bible.(...) members of the elite, Romanians and foreigners alike - who knew what it means to be Romanian, who knew that Romanians come from Rome, that they speak a language similar to Latin and other Romance languages, that they are Eastern Christians etc.(...)

The arguments are part of ethnicity and show a certain group consciousness, well settled around 1550 (...)

It is true that Romanian intellectuals have spread the ideas of Latinity, unity and solidarity among the people; it is true that the edifice called Romania was built by the efforts of conscious and responsible elites, who planned the national political work. It is not rocket science to realise that a national community, in order to last, needs a shield, a shelter, that is, the national state to organise it, defend it, protect it and represent it in international relationships. The Romanian nation was not built from nothing, but from many and long centuries of work of the Romanian people upon itself. The elites cannot build a nation out of nothing, but they can organise a nation. (...)

The history of our union is the history of our life, and the political union in 1859 was the testimony of the power of a reborn nation.

The second speech of Professor Ioan Aurel Pop, which we pay attention to, was given in December 2019 in Cluj, on the occasion of the unveiling of the state of the poet Andrei Mureșanu,

the author of the lyrics of the national Anthem of Romania. It is an occasion with which the importance of this symbol of Romania is underlined and, at the same time, the inconsistency that has been shown by the repeated change of this identity element that needs continuity to mark the memory of generations is underlined.

...Andrei Mureșanu is the author of the National Anthem of Romania (the poem was initially called 'Un răsuneț') and it is good to underline the important of this symbol of Romania.(...)

In the last century and a half, Romania had six anthems, something that did not happen with any serious country in Europe. No wonder, by always replacing the anthems, we do not enjoy credibility and are not recognised by the world by our own symbols.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Within the analysis we proposed, we aimed to identify whether there is a speech based on the promotion of the Romanian identity elements, rhetoric addressed by prominent personalities of the Romanian political and public life who, given the functions they occupy, give weight to their message.

Having as a theoretical basis the constructivist conception that claims that reality is constructed, that it is formed through interaction and is influenced by the actions of the state actors, we have assumed that the national identity is also constructed, which makes the speech that promotes it have a high importance.

The added value of focusing on speech in the study of identity is given by the easy way in which the identity elements can be promoted within the speech and by the impact that the speech can have on the well-chosen audience. For these reasons, we have highlighted from the speeches given with the occasion of events, of personalities of the contemporary social and political life, fragments that highlight the communication of messages of continuity, unity, preservation of traditions and customs, valorisation of the common national elements of visual, auditory and cultural identification.

Strategic communication of some fundamental notions for the Romanian state, as they are the elements that define the national identity, needs consistency and coherence of the message. In order to be effective, a consistent and uniform transmission of a consistent message is required. The speech, as part of the communication, is a non-material resource partially explored in

Romania, as we have found in the article, and which would still have much more to offer.

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