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National character research paradigms

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Abstract

The study objective is to analyze various approaches to the national identity problem. The leading research method is paradigmatic analysis of various conceptual and disciplinary approaches to the studies of both national character and identity of ethnic communities. As a result, the empirical and sociological paradigm stresses particular mechanisms of personal ethnic and national identification as well as the interaction of ethnic identity with other identity types, in particular social institutions and groups studied with the methods of experimental sociology. In conclusion, the integration function is the most adequate for interpretation of national identity under the philosophic and cultural paradigm.

Keywords: paradigm, identity, national, distinctness, self-consciousness.

Paradigmas de investigación de carácter nacional

Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es analizar diversos enfoques del problema de identidad nacional. El principal método de investigación es el análisis paradigmático de diversos enfoques conceptuales y disciplinarios para los estudios de carácter nacional e identidad de las comunidades étnicas. Como resultado, el paradigma empírico y sociológico acentúa los mecanismos particulares de identificación étnica y nacional personal, así como la interacción de la identidad étnica con otros tipos de identidad, en particular las instituciones sociales y los grupos estudiados con los métodos de la sociología experimental. En conclusión, la función de integración es la más adecuada para la interpretación de la identidad nacional bajo el paradigma filosófico y cultural.

Palabras clave: paradigma, identidad, nacional, distinción, autoconciencia.

1. INTRODUCTION

National identity is important as much as disputable in the modern world as. Globalization exacerbates national identity problems and calls for the extremely complicated interaction of ethnic distinctness and integrative identity to be thought over. The plurality of definitions of national character and distinctness can hardly come as a surprise in the context of the variety of methods and approaches to the problem. Such pluralism requires the approaches to be grouped. Kon singled out three types of disciplinary approaches to national character

noting their intimate connection. They are ethnographic, psychological and historically-cultural ones.

Nikiforova classifies the approaches by their methodic backgrounds: “In the Russian and Western science, there are three approaches to national and national identity: primordial, modernist (instrumental) and post-non-classic ones, the latter often called constructivist” (Nikiforova, 2008:382). Approaches to the problem of identity can be classified by social and cultural entities. We distinguish three main approaches making the contest for the cultural identity problem to be posed and solved: 1) civilizational, 2) personality and 3) sociological approach (Melnikova and Polomoshnov, 2012). Thus, there is not only the plurality of disciplinary and methodic approaches to national identity – similar plurality exists in respect to their classification. The goal of this study is to attempt a disciplinary classification of conceptual approaches to the problem of national identity proceeding from the disciplinary paradigm concept. In our opinion, four main paradigms may be determined to consider the national distinctness of nation: 1) social and psychological, 2) philosophical and cultural, 3) ethnographic, and 4) sociological.

2. METHODOLOGY

The method of the study is based on the concepts of identity and distinctness of a social and cultural entity as well as the paradigmatic analysis of particular national identity concepts. The distinctness of a

social and cultural entity (an individual, ethnic community or nation) does not coincide with its identity while being its subject. Distinctiveness is a set of real, specific and stable substantial features characteristic of the social and cultural entity. Distinctness is a specific stable peculiarity inherent to a social and cultural entity, personality, social group or system, ethnic community, state or territory within it (Gurbanov and Polomoshnov, 2013).

Identity is a phenomenon of a social and cultural entity's self-awareness reflecting its effective distinctness. Probably, there is no full identity in any particular instance. It is rather more pertinent to speak about different degrees of correlation between the real distinctness of an entity and its identity, i.e. about the way such distinctness reflects itself as the self-identification of social and cultural entities. Unlike distinctness, identity is an important self-awareness phenomenon ensuring integration of the person into a community. The identity of a social and cultural entity appears as identification of a person or society with certain social or cultural landmarks or values incorporating them into the social, political or ideological whole (Gurbanov and Polomoshnov, 2013). It is no coincidence, that:

...the main criteria of identity are 1) segregation of one community from another, delineation of their boundaries, 2) feeling of belonging or attribution to a community based upon its historic past, supported by the present and striving towards the future (Andreyev, 2001:69).

Identity allows an individual to look about in a particular social and cultural environment and integrate into it. The point of the cultural identity is the understanding of relevant cultural norms, behavioral models, values and language to understand one's self from the point of view of cultural properties accepted in that particular society (Davidovich, 1997). Ethnic identity is exceptional for social and cultural identity as a means of integration into local and global communities. Ethnic identity is a complex social phenomenon consisting of understanding by an individual of his commonness with a local group based on the ethnic pertinence as well as of realization by the group of its unity and experiencing the feeling of the same... (Zhade, 2007). Regional identity includes two principal components: knowledge of peculiarities of the own territorial group (social and cognitive component) and perception of oneself as its member along with an appraisal of qualities of the territory, its significance in the world and local reference frame (socially-reflexive component). The variety of approaches to identity may be arranged with their paradigmatic analysis. The key element of this method is the social cognition paradigm. Ritzer defines the concept of paradigm applied to social cognition as follows:

Paradigm is a fundamental image of a science's subject. It serves to determine what has to be studied, which problems should be posed and what rules ought to be followed in the interpretation of findings... In other words, a paradigm may include two or more theories, various images of the subject area as well as methods (and tools) and samples (exemplary scientific works to serve models for all the future ones) (Ritzer, 2002:571-572).

In a paradigm's structure, three conceptual levels may be singled out to represent "the developing dialectic unity of the general philosophic concept of social cognition, as well as of the general and special sociological theories" (Polomoshnov, 2013:11). The social cognition paradigm is a complex of conceptual and methodic grounds and theoretical concepts applicable to a discipline or subject. Methodic grounds of a paradigm are determined by the way the problems are posed, the main concepts are interpreted and the particular subject is studied within this discipline. That is, a variety of disciplinary paradigms should be marked out in social cognition. Paradigmatic analysis of national identity concepts explains the specificity of interpretation of this category from points of view of different social sciences and humanities as well as of the methods used to explore national identity by different scientific disciplines.

3. RESULTS

Analyzing the national identity studies the four principal paradigms interpreting the problem can be singled out. They are 1) psychological, 2) philosophic and cultural, 3) ethnographic and 4) sociological. Psychological paradigm considers national distinctness of an ethnic community as a set of psychic qualities most often termed as national character. According to different authors, this set includes different qualities, such as 1) peculiarities of sensual and intellectual perception, 2) specific behavior (inherited responses to external situations and stimuli), 3) specific emotional states and experiences, 4) values and needs, 5) specific way of thinking, 6) psychic and

physiological traits. One of the definitions of national character which is typical for the psychological paradigm is given by Olshansky:

National character is a set of peculiarities of perception of the world and reactions to it, which are most sustainable and characteristic for the given national community. National character is, first of all, a certain combination of emotional and sensual phenomena showing themselves, primarily, in feelings and moods – in sub-conscious and predominantly irrational ways of emotional and sensual exploration of the world, as well as in the speed and intensity of reactions to things happening. Most distinctly, the national character shows itself in the national temperament (2001: 13).

The main features of this disciplinary approach are 1) to list the criteria of national character, 2) to describe the psychic constitution of a nation. Such difficulties are principally methodic ones since, first, the analogy between psychic qualities of a person and the relevant ethnic community is impossible and, second, there is no objectively scientific methodology to study the psychic features of a nation. Difficulties with the articulation of a national character are induced by its principally intersubjective nature. In the psychological paradigm, it is studied as a phenomenon of mass, social psychology. National character implies, furthermore, the qualities inherent to a group (very numerous, sometimes) and not to an individual. The group has a common culture, symbols, customs etc. However, can the commonness of the psychic constitution of people comprising a culture be inferred the commonness (and distinctness) of their culture? Nevertheless, there is a distinctive area of science named ethnic psychology. Among other problems, it strives to explain the causes of differences between

nations or national distinctness. There are two views excluding each other. Primordialism considers national character biologically inherent. Instrumentalism (also known as constructivism) views the national character as a flexible structure susceptible to transformation, education and reformation (Nurullina et al., 2018).

Kon is not accidentally very skeptical towards the attempts to describe national characters psychologically. In his opinion, national character understood as an unchangeable entity inherent to all members of a nation is a psychologic myth, whilst where they talk about the national character as the set of common psychic traits and reactions embedded in a group's self-consciousness, the term national character reflects a certain historical reality (Kon, 1968). The psychological paradigm means national character as the objective basis considering it in the relation of ethnic communities to various aspects of the social reality. National character is the system of relationships of an ethnic community to the different aspect of reality showing itself in sustainable ways of thinking, emotional responses and behavioral habits as a whole. Realo et al. (2009) performed a sociological study, in the context psychological paradigm, of the national character perception stereotypes of their own national character described by the residents of Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belorussia, and Poland, compared to that of the Russians. They also used descriptions of the Russian character given by the Russians living in Russia. The researchers strived to distinguish between national the character perceptive stereotypes and its real traits. In so doing, they tried to reveal the mechanisms by which the stereotype understanding of the national

character forms. Their findings were ambiguous. The authors find a significant correlation between national character stereotypes and its real traits, which means, that such stereotypes (as applied to the owner as well as to the surrounding nations) contribute to the real national character.

National character stereotypes about one's own nation are indeed widely shared and temporally stable and, most importantly, moderately related to self-rated personality traits if all assessments are made using the same measurement instrument. Furthermore, national character stereotypes about one's own nation appear to be formed, at least to a certain extent, in reference to a dominant neighboring nation (e.g. USA, Russia) or to people's self-rated personality traits: a typical ingroup member is often portrayed as less extraverted and emotionally stable than people's rating of their own personality (Realo et al., 2009:246).

The ethnographic paradigm appears to have appeared at the border of history and cultural science. It describes phenomenal (i.e. observed) traits of the nations and their differences distinguishing them by their cultural products and not by their psychic qualities. National character is studied here through the results of a nation's activity, their moral norms and customs, traditions, spiritual and material values, social organization etc., determining their style of type of existence. Philosophic and cultural paradigm considers ethnic distinctness as a problem of social and cultural identity. Bolshunova regards national character as a form of distinct historic existence of a nation:

National character is not a statistic aggregate of psychic and mental properties frequently met in an ethnic community. It has nothing to do with the frequent personality types either. It reflects the soul of the nation with all its evident and hidden features. This is the form of a nation's existence, the way it appears in history as it is fixed in its language and its changes, its values and attitude to the world and itself, the ways it solves its historic tasks, its social behavior, the distinctness of its psychic traits (2011: 18).

Bolshunova believes national character to be a stable unchangeable structure:

National character is a topological invariant including stable qualitative properties that do not change at deformations, i.e. it is homeomorphic. Such qualities include values represented by social and cultural archetypes serving the measure for the nation or ethnos to commensurate their actions, feelings and choices with (2011: 20).

Smirnov regards national character as a component of national identity. This

...identity is comprised of two related parts: 1) objective (evident) one consisting of the group norms arising out of the group needs and values, and 2) subjective (latent) one summing the subjective perception by the group's members of its interests, goals and functions as well as of their personal station in it. This perception has rational, intuitive and sensual components that enable the group members to tell friends from foes (Smirnov, 2015: 18).

According to Smirnov, national identity comes as the entity of the objective (national character) and subjective (national mentality) components.

Lebedeva considers national character as the cultural phenomenon integrating an individual into a cultural environment:

National character is something connecting an individual with his culture. Our national character is the society inside us existing as the same reactions to familiar situations typical for people of one and the same culture as feelings and psychic states. While growing up, people acquire values, psychic and behavioral patterns typical for the people of their culture consciously as well as unconsciously (Lebedeva, 2002: 19).

Gadzhiev also believes national character to be an important aspect of national identity:

National and geopolitical identity embraces many components such as a view of life, national identity and mentality, national character, historic memory, ethnic and national images, national traditions, myths, symbols, behavioral patterns, etc. Not least, there is the perception of the place of their country in the world, the culture and civilization it belongs to, its national interests, political priorities, etc. (2011: 15).

According to Gadzhiev, national identity is based upon a certain national paradigm:

People living in the same social, cultural and political environment need a set of common values, norms etc. creating a *modus vivendi* for all members of society. This set

determining the substance and dynamics of the national identity as well as of the political and philosophic thought can be called paradigm (2011: 18).

Of course, the mentioned cultural interpretations of national character in the context of national identity do not solve many methodic and theoretical problems related to the determination of national character as a concept being one of the elements or forms of national identity as well as of its criteria and place in the national identity structure. Anyway, the philosophic and cultural approach must consider national identity and distinctness not only as the phenomena of personal or collective psyche but as the system of objective peculiarities of any given ethnic community. This approach is typical for Sorokin:

Where a scientist aims to study characteristic features of a nation or any social or cultural system, he must study the nation as such, as a single system in all its structural and dynamic traits changing historically. That is why I will stress some substantial properties or the character of the Russian nation basing upon a number of objective and verifiable historical facts rather than speculative nationalist stereotypes without mistaking the wish for the reality (2017: 18).

Methodic problems of national identity studies are analyzed in the cultural context by Shapovalov. Trying to reconstruct the traits of the Russian national soul he mentions the need for the cultural approach to the problem:

Obviously, the discussions of the soul of Russia (as well as any other country) are reasonable only when led from the point of

view of history and culture rather than that of blood and ethnicity... values and ideals, behavioral patterns, the way of life – everything that is rooted mostly in society and culture (2001:25).

The cultural approach to national identity leads to the reconstruction of culture by artifacts created by particular ethnic communities: “In aggregate, persistent ways of thinking and feeling make something we would call character or sustainable psychic traits of the community...It can be understood by analyzing cultural artifacts, various witnesses, descriptions, etc.” (Shapovalov, 2003:27).

Shapovalov criticizes theoretical psychological approach based upon personal observations and thoughts of a scientist rather than on regular sociological studies for its natural limitations (Shapovalov, 2003). A methodologically consistent cultural analysis of national character must start with the definition of cultural identity specifying its entities and forms:

In our opinion, cultural identity is understanding of its cultural distinctness (individuality, uniqueness) by a social and cultural entity. It is a synthesis of two: 1) real cultural distinctness of the entity and 2) understanding of that distinctness by the entity. For research, a social and cultural entity may be 1) an individual, 2) a microsocial group (for example, a family), 3) a macrosocial group (social estate, stratum or class), 4) an ethnic group (nation), 5) a civilization (Melnikova and Polomoshnov, 2012:36).

Thus, the cultural identity of a social or cultural entity is the mutually intermediated whole of its distinctness and awareness of the

entity of this distinctness. Identity represented in an individual mind is rather complex. "Since the main form of cultural identity is the personal one, one should distinguish between three forms of cultural identity: 1) real distinctness, 2) non-reflexive social and psychic identity, 3) reflexive ideological identity" (Melnikova and Polomoshnov, 2012:39-40). Thus, in the structure of national social and cultural identity, the two forms of national identity can be defined: the national idea (at the ideological and rational level) and national character (at the psychological level) as the nation's awareness of its personality traits and civilizational and cultural distinctions. The real distinctness and awareness of it never correlate fully smoothly. There is rather a tense and problematic mutually intermediated interaction between them. Finally, the culture analysis of the national character as an element of social and cultural identity should, on the one hand, draw a distinction between civilization and nation as the historic and cultural entity creating and developing it as a distinctive type and, on the other hand, show their mutual intermediation or relation: "Ethnic community is a historic community of the global degree representing a historic structure of unique macrosocial entities united by the common history, language, intellectual and material culture" (Melnikova and Polomoshnov, 2012:37). Taking a nation's distinctness we emphasize its activity and consciousness while approaching a civilization we stress the distinctness of products and forms of that nation's activity:

The theoretical aspect of a civilization's cultural identity lies within the understanding of its fundamental properties by itself and their definition as the invariant foundation of its distinctness. This self-understanding or civilizational self-

awareness shows itself at the level of ideology as well as of social psychology. It is reflected naturally at the first level (Polomoshnov, 2007:24).

Finally, the cultural analysis must not ignore the ways the national identity forms and transforms not limiting the discussion to the general thesis that this identity is a product and reflection of the nation's history. The qualitative difference between the traditional and modern mechanism of transformation of such identity to include the national character should be noted here. Previously, philosophers and cultural workers mostly acknowledged national distinctness and character without actively shaping it. Nowadays, mass media made this shaping possible, and it is the cultural and ideological policy of the state that plays the decisive role here. The sociological paradigm of national identity studies may be 1) social and philosophic as well as 2) experiential and sociological. The first sub-paradigm strives to understand singularity of the social system created by an ethnic community considering it a product of the nation's history and the driver of this community's distinctive traits reduced finally to peculiarities of its social organization and behavior:

The essence of the national character is determined by the set of specific traits in their unity and unique combination. Taken as a whole, they make the inimitable image of an ethos and their combination roots deeply in the ages being determined by natural, social and economic conditions as well as by intellectual and moral forces and events to include the most important historic milestones embedded in the nation's historical memory and consciousness and passed down through the generations (Avganova, 2007: 18).

Under this paradigm, a social system is not described in terms of general sociology or nomothetically but rather ideographically i.e. from the point of view of its individuality:

In this sense, the national and ethnic system is the sum of the people's experiences of common life and activities expressed in different forms and principles of social and political organization, regulation and communication as well as in values and existential positions as well as technologies and activity results specifically for the nation. This experience develops and is adjusted with changing historical conditions and political factors especially (Kumykov, 1999: 19).

The empirical and sociological paradigm stresses particular mechanisms of personal ethnic and national identity as well as the interaction of ethnic identity with other identity types, in particular social institutions and groups studied with the methods of experimental sociology. In the West, a great attention is paid to sociological national identity studies. The attention of European scientists is centered around the interaction of national identity with other identity drivers as well as the influence of globalization on the transformation of the ethnic identity. McLaren studies the influence of the European integration on national identity emphasizing the fear of its dissolution under the circumstances. He states, that the fear to lose national identity may cause the Europeans to oppose the integration in Europe: "Integration seems to be threatening the national identity by attempts to decrease nationalistic sentiments" (McLaren, 2004:897). Supported by opinion polls taken in various European countries, McLaren comes to a conclusion which is rather optimistic to the European

integrators. Although Europeans fear to lose national identity, their support of the EU does not depend on it too much McLaren:

In fact, personal utilitarianism and actual benefits received by a country have more influence on the level of support of the EU than the general trust to the own government. Generally, while EU seems to be considered in terms of a threat to the traditional national identities, it is much more willingly perceived in terms of the benefits it may bring to or expenses it may impose on the people and their countries (2004:908-909).

Pierre Balestrini (2012) studies the relationship between education, employment, personal economic expectation and national identity of European citizens in the context of the public opinion of Balestrini (2012) notes, that the development of European identity does not contradict national identities, which is why a flexible combination of both is required. It is therefore important that national and EU policy-makers work towards flexible modes of integration that ensure a greater compatibility between national identities and a European identity and thus give some satisfaction to as many national public as possible. It is also about fostering a European identity that is not portrayed as threatening national identities but capitalizing on what is common to all national identities (Balestrini, 2012). Balestrini concludes that people's support of the EU is mostly influenced by education and employment. He also notes the importance of the Christian heritage in the European identity structure:

The denial of the Christian heritage in the European constitution may well be perceived by citizens as a threat to their national identity, not only in countries where Christianity

is recognized as the religion of the state but also in other EU nations (2012:381).

Jack and Lorbiecki study the interaction of the national identity and organizational or corporate identity under globalization in big international companies. They proceed from the fact that the corporate identity forms under ambiguous and pluralistic identities of the workforce in modern Britain. They found a relationship between the organizational and national identities to be complex and controversial. Our data suggest that national identity is linked in complex and contradictory ways to the corporate, organizational and personal identities articulated in the context of organizational globalization (Jack and Lorbiecki, 2007). Specifying the nature of this relationship they note, that organizational identity is created by various competing ones:

The varying relationships between discourse and identity levels which emerge from our dataset are suggestive not of a kind of smooth and circular set of identity processes, but instead of a much more fragmented and contested set of articulations. Organizational identity is competing for territory which reflects different experiences and understandings of organizational culture – and, unless one is persuaded by the most extreme claims of main-stream managerialism, it is also a virtual truism to state that organizational culture is profoundly non-unitary terrain, a site of plural and contested meanings (Jack and Lorbiecki, 2007:92).

The problem of the national identity becomes more acute not only in the West but in the dynamic Eastern societies exemplified by China. Jiaping considers the influence of China's economic

modernization on the identities of national minorities. This modernization goes at an uneven speed in rural and urban areas of the country which influences the development of economic identity very much. He concludes that the development of the market economy activates ethnic identification of national minorities in China (Jiaping, 2014:980). Economic growth inequality involves migration of ethnic minorities to the cities which reinforces their ethnic identity:

Unequal economic growth has resulted in a massive increase in ethnic migration to the cities. The urban concentration of ethnic groups from different cultures, and especially their competition in the urban labor market, has had consequences for urban development. It has also highlighted the cultural identity of ethnic minorities, increasing the ethnic awareness of the Han majority, and making the ethnic minorities more self-consciousness. This development mirrors ethnic developments in Western countries, where the city is the key 'site' for ethnic identity negotiation, contesting and remaking. The disadvantages and advantages of being identified as a member of an ethnic-minority group have intensified and have been reinforced by market developments (2014:981).

4. DISCUSSION

The study of the national identity and character research paradigms showed that various disciplinary approaches do not only differ conceptually and methodologically but complement one another, which is why a holistic concept of the national character can be represented from the interdisciplinary viewpoint. Nevertheless, of the

four national identity paradigms in question, integration is most adequate for the philosophic and cultural one. A holistic cultural concept of national character as a form of the social and cultural identity of an ethnic community has not been created so far. However, various disciplinary paradigms mention important criteria attributable to the national character as a stable and relatively invariant but historically flexible mental and psychic mass consciousness structure, such as 1) self-awareness of the nation of itself, the world and other nations, 2) attitude of the nation to the world, itself and other nations, 3) system of fundamental social and cultural values, life philosophy and behavioral patterns determining the way the nation appears in the history. Obviously, no philosophic and cultural study of national character is possible without a definition of the key term of the nation as a form of ethnic community. From such definition, the criteria of national identity and national character should be deductible.

The philosophic and cultural national character study must effectively solve the unavoidable problem of the proportion between national and human as well as that of the social differentiation of an ethnic community. Is it possible to talk about the unique national character in a society divided into social classes or strata with very different properties, interests and traits? Today, studying national character under the cultural paradigm rather raises theoretical and methodic problems than suggests a definite concept. The deep development of the methods and theory of national character analysis is indispensable not only to understand the character of any particular

ethnic community or civilization but to consolidate and develop the adequate social and cultural national identity as a whole.

5. CONCLUSION

The paradigmatic approach to studying national character as a form of national identity distinguishes between the four paradigms: 1) psychic, 2) philosophic and cultural, 3) ethnographic and 4) sociological. Psychic paradigm regards the national distinctness of an ethnic community as a set of personal psychic traits aiming to list psychic qualities describing the psychic constitution of a nation. Ethnographic paradigm describes phenomenal nations and differences between them by their cultural products. It studies national character indirectly through the results of the nation's activities. Philosophic and cultural paradigm regards national character in the context of social and cultural identity as the interaction of the real distinctness of an ethnic community with its self-identification. It views national identity and distinctness not only as phenomena of personal and collective consciousness but as a system of the ethnic community's objective traits.

Sociological paradigm has 1) social and philosophic approach or 2) experiential and sociological approach. The social and philosophic approach emphasizes the specificity of the social system created by an ethnic community regarding it as a product of the nation's history creating its characteristic traits being finally the peculiarities of its

social organization and behavior of its members. Experiential and sociological paradigm stresses particular mechanisms of personal ethnic or national identity as well as on the relationship between the ethnic identity and other identities in the context of particular social institutions or groups exploring them with the methods of experimental sociology. Different disciplinary approaches do not only differ conceptually and methodologically but complement one another, which is why a holistic concept of the national character can be represented from an interdisciplinary viewpoint. The integration function is the most adequate for interpretation of national identity under the philosophic and cultural paradigm.

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