

## NATIONAL IDENTITY, CULTURAL MEMORY AND POLITICS

### Summary

In this book, the author discusses problems of ethnocultural and national identity, cultural memory and their relations to various other identities. Also discussed are themes of cultural politics in the European integration environment and inconsistencies within this environment. The themes were researched by analysing the specifics of capitalism, rapidly entrenching in Lithuania. It was attempted to comprehend the form of capitalism, which appeared in Lithuania after the end of Soviet occupation, and with the comprehended matters “assess” the deciphered theoretical and ideological working principles of the capitalist system and the features of the capitalist lifeworld. Significant attention was given to explaining how a transition is made from an overrideological Soviet environment to, from the first sight, pragmatic and seemingly non-ideologized world of freedom, which, looking deeper into it and gaining experience in this new world, is revealed to be based on clear ideological clichés of the so-called “free market”. Various theoretical images both complemented and negated each other, thus the move towards a more general understanding was achieved by going in various roundabouts, utilising the thoughts and insights from authors who were able to see the fundamental particularities of systemic development. The latter had already been tested by the process of lived history. Research on capitalist system was collected in the book *Postmodern capitalism* (Rubavičius 2010). Capitalism in Lithuania was entrenched while seeking memberships in NATO and EU. The analysis of general systemic matters helped

to understand certain factors of globalization and their interaction with European integration processes, as well as the ideological convictions, upon which these processes are based.

Lithuania experienced sudden, unexpected and unforeseen changes, which were even more accelerated during the process of joining the EU. Nobody could imagine that the society will become stratified at such a fast pace and a social exclusion, impossible to cover by any ideological concepts of freedom and free market, will emerge. Likewise, widespread poverty and unemployment have become a structural feature of the new socio-economical system and society, non-erasable through any kinds of reforms and promises made by politicians. After gaining liberation from Soviet occupation, questions of national identity, statehood, sovereignty, national interests were of high importance. These questions were associated with the attempts to imagine the path of our statehood, to strengthen our national identity and national culture, what kind of self-image will become entrenched in politics and arts. These questions made it unavoidable to research the political environment of EU: what political convictions dominate the minds of architects of European integration and what political guidelines are instilled as desirable trends for state and societal change. The EU itself has been on a long road of unification, in which we can distinguish important shifts in political convictions, but the fundamental matters, connected to the statehood of the member states, attitude towards the future of nations and cohabitation in new European environment, as well as the evaluation of recent tragic history of the twentieth century, remain the same.

The EU politics, already since the very beginning were based on the struggle to create a new Europe, in which the atrocities of World Wars and human eradication would never appear again, so it was sought to “decontaminate” various manifestations of nationalism, firstly by economical, and a bit later, by increasingly important trends of political and

cultural integration. To achieve this purpose, the ideas of nation-state sovereignty, national sovereignty and their meanings were unpacked. The decline of state power was also understood as a natural outcome of globalization, in hopes that this process will in itself help the European social engineering politics of integration, but at the moment we are witnessing the return of national questions and phenomena, as well as manifestations of major state nationalism within the political horizons. These phenomena and manifestations start to define not only the home politics of various countries, but also international relations.

The questions of national interests, as well as those of state sovereignty have become more relevant since the results of 2016 Great Britain referendum, deciding the future of Europe – *Brexit*. The decision – to leave the EU. Another important phenomenon – growing processes of national consolidations and nation formation, which are signified by nationalist sentiments, manifestations of fight for national independence. Growth of national consciousness, nation consolidations, strengthening sense of nationalist sentiments is clear in Ukraine, Belarus and several other post-Soviet countries. In them, these processes can be defined as a period of fast-paced multifaceted formation of various nations in which the importance of national identity and national culture, as well as the importance of cultural memory in building the European nationhood and entrenching it in the global arena of political international relations, is clearly understood. Concerns about state formation and the separation of partially independent regions are getting increasingly topical in Great Britain, Spain and various other countries. In Poland and several other countries, there are increasing manifestations of nationalism, which are brought on by factors of globalization, diminishing the sense of statehood and national identity. Another factor is the ideological and political overkill of EU's political integration, working by de-stating, de-nationalising member states by installing exemplary European cos-

mopolitanism, as well as seeking to transfer as many as possible state's political constitutional powers to Brussels and at the same time taking it down to a lower regional or self-government level.

All European states, especially Russia's neighbours, are affected by the rise and entrenchment of Russian imperialist chauvinism in its state policy. Russia's aggressive imperialist nationalism, which is seen by most citizens of this country as vital politics of strengthening national identity, forces the EU countries and their political elites to think how to strengthen European identity while at the same time executing their contradictory politics of nation de-nationalization, separating them from the state. So, in the EU itself and in its relations with the closest neighbours, we witness increasingly more tension, conflicts and growing uncertainty, which is further accelerated by Russia's aggressive political course with regard to its closest neighbours – for example, the attempt to shred Ukraine to pieces, started in 2014 by the Crimea occupation.

In the mentioned monograph, after generalising the research on capitalist system, it was possible to appropriately focus on the questions of the historical path of new Lithuania, connected to national identity, cultural memory and its shifts, the condition of statehood, particularities of European integration. Some of the academic articles on these problems had been written while bearing in mind a certain structure of the monograph and the tangle of its themes. But the book always brings its own "rules of writing" – it is vital to more clearly separate themes, to connect them with core problems and, most importantly, to create a certain theoretical image, which would help explain the discussed problems as aspects of a more general process. The function of such theoretical image in the book is performed in the third chapter by a developed outline of the understanding of culture, as well as comprehension of a new phase of globalization – the technological and financial world globalization did not become a total political globalization, so the features

of heterogenization rose to light again, only in a new globalized world level. These features determine the strengthening of geopolitics as well as regional and civilizational compounds.

In the first chapter ‘The Return to Europe’, it is attempted to more clearly comprehend what reasons determined that the wave of national liberation from Soviet occupation, which lifted up the nation and society, its cultural history, strengthened the sense of national identity and on it based quest to reconstruct statehood, did not grow into a clear work of creating nation-state and for it inherent national identity, neither into the work of cultural memory entrenchment. *The Return to Europe* signifies a contradictory process – in its own way returning to reconstructed statehood, interrupted by the Soviet Russian occupation in 1940, connecting the threads of cultural memory, reminiscent of nationhood, necessary to overcome the time of occupation, but simultaneously looking into the trends for the future, which are authoritatively asserted by the so called “requirements of the free market” and the tantalizing reality of future, offered by the EU. Lithuania’s political and academic elites quickly realized that in EU, questions of nation, especially of national identity and attempts to strengthen the nationhood are not desirable, perceived even more antagonistically – as not politically correct, thus they were expelled to the political and cultural margins.

The sudden re-orientation by clearing the cultural space with new ideological notions of “freedom”, “modernity” and similar concepts, is seen in the works of our historians – even the very process of national liberation is defined as national liberation only in the twelfth tome of the *History of Lithuania*, published in 2008 (Laurinavičius, Sirutavičius 2008), but there is still no courage to attempt to perform a research that such a definition requires. *National, nationhood, nationalism* – these connected concepts seemingly evaporated from political and academic discourse (with the exception of discussions on the development of

Lithuanian nation and its cultural conditions by Romualdas Grigas, Romualdas Ozolas, Jonas Balčius, as well as the works of Vytautas Radžvilas and Alvydas Jokubaitis from the recent years, discussing the development of Lithuanian nation and state in the environment of European integration processes and ideological convictions of EU integration politics), so the nation and society were left out without any clear directions for state creation and strengthening of national identity, in other words, left to the mercy of “free market” and, simultaneously, for the effective but for the wide public completely incomprehensible, politics of European integration, which was dominated by quite a narrowheaded economic discourse. The initial surprise about such a sudden shift in attitudes towards national matters was replaced by the desire to ascertain the reasons for such a change. Simultaneously it was inspected how grounded is the suspicion about certain convictions dominating in EU on national questions. Even though these convictions are not clearly unfolded, but political and academic elites comprehend them perfectly well, while political documents are created based precisely on these convictions.

This is especially relevant when referring to the main long-term formative principles of the EU as a supra-national compound, that encourages the decline of nation-state power and their national content, transferring a part of constitutional powers to the European level, and a part – to the regions and inducing the direct cross-border connections and their direct representations in the EU, bypassing the national governments, in this way also transferring a part of state’s constitutional powers to the regions. Also important is the increasingly spreading juridical apprehension of new constitutionalism, which consolidates the rights and opportunities of new social groups and newly created corporate and other institutional formations to constitutionally assert and develop constitution-based juridical, as well as social relations, dismissing the fundamental categories of sovereign and sovereignty (Přibáň

2012). The chapter discusses the insights by various philosophers on the future of Europe, as a formation which has supplanted nationalism and the exceptionality of nationhood, as well as its fundamental formation principles, the peculiarities of which can be seen in the attitude towards migrants. The political depravity of the propagated ideology of “unconditional hospitality” is also highlighted.

The second chapter ‘Collective memory during liberation from Soviet occupation’ discusses political and cultural aspects of Lithuanian nation’s and society’s condition as it is returning to Europe. It is sought to find out the prerequisites and factors for liberation from the Soviet occupation. The process of emancipation is defined as a sally of national liberation, thus the liberation movement can be put into a larger group of such movements, taking place in various continents during decolonization years. Thus, the concept of revolution in this view is misleading and eclipsing the fundamental feature of these movements – national or nationalist gathering, a spread of nationalist sense of one degree or another, based on one’s culture and cultural memory. Revolutions are a matter of state’s home politics, they are direct processes, associated with changes of estate relations with regard to state. Liberation from the invader’s governance is a completely different phenomenon. Thus, the modern time Lithuania has not experienced any revolutions as of yet. The fundamental prerequisite for liberation, which became a factor hastening the emancipation, was the preservation and actualization of historical cultural memory. In the historical cultural memory, the aspect of experience of the statehood, a clear understanding of when and how the statehood was lost by the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, and that the postwar years of a fierce and long struggle to regain statehood, remained important. All of these during the Soviet occupation suppressed and erased from memory experiences rose to the light of day, strengthening the common sense of nationality and a determined act of eman-

icipation. Very important in this respect were the memories of exiles and postwar resistance fighters. However, soon enough, another wave of memories – those of party nomenclature members – rose into prominence. In these memories, the achievements of the local Soviet party for the good of Lithuania were highlighted, thus legitimating the political power, retained and economically strengthened under the conditions of regained independence and privatization

In the third chapter ‘Culture and Lithuanity’, the theoretical image of culture is developed, the most important in which is the concept of peaceful cohabitation, encompassing various aspects of accommodation. Culture is understood as the totality of ways the community cohabitates with a locality (homeland), neighbors and themselves, sustained by the native language. It changes according to changing internal and external circumstances, or akin to natural environment, affected by human activity. Because a human being only becomes an individual through community, the initial goal of culture is to ensure the survival of the community, strengthen it, and this is only possible by supporting and fostering the communal identity and a sense of community. Thus, the goal of the cultural system is to support and foster a lively connection between communal identity and place, which is entrenched with the help of rituals, origin and historical stories, in symbolic and signifying ways, finally, with the political factors of establishing and developing of the nation-state. Identity is maintained and sustained. It is sustained through collective cultural memory, which is the active form of cultural system, while it is maintained by national and political rituals “active” in the whole cultural system. In this view, the unconditional activity of educational system, based on the native language and culture, is especially important, as well as state politics, consolidating this activity.

The chapter discusses various aspects of the intersection between activity of cultural memory, culture, place and identity, peculiarities of

contemporary critique of essentialism by highlighting the ontological realness of identity, which in the social world manifests itself in a relative manner because all social reality is weaved together from human connections and relations. Thus, the deconstructive critique of essentialism de-essentializes not the matters of social reality, but attributed to that reality streamlined naturalized apprehension of social reality, which is based on verifiable facts, thus their essences as well. Considering the specifics of deconstruction and social constructivism, we reach a conclusion that the factuality of the lived world is of different nature – that of social relations. Based and developed through such theoretical insights are the explanations on the evolution of modern Lithuanity, on how it was strengthened by creating a nation-state and by nation building among people, how national identity was maintained under the conditions of Soviet occupation. The process of urbanization and its effects on Lithuanity are discussed extensively. The importance of president Antanas Smetona's politics of strengthening Lithuanity, relations between Lithuanians and members of other nationalities in order to promote the development of sense of nationality is highlighted. Also unfolded are fundamental features of Lithuanian nationalism, connected by a conscious, renouncing any forms of expansionism and enslavement of other nations, patriotic fostering of love for homeland and one's own country.

The fourth chapter 'Lithuania during Soviet occupation' analyses the ways of maintaining, fostering and cultural strengthening of Lithuanity, particularities of spread of Lithuanity under the conditions of Soviet occupation. Soviet occupation was based on a relentless terror of postwar years, the experience of which remained in people's memory for a long time, also on all-encompassing ideological indoctrination, creating the so-called new progressive Soviet human being, and on a sudden Russification of public life. During the time of Soviet occupation, the country

was rapidly changing: a fast industrialization took place, thus the cities attracted many rural residents and other newcomers. But the cultural life was based on Lithuanian language, the role of Lithuanian literature in maintaining the native language and cultural memory grew exponentially. Even though Lithuanian nation lost its statehood and state institutions and was already imagined by ideologists as Lithuanian-speaking Soviet folk, but the ethno-cultural consciousness of maintaining Lithuania, connected to nation survival instinct, started getting stronger. The manifestations of this consciousness are clear in the work of urbanists, preserving and rebuilding urbanist heritage, in various youth ethno-cultural movements, as well as in artistic and cultural works. Song Festival and Poetry Spring events are distinguished and analyzed as they are held to be important, if not vital, cultural phenomena for the maintenance of Lithuania. For the Song Festival, an infrastructure of preparation, selection and celebration, encompassing the whole country and including administrative state institutions of all levels, was created. The importance of postwar urbanist image heritage of the city of Kaunas for developing the historical sense of independent nationhood is also discussed. Because the questions of maintaining and sustaining Lithuania are especially common nowadays and a part of our intellectuals tend to discard all of the Lithuanian culture, created during the Soviet occupation as tools for Soviet indoctrination, more widely discussed are theoretic scheme assumptions, argumentations and legitimacy of conclusions by Nerija Putnaitė, because it is precisely she, who most actively represents the group of negationists of ‘Soviet Lithuanian culture’. A question is raised – how was a communal gathering for national liberation possible, if the Soviet system succeeded, as it is alleged, to completely Sovietize Lithuania, which ‘inherently’ had fundamental features of the Sovietness?

In the fifth chapter ‘Lithuanianism in the strategic vision of Lithuania’s development’, turning back to certain factors of globalization and

European integration, as well as specifics of European politics with regard to ethno-cultural communities, more widely discussed are the effects of new media environment for the national identity and cultural memory and the threats and challenges for national identity. The opinion is held that the maintenance and fostering of national identity and to it vital cultural memory must be the initial goal of state politics. Thus it is analyzed how this goal is perceived and expressed in the important document for strategic vision *Lithuania 2030*. In other words, it is attempted to apprehend, whether the political and academic elites, which created the document, perceive national identity, cultural memory and cultivation of sense of nationhood, as a task of existential importance with regard to the nation. The analysis of consideration and acceptance of the document, as well as its textual analysis, reveal that national identity, the connections between identity and cultural system and cultural memory are not appropriately apprehended, so ideological economic trends of the 'necessity to modernize' and 'conformity to various rates of globalization' suffice. When comparing the Lithuanian vision of strategic development with similar documents, accepted in Latvia and Estonia, it appears that our neighbors more clearly comprehend the fundamental goal of strategic development – the maintenance and fostering of national identity, as well as the necessity to define the threats, presented by the insatiable globalization and European integration, and envisage the means to eliminate these threats. In Estonia's document the main strategic goal is formulated very clearly – in order for the Estonian nation to survive for centuries to come it is vital to maintain and foster Estonianhood and to ensure the appropriate dispersion of Estonian culture in the European cultural environment. This strategic goal is very clearly politically declared subduing the development of globalized economics as well.

The author develops the view that national identity, Lithuania, as well as other communal identities are relative, ever-changing, but

simultaneously remaining the same as a certain 'glue', connecting people through millennia. In the individual consciousness they unfold as natural values, moral, symbolic belongings to certain communities and trends or encouragements for self-identification. So in the book the author offers a polemic with non-critical, only superficially applied deconstructive anti-essentialism, also with the so called 'contemporary' view, prevalent among a part of members of local academic and political stratum, that Lithuanity needs to modernize as quickly as possible or come closer to arbitrarily decided standards of globalization and Europeaness.

For a society with such a rich experience of Soviet de-nationalization, Russification and attempts to create a new, Soviet human being, as well Soviet people creation politics, it is advised to much more suspiciously evaluate various manifestations of social engineering, no matter with what new attractive temptations of freedom and liberation they would be embellished. It is not advisable to underestimate and marginalize those cultural and social practices, which maintained Lithuanity under the conditions of Soviet occupation, and currently help to comprehend new challenges and threats coming from globalization and European integration. It is precisely these internalized practices that might serve well in the search for appropriate cultural creativity responses to new threats. Such more generalized consciousness is directed not against the EU and the necessity of European integration, but against the current practices of EU's political bureaucratic elite acting under the conditions of 'democracy deficit' and promoting narrow-headed political ideological convictions and directives, encouraging the insatiable, not explained to the societies de-nationalization, negation and marginalization of Christian heritage of civilizational importance, as well as reckless derogation of state powers, increasingly transferring these powers to the hands of the anonymous bureaucracy of Brussels, elected by

no one and answering to no one. Increasingly visible political trends of EU's political elites, turning sovereign nations into ethno-cultural communities and strengthening with particular homelands unrelated webs of interaction between such communities, we argue, present a threat to the development of the EU itself and to the civilizational vitality of European society, which must grow and gain power from the European region, connecting several nations and held to be one's own, in order to create the culture, required for development and integration, encompassing national cultures, and simultaneously strengthening national cultures, encouraging the creative expression and dispersion of national cultures based on peaceful and dignified cohabitation.

Monografijoje gvildenamas lietuvių nacionalinio tapatumo susiklostymas bei kaita siekiant valstybingumo, kuriantis moderniai valstybei, išgyvenant sovietinę okupaciją ir iš jos išsilaisvinus. Dabartinės kaitos pobūdį lėmė vidiniai laisvinimosi ir nepriklausomos valstybės kūrimo, taip pat išoriniai globalizacijos ir ypač eurointegracijos veiksniai, kurių svarbiausias – ES įgyvendinamas sumanymas kurti naują europinę liaudį. Aptariamas nacionalinio tapatumo turinys, svarstomi lietuviškojo nacionalizmo bruožai, išskirtine laikant prezidento Antano Smetonos veiklą lietuvybei tvirtinti. Išskleidžiamas kultūros, kaip sugyvenimo su vietove, kaimynais ir savimi būdų viseto, supratimas, paryškinant pirminį kultūrinės atminties veikimo tikslingumą – gimtąja kalba stiprinti įsivietinusį bendruomenės tapatumą. Aptariama tremtinių atsiminimų banga, telkusi Lietuvos žmones vaduotis iš okupacijos, analizuojami sovietinės nomenklatūros prisiminimai. Nacionalinio tapatumo būseną skleidžiama gvildenant esminius Strategijos *Lietuva2030* bruožus bei jo kūrėjų ideologines nuostatas. Lyginant šį dokumentą su Estijos ir Latvijos strategijomis, ryškėja lietuvybės turinio ir veiksmingos nacionalinės tapatumo bei kultūros politikos stoka, suvoktina kaip lemtingas iššūkis. Nacionalinio tapatumo ir kultūrinės atminties sąsajų problemos, ES įsitvirtinusios „besąlygiško svetingumo Kitam“ ideologijos ypatumai svarstomi pasitelkiant žymiausių Vakarų filosofų, sociologų ir politologų įžvalgas.

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### NACIONALINIS TAPATUMAS, KULTŪRINĖ ATMINTIS IR POLITIKA

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