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CREATING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS

ABSTRACT This paper comprises four related parts. The first part presents hypotheses regarding the forms of creating a collective identity in the age of digitization and the adopted theoretical assumptions, including conceptualization of concepts. The concept of Daniel Kahneman's thinking systems is quoted, which was used to analyse the presented phenomenon in relation to the political decision-making process. The second section is a presentation of the research problem as a concept that is equivalent to the category of behavioural economics. Next, we explain the pattern of the transition from the left-wing identity policy to its right-wing response. The final part represents an analysis of the Internet collective identity in relation to political risk and profit, while the epilogue presents the political implications of the use of collective identity by measurement tools and consulting entities managing the flow, collection and compilation of data.

Keywords: collective identity, behavioural economics, political behaviour, political decision, big data, social media, Facebook

INTRODUCTION

The judgments presented by social psychology two decades ago regarding the issue of a group's collective identity indicated that stereotypes constitute an effective barrier protecting the developed and established position of Others.¹ Not only is it needed as a kind of background for one's own uniqueness, but also as the reason why the *I* – *signifier* represents the subject for another *signifier*.² Therefore, this concerns the fact that the presence of the subject in any social order is preceded by the existence of an order, which Jacques Lacan called *the Symbolic*. Andrzej Leder states that the identity of the subject is not a function of the signifiers that represent it (*empty signifiers*), and it only gains identity in the symbolic field.³

The development of mass communication, especially of social media, nullifying the time and distance necessary to access political messages and the politicians themselves, suggests that collective identity, understood as a set of self-observation content, has changed into a form of imposing this property on and discovering it in individual groups. And this is the main hypothesis of this text. While political scientists focus their research on political decisions (behaviours) which entail consequences at least in the form of choices (actions or omissions) having an identifiable political content in a short time, it is worth considering whether it is really about the suddenness of changes in political behaviour or the creation of a non-institutionalized political organization with imposed coherence in the form of a reconfigured identity collective. The above presumption is based upon the constataion about the particular and decisive influence of a political decision on the ability to break the chain of rudimentary group values.

Creating an identity in the cyberspace seems to be a phenomenon that does not arouse controversy, since it is commonly recognized as a fact. We are talking about the social need, although expressed individually, for the presentation of a commercial version of oneself by every conscious user of the Internet. The combined self-presentations may, but obviously do not have to, contribute to the overall image of society and its identity. We assume that individual activities in social media, although frequently similar in content and, notably, in form, are intended by individuals to illustrate their own uniqueness. That said, at this point we hypothesize about the socially superior process of creating collective identity, which is dominative in relation to the expectations and effects that these units create in the community, frequently called the Internet. Further, this process is par excellence political, which this article is intended to demonstrate. This is why artificial intelligence (AI) does not establish identity per se, and the algorithms themselves represent a technical tool and a function of political decisions

¹ Z. Bokszański, "Tożsamość kolektywna a stereotypy", *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica*, no. 28 (1999), p. 27.

² A. Leder, *Rysa na tafli. Teoria w polu psychoanalitycznym*, Warszawa 2016, pp. 15-16.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

to the highest cognitive degree, and therefore strictly personalized. This clarification is very essential because the development of social communication through modern media has consolidated the advantage of the common understanding of the concept of politics and a total lack of understanding of the identical concept of the political. Obviously, political actions produce effects, even though it is not just a matter of the fact that, as a consequence of access to social media accounts of millions of American users, the superficiality of democratic solutions has been proven⁴ (even in such a definitionally perfect state organization as the United States), but a matter of the process of creating the collective identity itself. Only in result of its creation did specific political phenomena occur, influencing our reality, not just the digital one, but primarily that which is experienced and real. Arriving at this point, it would be worth considering whether the term *virtual world* annulled its referent. If we were to consider the Internet as a tool for transmitting the worldviews of its users, then our presence as creators of our own Internet profiles was a prerequisite for digital ontologization. Nevertheless, the development of algorithms has in practice substantially reduced our efficiency and inner-directedness. Would it be legitimate to reckon that the Internet is merely a transmitter of content posted by communicating entities? To a certain extent, it would, but nevertheless mass presence has led to a feedback relationship that, according to modern psychological research, is not fully realized.⁵ While presenting oneself, a person signals publicly that they have problems with fully identifying themselves; what they receive in return becomes a precise message, reinforcing their original viewpoints for the purposes of making choices. Apparently, this regards only consumer choices, but in consequence also decisions about specific political implications. Therefore, it will be justified to hypothesize about the overlapping of the virtual and real worlds, which was partially beyond the perception of the questioned entities, and thus there was a lack of cultural capital in the confrontation with the artificial intelligence algorithm that surpassed their cognitive skills – especially when measured over a short time horizon. This problem can be explained by referring to the concept of fast and slow thinking presented by Daniel Kahneman.⁶ In the concept of *mental systems*, the author distinguished: *System 1 (S1) – that works in a quick and automatic manner, with little or no effort, we have no sense of conscious control with it.*⁷ In turn, *System 2 (S2)* enforces certain behaviours, involving our effort to perform a complicated mental operation.⁸ The former, which is of particular interest to us, is about the domination of sensations and emotions. We pay attention,⁹ which perfectly illustrates the pace of posting Internet broadcast and taking a stance on matters important to the individual. Notwithstanding the fact that the issue

⁴ S. Holmes, “Masy ludzi zbędnych”, interviewed by E. Świętochowska, *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, 30 October – 1 November 2020.

⁵ See T. Singer, *Cultural Complexes and the Soul of America. Myth, Psyche and Politics*, New York 2020.

⁶ D. Kahneman, *Pułapki myślenia. O myśleniu szybkim i wolnym*, Poznań 2012.

⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

of the pace of information transfer online no longer exists,¹⁰ time, which is currently the subject of economic transactions, forces fast publishing activities to “buy” the so-called reach. However, this is not about the fact that a shortened reaction time is burdened with a series of errors and distortion, but it favours an emotional reaction, in whose rightness we share a primary belief. Then we intuitively omit all barriers and creative efforts that would dictate the recognition of the phenomenon in its possible specificity. The reason is that System 1 does not allow us to identify cognitive biases. We are sure of the validity of our intuition. This conviction in our beliefs exempts us from the necessity to relate the presented knowledge to statistical data. The latter may radically contradict what we think is rational and probable.¹¹ The question of statistical intuition is particularly interestingly intertwined with our stereotypical thinking about people and social groups. When attributing features to certain people, we are guided by their automatic assignment to the stereotypical images given to them by the cultural context in which we function.¹² In doing so, we ignore the probability of a cognitive bias resulting from the original rejection of the process of thinking about commonly available statistical data in which we are engaged, which we could already imagine with a little effort.

All collected information about us are stored in by data bases, identifying our primary sensitivity.¹³ In effect, it has become important whether or not that data is made available. It comes as is no surprise that online behaviour has become the subject of research by social psychologists. Unfortunately, as a consequence of isolating the problem, the ethical and, above all, political consequences of the research itself have been forgotten or ignored. Furthermore, the assertion about the public dimension of politics, which is a politological truism in terms of politology, has not been correlated with the possibility of recreating the network of emotions and impressions representing the hitherto previous individual identities. The success of network communication, and thus the increased ability to research variables in the big data area, has made it possible to obtain information in the field of social science on an unprecedented scale. The coincidence of interests of science and entities enforcing the desired consumer behaviour has resulted in the development of methods of obtaining and processing data. The domain of social science has gained commercial value, which must be considered a substantial change since its scientificity was questioned.¹⁴ Of course, we are speaking of a universe of applied sciences. Political science, operating on the border of Humanities and Science, faces the

¹⁰ See W. Lippmann, *Opinia publiczna*, Kraków 2020, pp. 58-69.

¹¹ See H. Rosling, *Factfulness: dlaczego świat jest lepszy, niż myślimy, czyli jak stereotypy zastąpić realną wiedzą*, Poznań 2018.

¹² See D. Kahneman, *Pułapki myślenia...*, pp. 11-19.

¹³ A good illustration is that Facebook users publish numerous posts aimed at describing past events outside the web: *where we know each other from, where we met*, providing the portal not only with this data, but also updating the network of mutual relations and acquaintances. The remark that it is Facebook that we use to describe what activities we have pursued beyond its reach, is left without comment.

¹⁴ A. Grobler, “Dwa pojęcia wiedzy: w stronę unifikacji”, *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria*, no. 1 (97) (2016), p. 152.

challenge of describing political behaviour, which appeared seems possible, but unlikely due to difficult-to-estimate costs. The technological advancement serving the exchange of information about ourselves was meaningful only in a situation when the popularity of new communication has taken a mass form. Maintaining the proportions, it is the Internet in combination with the social medium that plays an analogous role to the *Large Hadron Collider* for research by physicists. What was provided by theoretical physics and theoretical political science, became possible to observe and research. Particle acceleration, which serves to accelerate them to enormous speeds, close to the speed of light, has its counterpart in the world of the Internet, where the speed of information transfer has begun to influence the shape of political systems and political organization as a whole.¹⁵ The mechanisms of gratification known to man have gained a new version in the form of building reach and approval (*likes*) for views presented on the web. The mechanisms using our stereotypical behaviours have gained political value, because it has been possible, on a massive scale, not so much to steer control the way manner of thinking by guiding individuals them to a specific viewpoint, but rather to enhance emotions and impressions existing in them individuals. It was not an overly surprising discovery. It is easier to strengthen a person own beliefs and use them for political purposes than to change their opinions. Traditional consumer marketing assumed the dissemination of the need of possession through the universality of the product, and subsequently supplemented it with the need to purchase it. Changes that resulted from the observation of consumer behaviour in the network Internet altered the approach of the retail industry by prompting the needs arising from traces of preferences left in the browsing history. This path was followed by consulting companies offering political entities access to data of persons individuals who recorded their psychological profiles resulting from Internet activities. Hence, the natural political consequence was to confirm empower consumers in their choices of consumers, thus eliminating coincidences and lowering costs generated by the randomly distributed. The universe's political offer was expensive and was randomly distributed. The perfect tool for this purpose proved to be Building a sense of collective identity proved to be the perfect tool for this purpose.

According to Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, natural tendencies to strengthen collective identity are specific to the societies of Eastern Europe, which are subjected to specific education towards modernity. There have been attempts to strip them of their former roots through the processes of westernization, globalization and the creation of a supranational political order, offering imitative behaviour.¹⁶ In doing so, it was important not just to communitarise Europe's future, but also its past, including the history of the offenses with which these societies could not and did not want to identify. Analogously, this can be applied to the stereotypic view of the libertarians of the American South or the culture of white working-class Americans from the Rust

¹⁵ It is clear that the realized quantum computer projects, when realized, would serve, apart from science, political activities and purposes.

¹⁶ See I. Krastew, S. Holmes, *Światło, które zgasło. Jak Zachód zawiódł swoich wyznawców*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 84-91.

Belt and the Midwest.¹⁷ Although the above-mentioned American communities had their established identities, due to globalization, they remained outside the mainstream of political interest, representing rather the costs of transforming global economy and cultural uniformity. Although the intellectual left in the United States described and interpreted these new phenomena, including the backlash, the fact that political behaviour was articulated by the right-wing circles came as a surprise to the former. Nevertheless, it is hard to decide with certainty whether until that time these people were united by a common experience and biography, or whether they understood them individually, as an identification with an idea and not with a group.

CREATIVE COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMY

The main concern of this text in the scope of the question regarding the pattern and course of creating a collective identity and imposing it on Internet users will be analysed based on the claims represented by behavioural economics.¹⁸ Three rationales are assumed as part of it: maximizing the benefits of entities (P1), limited information processing and attention capabilities (P2), and constant expectations towards behaviours and desires of other entities (P3).¹⁹ A decade ago, such a considerable interference in the electoral behaviour of people present in the Internet was not even predicted, because the pace of development of data collection and processing technologies was underestimated. The easiness of access to such technologies and their use was therefore somewhat surprising, as illustrated by our adherence to traditional patterns of research on political behaviour, and perhaps also by an inadequate assessment of the pace and risk of technological progress. According to the authors of algorithms, the current age of information has been replaced by a technically advanced age of disinformation.²⁰ When translated into the language of contemporary social research, we can assess the effects of people's actions in the field of political behaviour, adopting elements of the prospect theory developed by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman.²¹ The main conclusion was that people react in a different manner to profits than to losses, although the researchers were aware of the shortcomings of the method because it was not possible to conduct research on large

¹⁷ See A.R. Hochschild, *Obcy we własnym kraju. Gniew i żal amerykańskiej prawicy*, Warszawa 2017; J.D. Vance, *Elegia dla bidoków. Wspomnienia o rodzinie i kulturze w stanie krytycznym*, Warszawa 2018; T. Frank, *Co z tym Kansas?*, Warszawa 2008; S.L. Huntington, *Kim jesteśmy? Wyzwania dla amerykańskiej tożsamości narodowej*, Kraków 2007.

¹⁸ R.H. Thaler, *Zachowania niepoprawne. Tworzenie ekonomii behawioralnej*, Poznań 2018.

¹⁹ P.M. Sniderman, M.S. Levendusky, "Instytucjonalna teoria wyborów politycznych", in R.J. Dalton, H.-D. Klingemann (eds.), *Zachowania polityczne*, vol. 2, Warszawa 2010, p. 17.

²⁰ *Dylemat społeczny*, a documentary, script: V. Curtis, D. Commbe, J. Orłowski, director: J. Orłowski, Netflix 2020.

²¹ D. Kahneman, A. Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk", *Econometrica*, vol. 47, no. 2 (1979), pp. 263-291.

amounts of money, limiting the study to the so-called *laboratory gamble*.²² That said, the political electoral situation in which the deciding entity finds itself is an analogous gambling decision. This is not combined with proper awareness, characteristic for thinking as part of System 2. Determining voting behaviour in terms of duty and citizenship assigns a universal and abstract value to this action. However, as postulated by the creator of the economic theory of democracy, Anthony Downs, a rational voter must be aware of the fact that no party could fulfil all of its promises.²³ Certainly, Downs assumed an assessment as part of what we would call System 2, while the decisions of voters are most commonly based on System 1. Coming back to the category of hazard, the similarity is in risk assessment. The risk of political behaviour is misdiagnosed or its perception is weakened by other, non-economic factors. Emotions and impressions come to the fore. From the perspective of a political organization, we are talking about statistical life, to which we relate activities organized by public policy assumptions and identified life understood as an individual biography, and we usually read it in terms of feelings and impressions.²⁴ This is fostered by the common presence of social issues in the media, which create an entire symbolic context. We read human experiences, especially negative ones, not only through the filter of personal empathy, but also of the dangers of finding ourselves in an analogous situation.²⁵ The expected outturn shall be the effective activity of the state, as if it had solved our private matters. However, this applies to the alleged borderline situation, that is, the area of strong emotions, which is a reaction of experiencing, or empathic incarnation in the observed event. An analogue stance does not accompany an approach to the abstractive – from our perspective – social dilemmas, which belong to the capacities of the governing state institutions. The self-control of citizens is therefore limited to the state in which they know the potential unpleasant effects of their behaviour, acting in the sense of individual rationality.²⁶ In the framework of this rationality, they may not see a direct correlation between the election act and the dangers of being ruled over a long period of time.²⁷ The right to decide about our lives, the actual remnant of *patria potestas* (*ius vitae ac necis*), was transferred to the supreme authority, assuming a representative form in a democracy. It seems important to learn the reasons behind the behaviours of politically active individuals that do not attach importance to electoral behaviour based on minimizing the maximum probable risk resulting from the need to conform to a stream of political decisions – especially when we realize that the

²² Ibid., p. 265; See R.H. Thaler, *Zachowania niepoprawne...*, p. 61.

²³ P.M. Sniderman, M.S. Levendusky, "Instytucjonalna teoria...", p. 31.

²⁴ See T.C. Schelling, "The Life You Save May Be Your Own", in S.B. Chase Jr. (ed.), *Problems in Public Expenditure Analysis*, vol. 127, Washington 1968, p. 129.

²⁵ See S. Baron-Cohen, *Teoria zła. O empatii i genezie okrucieństwa*, Sopot 2014, pp. 31-32.

²⁶ See A.M. Colman, "Thomas C. Schelling's Psychological Decision Theory: Introduction to a Special Issue", *Journal of Economic Psychology*, vol. 27, no. 5 (2006), pp. 603-608.

²⁷ An interesting study of the American South was presented by Arlie Russell Hochschild, who cited the arguments of his interlocutors who identified oppression and violation of civil liberties with the Federal Government, which the future U.S. president Donald Trump perceived not as a traditional administration, but as an entity using power. See A.R. Hochschild, *Obcy...*, passim.

political context of ruling one's life has virtually no competition under democratic conditions. It invalidates all other contexts. The voter's awareness must take into account the time and scale of the risk, and in the case of elections we are talking about potential long-term threats that cannot be overruled by an individual non-political decision. In such a way, only their effects can be mitigated.

In consequence, an externally induced agency has emerged, as the social media algorithm finds tendencies in believing in and communicating conspiracy theories, which in turn has led to the emergence of an extreme political phenomenon – the alt-right. The implication of this movement must have been the transfer of identification, often unconscious, to electoral behaviour. Political provision of security of a citizen in the area of the axiology closest to him, which is clear to him, leads to the inhibition of the self-control instinct. He feels satisfied due to fulfilling his fundamental needs. The citizen does not try to statistically calculate the cost of the risk of extremes policy. Furthermore, through the action of the algorithm and sealing of the information bubble, his so far extreme views prove to be numerically popular, appearing to him as representative of the majority of society. This manipulation of consciousness, in turn, leads to a willingness to share one's views with the largest group of similar thinkers possible. Among others in this way, the proportion of American voters who were prone to racist behaviour were encouraged.²⁸

At this point, the fundamental research question will be the doubt referring to Richard H. Thaler's claim why rational entities – acting politically – do not optimize their decisions.²⁹ Even though the majority of political programs assumed that the increase in the economic awareness of citizens could prevent a number of problems in the future, and ultimately reduce the impact of public policy on the fate of individual citizens. Over time, as a consequence of research in behavioural economics, people began to look at the actual behaviours of individuals, departing from abstract assumptions of economic rationality.³⁰ In the analysed research issue, the economic factors merely constitute one of the elements describing one's fate, although their influence on making election decisions should be emphasized. That said, the emotional system of thinking (S1) supported by high expressiveness, characteristic of the internet activity of citizens, results in the fact that the citizens do not assess their social situation solely from an economic perspective. Instead, they treat it as a consequence of social and political relations formed beyond their control. They draw considerable attention to the axiological social order, seeing politicians as guarantors of the observance of principles fundamental for the community. A major role is often played here by moral arguments, and a part of society expects these issues to exist not only in the discourse, but above all in the actions of the authorities. Hence the popularity of various forms of political theology. Often, these rules take precedence over the problem of the wealth of individual members who deem economic inequalities to be permissible. This is all the more surprising as concurrently, the American working class struggled with the problem of

²⁸ C. Wylie, *Mindf*ck. Cambridge Analytica, czyli jak popsuć demokrację*, Kraków 2020, p. 225.

²⁹ See R.H. Thaler, *Zachowania niepoprawne...*, p. 25.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

unemployment and the closure of factories or the relocation of production to a different state or country. The emotional attitude toward the organization of social order forces strong reactions to the experienced injustice, in which the characteristic role is played by personal freedom, often unrelated to the perceived poverty. Criticism of the system dominates the assessment of subjective predispositions and willingness to improve one's situation, especially in the face of a belief that reality is created by changes in the external environment of individuals and facts, rather than by their own defects.³¹ However, the development of social contacts on the Internet has been used for awakening attitudes connected with the sense of being scammed by the system. One blames it for his fate, while the secondary class consciousness grows.³² As a result of low social wealth, relatively inferior education and the loss of opportunities for personal development, a claim for compensation arises, not necessarily a directly economic one, because the white working class *Rust Belt* not so much demanded social transfers for themselves, but denied this kind of aid to the members of their own social class if they displayed pathological behaviours.³³ The identity expressed in such a manner implied remaining silent in the American South, as social classes were merely implicit and an acceptable and tactful language of criticism against blacks was used, although concerns were expressed about Muslims.³⁴ The transition of the former electorate of the Democratic Party to the Republican Party since the presidency of Richard Nixon resulted from a specific transcription of the political order by the masses. Continuous expectations towards others meant maintaining the traditional social order, that is, demanding from political decision-makers not to disturb relations within a given social group. The introduction of an imbalance between the working poor and the unemployed, through federal social transfers, devalued the objective value of work. In such a setting, it is easy to demand eliminating discrimination, when the emboldened crowd (nowadays the Internet community) expects to settle accounts with their persecutors, and thus, by definition, being hostile to the previously privileged elite.³⁵ A good illustration of this pattern was the rise of revolutionary moods in nineteenth-century France, the people of which could not come to terms with the reality in which the aristocracy, although losing their privileges, preserved their property.³⁶ In extraordinary conditions, everyone is subject to compulsion, but the poorer must endure it more often than the richer. The problem is likely to be in the inability to distinguish between legitimate coercion and arbitrary persecution.³⁷ All of this was used as a format for creating a political identity appropriately reinforced in articulation.

³¹ J.D. Vance, *Elegia dla bidoków...*, pp. 30, 182-183.

³² See R. Eatwell, M. Goodwin, *Narodowy populizm. Zamach na liberalną demokrację*, Katowice 2020, pp. 54-55.

³³ J.D. Vance, *Elegia dla bidoków...*, pp. 172-173.

³⁴ A.R. Hochschild, *Obcy...*, p. 193.

³⁵ R. Girard, *Kozioł ofiarny*, Łódź 1991, pp. 30-31.

³⁶ H. Arendt, *Korzenie totalitaryzmu*, Warszawa 2014, p. 44.

³⁷ R. Girard, *Kozioł...*, p. 31.

THE IDENTITY OF THE LEFT BECOMES THE IDENTITY OF THE RIGHT

The growing political activity of American citizens requires proper retrospection, especially from the moment when they discovered that building the identity of one's own organization produces concrete electoral results. The increase in the above attitudes could be attributed to three reasons. The first one is to submit to the stream of arguments resulting from being locked in a community of like-minded people (information bubble), which results in the lack of seeking alternative attempts to understand political phenomena and processes. This attitude can be defined as a moment of formation. In behavioural economics, it will correspond to premise P2. Donald Trump's electoral slogan became its political equivalent: *Make America Great Again* (MAGA). It united traditionalists, opponents of the elite and people who had not been politically involved so far.³⁸ The divisions in the electorate in 2016 were even more prominent along the education category and this variable can be considered the cause of certain political attitudes. That said, at this point it is worth looking at this issue not in a deprecating way, but as a source of a specific perception of the world and related self-identification. The second reason is the expiatory moment – the repentance of the left-liberal elites, who allow the awareness of previous inappropriate behaviour towards minorities. It corresponds to premise P3. In this case, the imperative of repentance was treated as a kind of a mental crime.³⁹ It produced a counterproductive outcome, because critics shared a reluctance towards the inability to articulate and support the values that were the components of the original identity. It meant interfering with freedom of speech, the right to do exegesis of all values professed by people, derived from religious ethics.⁴⁰ Interestingly, the stance of European liberals was different. According to J. Zielonka, they were convinced of not only their intellectual, but also moral superiority over their opponents, suggesting educational processes to them and adopting extremely irrational attitudes.⁴¹ The American liberals (the new left), in turn, focused on the politics of identity. The order introduced by Reagan hindered the formation of identity other than individual, assuming the will to belong to families, churches or micro-communities.⁴² The political crisis of the new left in the USA also stemmed from the internal imbalance of their organizations, as protests against the domination of whites or men in leadership roles grew.⁴³ Therein lies the actual success of a policy that is opposite to American liberalism. The identity politics produced opposite results than assumed. Affirmative action and postulates for the equality of individual

³⁸ R. Eatwell, M. Goodwin, *Narodowy populizm...*, p. 48.

³⁹ P. Bruckner, *Tyrania skruchy. Rozważania na temat samobiczowania Zachodu*, Warszawa 2019, p. 59.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴¹ J. Zielonka, *Kontrrewolucja. Liberalna Europa w odwrocie*, Warszawa 2018, p. 49.

⁴² M. Lilla, *Koniec liberalizmu, jaki znamy. Requiem dla polityki tożsamości*, Warszawa 2018, p. 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

minorities not so much built the postulated collective identity, making America more tolerant, but enhanced internal differences.⁴⁴ This can be explained by the distinctive features of political communication. The collective *we* lost to the dominant *me* that demanded unconditional recognition. The natural consequence of confessing the sins of the elites was the political empowerment of minorities. Hillary Clinton devoted a lot of attention to ethnic minorities during the 2016 election campaign, almost forgetting the uneducated white working class.⁴⁵ These phenomena culminated in contemporary Black Lives Matter protests. On the basis of the expected forgiveness of guilt, the process of creating a common identity failed to begin, as minorities expected a consistent increase in the role of the formerly persecuted. Thus, there was a demand for constant views on the issue of equality in the identity policy on the part of the Democratic Party. The civic attitude of today's Republican voters was represented by phenomena of dislike of the Other, as positive discrimination by politicians hit the interests of the lower middle class and the values of the disadvantaged and politically disengaged classes. The third counter-revolutionary moment is an attempt to stop processes that were presented as unrivalled, focusing the attention of aspiring societies on imitative processes in order to eliminate atavistic attitudes. This corresponds to premise P1. Hence, as Krastev and Holmes claim, a simplified perception of ethnic homogeneity or xenophobic nativism existed.⁴⁶ There was a dominance an elite-derived critical look at the desires to seek identity on the basis of national character. The situation of the societies of Central and Eastern Europe differ from that of the cited anti-elite American communities. The latter live in a split between the willingness to remain in the community of fate as an expression of inalienable belonging, while being confronted with the model of pragmatic professing common values of good and faith in the established democracy.⁴⁷ The political order was interpreted as reclaiming the rights not only to profess traditional values, but also to present them in public. Identity politics was therefore seen as unfair; in the name of defending some groups, it limited the importance of others. Tantamount to this was a phenomenon described by American sociology as *white male anger*. Although depicted by Michael Kimmel with glaring methodological errors, this postulate had some causal value.⁴⁸ Propagated social diversity took obsessive forms, which allowed white working-class men to feel threatened by their own identity.⁴⁹ The Republican identity policy was thus an American framework that was to transcend the distinctive features of minorities. The problem of belonging to an excluding political community meant that members of classes potentially privileged in relation to the excluded built the identity of the victims in themselves. Mark Lilla assumes that man acts in politics to pursue the particular goal of recognizing and nurturing who he

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 97-99.

⁴⁵ R. Eatwell, M. Goodwin, *Narodowy populizm...*, p. 133.

⁴⁶ I. Krastew, S. Holmes, *Światło...*, p. 88.

⁴⁷ See Z. Bauman, *Tożsamość. Rozmowy z Benedetto Vecchim*, Gdańsk 2007, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁸ M. Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity and the End of an Era*, New York 2017.

⁴⁹ R. Eatwell, M. Goodwin, *Narodowy populizm...*, p. 133.

already is.⁵⁰ Not necessarily will he strive for an abstract – in his opinion – change of the general situation, which is a social form of existence. A guarantee of rights is therefore not associated with the postulate of equality, but with a sense of injustice for everyone who loses due to the taken political decisions.

How did it come about that political motivations closer to the liberal left were taken over and used by the republican circles? The essence of collective identity changes is in cultural shifts. In particular, the reference vectors have shaken the domain of American political culture. America ceased to be the moral model of statehood for the world, and Trump himself not only never attempted to correct this situation, but turned it into the core of his politics.⁵¹ The loss of respect for procedures and institutions, and finally for the rules of the republic treated as an objective good, showed that there was no longer any will to jointly care for respecting them.⁵² Emotions representative for the described Kahneman System 1 supersede economic, military and technological statistical data that should be taken into account when building assessments of the current situation in thinking about the state and society. The identity policy being a specific liberal feature in the USA calling for supporting the community, was intercepted by new American conservatives, with their party counterpart in the form of the Tea Party.⁵³ Identity in the political offer of the left, seemingly based on the processes of empowerment, was to guarantee the emergence and development of a new better society. It wasn't just about identification with a catalogue of values, but rather creating new social relations devoid of old divisions. The ability to accept the universal world was wrongly assumed at the expense of the primary identities of minority groups. They did not want to heal general relationships, but to increase the importance of their own specificity. Meanwhile, the American right and Donald Trump himself decided to use the fundamental identification of the electorate, both religious and cultural, to increase electoral activity.⁵⁴ That assumption was based upon the conviction of the need to support the existing collective identities, and even to strengthen them by guaranteeing the respect of rudimentary values in the personnel mechanisms of federal policy and the content of political decisions. This could also be explained in the context of political theology, because the categories of political fault of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party constitute a secularized concept of sin. In the first case, sin was the essence of omissions in respect to minorities, and these blamed the Democratic Party not only for insufficient progressivism, but also for its hidden aversion to minorities, as evidenced by political programs assuming high dependence of marginalized groups. The right-wing establishment, and even more so Donald Trump himself, although they were not the embodiment of professed virtues,

⁵⁰ M. Lilla, *Koniec liberalizmu...*, p. 106.

⁵¹ I. Krastew, S. Holmes, *Światło...*, pp. 206-207.

⁵² M.A. Cichocki, "Mocarstwo bez powabu", *Rzeczpospolita Plus Minus*, no. 267, 14-15 November 2020.

⁵³ See M. Brauchli, "Gdyby nie wirus, Biden by przegrał", interviewed by J. Bielecki, *Rzeczpospolita Plus Minus*, no. 267, 14-15 November 2020.

⁵⁴ See J. Sides, M. Tesler, L. Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*, Princeton 2018.

promised to support the conservative world view (American values) and to fight globalization, that is, a phenomenon created by the American economy, becoming its own victim. Krastew and Holmes recall that confession of sins has become the credo of President Trump's policy of demanding that America recognize and identify itself with its lack of innocence.⁵⁵ The policy of the 45th president of the United States was to disrupt the identification of the citizen with the idea of the state, while maintaining identification with personally professed values. It was not MAGA's intention to rebuild the domination of the state as a universal political community worth following,⁵⁶ but a motto of mobilization for domestic use. Political success was to be a consequence of the specificity and ethnic coherence of America, and non-compliance with the rules of international politics was justified by winning against the counties characterized by similar selfishness. What seemed like an interruption of identity politics turned out to be a meta-identification of the right, as their fears and flaws gained the status of political rights. Especially when this new order was guaranteed by the head of state.

AWARENESS OF PROFIT AND LOSS, AND FACEBOOK'S COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The creation of extended databases has become a function of technological progress and increased activity of internet users. Awareness of the flow and collection of data was developed through messages presented to Web users and a system of consenting to the collection and processing of information regarding one's activity. Beside their educational and information function, directly formulated comments could contribute to the reduction of the ability to recognize a potentially dangerous situation. An active online presence was to be awarded by payout mechanisms. A considerable number of followers were awarded financially or in barter. Cookies were used to present promotional shopping deals for the interested users. Nevertheless, we have an example of another recognition of the situation of immediate benefit and a risk of potential loss characteristic of behavioural economics. Economists' research indicated that a minimum profit would be acceptable if it did not involve a sense of injustice or being cheated.⁵⁷ In other words, contrary to the rational economic calculus, people accept inequality because they believe that a world of perfect equilibrium cannot exist, so they settle for an acceptable injustice, slightly less than half the potential pool, usually around 40 percent.⁵⁸ The situation is somewhat different when economic and political risks are combined over a longer time horizon. A good example is the Brexit referendum in Great Britain. The short-term gains in the form of halting the wave of immigration that affected the labour market, the issue of internal security, and the false

⁵⁵ I. Krastew, S. Holmes, *Światło...*, pp. 207-208.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

⁵⁷ R.H. Thaler, *Zachowania niepoprawne...*, pp. 185-188.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

promise of transferring the amount of the contribution to the EU budget to support the National Health Service, were to outweigh the long-term risk of operating outside the structures of the European community as immediate gains.

Placing a series of data in social profiles was characterized by a relative awareness of online safety. In a 2013 survey of Polish internet users, 83% of respondents claimed that *Internet-related threats may have real effects on everyday life*; when asked: *Do you think that sending, exchanging and using information on the Internet is safe?*, 42% answered *rather not safe*, and 9% *definitely not safe*.⁵⁹ Concurrently, such knowledge was coupled with the voluntary use of two-factor authentication on Facebook, which, in the opinion of the algorithm's creators, could indicate a strong sense of product safety or could be dictated by other motivations of the company, for example by their commercial use. Not only the statistical data obtained from our accounts became a commodity. As the developers of global Silicon Valley brands claim, *If you're not paying for the product, then you are the product*. This dependency could still be properly recognized. That said, encouraging us to specific behaviours or creating concrete political ties for the purpose of exerting an influence on electoral decision-making was beyond this perception. Facebook's focus on modifying user behaviour by accessing data and metadata using an artificial intelligence algorithm could ultimately regulate their decisions of political relevance.⁶⁰ Research on behaviour in the Internet should be based on the assumption of awareness of the one-way flow of messages. Its content is expressed by a set of emotions, which is to link the content with the widest possible recognition. The issue of resonance (feedback) consists in expecting attention, but we do not know whether the awareness of confirming others and thus oneself in well-established judgments about reality becomes a field for abuse by entities positioning the content. An award in the form of personal satisfaction could be perceived through the context of the risk of being forced to a political act of choice. The sudden availability of an identical political project can be translated as a literal fulfilment of our expectations. This coincidence did not raise any doubts or astonishment of users locked in an identity bubble. It is only seemingly our choice, as the *filter bubbles* play a more important role. This demonstrates the problem of the algorithm's lack of social responsibility, because the click rate triggered the filtering of the content in terms of ideology, where liberals received liberal content, conservatives, in turn, conservative.⁶¹ Allowing the participation of modern technologies of data manipulation for the purposes of social development was broadly considered to help people optimize their life choices. The potential gain was the directing of the recipient onto the path to achieving personal happiness. An additional element was faith in the positive qualities of the development of global communication, and awareness of commercial profit from the growing interest in social media. Psychometrics, that is, a set of measurements of the possessed knowledge, discovering previously unknown correlations, was considered a special tool

⁵⁹ *Opinie o bezpieczeństwie w internecie*, Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa, July 2013, at <https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K_099_13.PDF>, 20 November 2020.

⁶⁰ R. McNamee, *Nabici w Facebooka. Przestroga przed katastrofą*, Poznań 2020, pp. 12, 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

for change. It does not represent a dangerous tool in itself, but only uses the technology of measurement.⁶² In the case of stimulating electoral activity, it turned out that the mere study of political preferences is no longer needed. Assuming the behavioural economics perspective allows us to bypass the high-profile element of the ethics of behaviour of Facebook or Google. For such-minded researchers, ethicality in using data or manipulating people is irrelevant. Social psychology can also be left with the study of the impact of social media addiction. It is not important whether social networks change individual consumer behaviours and psychological personality profiles. Analogously, we are not interested in the opinions of Robert Oppenheimer and Mark Zuckerberg about their inventions. What is meaningful to us is the level of awareness of citizens when their actions gain a specific political effect. It can be judged in terms of profit and loss. We are thus concerned that, in the course of the development of artificial intelligence algorithms, the possibilities of making decisions with political content and effects have been expanded. Moreover, this knowledge has been used at least several times to trigger political effects. This knowledge facilitated communication with the electorate using other tools, at the same time simplifying the programming of short and blunt messages.⁶³ The assumptions of behavioural economics match the evaluation of this phenomenon. Therefore, it is not about a strictly normative assessment of the actions of political actors, but rather about indicating the process of forming collective identity used to intensify the electoral behaviour of citizens. The conclusion that follows from this analysis is that Facebook, by comparing the data, offer and identity of the information consumer, indirectly contributed to the separation and use of the collective identity of some users who later made a specific electoral decision or non-decision. The latter always carry political consequences. Promoting basic emotions at the expense of unbiased attitudes was in Facebook's interest as a seller of advertising space, but at the same time, knowledge was gathered that was no longer neutral to political decision-makers. It would not be reasonable to assume the ignorance of its creators as far as the political characteristics of data management is concerned, especially when we realize that all social behaviours at their highest point reach the political level.

EPILOGUE

One of the classical approaches to understanding collective identity is bestowing it with theological characteristics. Such an attitude towards an objective directs us to the concept of the struggle for power. Collective identity is then politicized in the literal sense.⁶⁴ We know the political end of the actions of algorithms in the digital age.

⁶² M. Kosiński, *Jak okiełznać algorytm*, interviewed by K. Szymielewicz, at <https://panoptikon.org/sites/default/files/panoptikon_na_2019_09_11_m.kosinski.mp3>, 20 October 2020.

⁶³ J.S. Hacker, P. Pierson, *Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality*, New York 2020.

⁶⁴ B. Simon, B. Klandermans, "Politicized Collective Identity. A Social Psychological Analysis", *American Psychologist*, vol. 56, no. 4 (2001), pp. 319-331.

A wealth of literature has been produced on the impact on the results of the 2016 presidential election in the United States and the Brexit referendum. In the wake of this, could the question be posed regarding collective identity offered by Cambridge Analytica (CA)? Did the knowledge and ignorance of Facebook users contribute to gaining power? Surely, the beneficiaries of this created identification could easily be indicated. We will recognize the strengthening of prejudices and the manipulation of behaviours among the functions of creating a new political collective consciousness. Undoubtedly, while testing its own tools, CA gained knowledge about their influence on creating political involvement of users.⁶⁵ The data was used in a questionable manner that permanently and often irreversibly altered the political reality, and the reaction was to block the Facebook application by governments that discovered CA interference.⁶⁶ A sense of anonymity can reveal a user's true awareness, hence the compulsion to use a real identity on Facebook. In such a way, the issue of how to encourage people to more frequent use, as well as connecting other online activities with the one on Facebook, has taken on greater importance. Responsibility relative to the consequences of influencing elections in several places around the world would probably not apply to the information exchange platform, but Facebook itself has become a medium that has already been governed by the relevant regulations. The media strengthens identities, making use of lowering will and cognitive alertness. Obtaining and disclosing information regarding the actual inclinations of users, who were consequently offered a policy of recognizing the identity traits they so far feared to disclose to the public, was the category of profit.⁶⁷ From the perspective of political science, it is not about pinpointing the blame for the unethical use of the achievements of social science. Of interest is also the recognition of subsequent phases of creating a space in which the collective identity of social media users was strengthened and recreated, leading to tangible election results. Technology, especially communication technology, does not develop in an axiological vacuum. The summary is given by a whistleblower employed at Cambridge Analytica: *defining one's identity is an extremely powerful tool, so we should oppose any attempts to deprive us of the possibility of self-determination by those who want to impose their definitions on us by closing us in a social or logarithmic closet*.⁶⁸ In essence, it is about creating a new identity hegemony, as pointed out by people who stopped working for data management companies. In this case, the cognitive dilemma implies the inability to decide whether it is about facilitating decision-making processes for the development of individuals and society, or about creating such civic and political attitudes that the artificial intelligence algorithm considers optimal – notwithstanding the fact that the final stage of these practices will be the politicization of our lives par excellence. We cease to be the ultimate beneficiaries, even though we believe in the essence of democracy and the

⁶⁵ C. Wylie, *Mindf*ck...*, p. 224.

⁶⁶ R. McNamee, *Nabici w Facebooka...*, pp. 179-180; see C. Cadwalladr, "The Great British Brexit Robbery: How Our Democracy Was Hijacked", *The Guardian*, 7 May 2017.

⁶⁷ C. Wylie, *Mindf*ck...*, p. 212.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 448.

distribution of its goods. Thus, the problem of establishing a collective identity does not concern its content and scope, but political outcomes. This is particularly important when our will becomes the relation between beliefs and the offer of goods that fit those views.

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