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**Edita Jančiauskienė**

**IMPLICATIONS OF BREXIT ON EUROPEAN IDENTITY:  
MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS**

Master's Degree Final Project

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**SOCIALINIŲ, HUMANITARINIŲ MOKSLŲ IR MENŲ FAKULTETAS**

**Edita Jančiauskienė**

**„BREXIT`O“ POVEIKIS EUROPINIAM TAPATUMUI:  
MEDIJŲ TURINIO ANALIZĖ**

Baigiamasis magistro projektas

**Vadovas**  
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## SANTRAUKA

Brexit`as ženkliai pakeitė Europos politinį klimatą tiek nacionaliniu, tiek tarptautiniu mastu. Esminė prielaida šio baigiamojo naujumui yra tai, jog pagrindinė tyrimų sritis Brexit`o atveju yra galimos jo ekonominės ir politinės pasekmės. Šis darbas pateikia sociopolitinę šio reiškinio perspektyvą, analizuodamas europinio tapatumo suvokimo pokyčius Brexit`o kontekste. Išsami projekto tyrimo sistema yra palanki tolesniems moksliniams darbams, todėl ją pasitelkus galima vykdyti panašius tyrimus ir ateityje, ypač skirtingais laikotarpiais. Tyrimo problema – europinio tapatumo suvokimo pokyčiai Brexit`o kontekste. Tyrimo tikslas – išskirti esminius europinio tapatumo suvokimo pokyčius Brexit`o kontekste, remiantis medijų turinio analize. Tyrimo objektas – europinis tapatumas. Tyrimo dalykas – europinio tapatumo pobūdis Brexit`o kontekste. Norint pasiekti tyrimo tikslą, suformuluoti trys uždaviniai. Pirmasis uždavinys yra išanalizuoti tradicinę europinio tapatumo sampratą. Antra, būtina parengti metodologinę sistemą medijų turinio analizei. Trečiasis uždavinys – nustatyti europinio tapatumo pokyčius, taikant interpretacinę medijų turinio analizę. Pagrindinis tyrimo metodas teorinėje darbo dalyje yra mokslinės literatūros analizė. Tam, kad būtų nustatyti europinio tapatumo suvokimo pokyčiai, pasitelkta interpretacinė medijų turinio analizė. Tyrimo duomenų masyvą sudaro 60 internetinių straipsnių, kurie pateikiami kaip britų bei europietišku naujienų tinklapių atitikmenys: „BBC“ ir „The Guardian“ atitinka britų medijas, o „Euronews“ ir „POLITICO“ atitinka europietiškus šaltinius. Dviejų lygmenų kodų sistema buvo sukurta kaip pagrindas turinio analizei. Darbą sudaro trys skyriai. Pirmasis skyrius skirtas teorinei tyrimo analizei, jame nagrinėjama socialinio tapatumo teorija, istorinės europinio tapatumo prielaidos bei socialinio tapatumo pokyčiai dėl skaitmeninių medijų įtakos. Metodologinėje dalyje analizuojama turinio analizė kaip įrankis sociopolitiniuose tyrimuose, taip pat aprašoma kodų rinkinio struktūra, sukurta empirinei šio darbo daliai atlikti. Empirinėje tyrimo dalyje pateikiami kodavimo rezultatai, taip atsakant į tyrimo klausimus, suformuluotus metodologinio skyriaus pabaigoje. Empirinis tyrimas atskleidė, kad nėra esminių skirtumų tarp britų ir europietišku naujienų portalų nei vertybiniu aspektu, nei tuo kaip yra pristatomos su europiniu tapatumu susijusios temos. Duomenų masyvo kontekste europinis tapatumas pristatomas kaip nevienareikšmė sąvoka, kurioje telpa du visiškai priešingi požiūriai. Dalis žmonių yra



daugialypių tapatumų sambūvio šalininkai, kurie tiki, jog nėra būtina nustatyti prioritetus skirtingoms tapatybėms, kadangi jos yra natūrali asmens savasties dalis. Atitinkamai, ES yra suvokiama kaip organizacija, kuri siejama su klestėjimu bei gina demokratiją ir žmogaus teises bei skatina kultūrinę įvairovę ir socialinę aprėptį. Priešingas požiūris nurodo, jog skirtingi tapatumai nėra suderinami, todėl lojalumas savo tautiniam tapatumui yra laikomas būtinu, norint užtikrinti asmeninį ir nacionalinį saugumą, o Brexit`as laikomas galingu įrankiu šiems tikslams įgyvendinti.

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## SUMMARY

Brexit has significantly altered the political landscape of Europe both nationally and internationally. The scientific originality of the final project arises from the fact that the main area of research in the case of Brexit is its economic and political implications. This thesis presents the socio-political perspective of the phenomenon by researching shifts in the cognition of European identity in the context of Brexit. The project provides the comprehensive framework for future research; therefore, it is possible to execute similar researches throughout different periods of time. The problem of the final project is transformation in the understanding of European identity in the context of Brexit. The aim of the final project is to identify the developments in the understanding of European identity in the light of Brexit through the analysis of media content. The object of the final project is European identity. The subject of the final project is the nature of European identity in the light of Brexit. To achieve the aim of the project, three tasks have been established. The first task is to investigate the scope of the traditional understanding of European identity. Secondly, it is essential to outline the methodological framework for media content analysis. The third task is to determine the shifts in European identity by employing media content analysis within an interpretative approach. The main research method of the theoretical part of the research project is the research of scientific literature. As far as the determination of changes in the understanding of European identity are concerned, an interpretative media content analysis has been employed. The sample of the research consists of 60 online articles that represent both British and European news media sources, with *BBC* and *The Guardian* representing British media, while *Euronews* and *POLITICO* represent European sources. A two-level codebook was created as the framework for the content analysis. The thesis consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, the theoretical framework for the investigation is established, analysing Social Identity Theory (SIT), historical preconditions for European identity as well as social identity shifts due to the digital media influences. The methodological chapter investigates content analysis as a means for socio-political research as well as outlines the design of the coding categories for the empirical research. The empirical analysis examines the results of the coding by answering research

questions that were formulated at the end of the methodological chapter. The empirical research has revealed that there are no distinct differences between British and European news media sources as far as values or the representation of topics related to European identity related are concerned. In the context of the sample, European identity is presented as an equivocal concept with two opposing outlooks. There are advocates for the co-existence of multiple identities who believe that there is no need to prioritise identities as they are a natural part of a person's self. Therefore, the EU is recognised as an entity which designates a direction towards prosperity by being the protector of democracy, human rights as well as the promoter of cultural diversity and social inclusion. The opposing perspective posits that different identities are mutually exclusive, therefore, loyalty to one's national identity is deemed to be fundamental in what regards one's personal safety as well as national security, while Brexit is perceived as a powerful instrument to achieve these goals.

# INTRODUCTION

One of the most elementary and easily accessible sources of data for public opinion analysis is the media. This thesis delves into media content analysis regarding it as a significant and efficient methodological means to outline patterns and trends in ever-changing European identity. While concentrating on news media, this thesis attempts at revealing how media content analysis together with analytic methodology can provide distinctive insights about shifts in public opinion and significant changes in European identity, both locally and on the European level.

**Relevance of the final project.** European identity is a popular research topic among linguists and political scientists (Carta & Morin, 2014; Carta & Wodak, 2015; Karner & Kopytowska, 2017). The researchers mostly deal with discourse analysis or, particularly, critical discourse analysis (CDA), while concentrating on public policy or public diplomacy practices of the EU. Other scientific works (e. g. that of Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004) deal with theoretical and methodological issues regarding changes in the policies and discourse of the EU, however, such works are far fewer in number. Another area of interest is public opinion (Fuss & Grosser, 2006), namely, the reasons and preconditions of ‘feeling’ European.

**Scientific originality of the final project.** Brexit is a relatively new development from a temporal point of view, especially considering the entire existence of the European Union and its predecessors. A lot of attention is dedicated to the economic and political implications of Brexit on the EU future, however, public opinion is often disregarded or, at most, the discourse of Brexit referendum campaign seems to be the most popular topic for the research. This research project endeavours to present the socio-political perspective of the matter. Challenges for content analysis as a method for assessing shifts in European identity arise from the lack of comparability of the various studies that exist and the broad scope of data to process.

**The problem of the final project** is transformation in the understanding of European identity in the context of Brexit.

**The aim of the final project** is to identify the developments in the understanding of European identity in the light of Brexit through the analysis of media content.

**The object of the final project** is European identity.

**The subject of the final project** is the nature of European identity in the light of Brexit.

**Tasks of the final project.**

1. to investigate the scope of the traditional understanding of European identity;
2. to outline the methodological framework for media content analysis;

3. to determine the shifts in European identity by employing media content analysis within an interpretative approach.

**The research methods of the final project.** The theoretical part of thesis utilises the research of scientific literature as the main method of analysis. The changes in the cognition of European identity are analysed using a quantitative media content perspective as well as an interpretative approach. The sample for the analysis consists of 60 online news articles that were randomly selected during the period from February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 (taking into consideration the official announcement of the referendum made on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2016) to December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Four news outlets were chosen in total, *BBC* and *The Guardian* representing British media, while *Euronews* and *POLITICO* represent the outlook of the EU.

Consequently, the sample was analysed via the codebook created by the author of the thesis. A two-level codebook was devised to reflect both the general trends in the topics of the sample as well as a more in-depth content analysis that guided the interpretative part of the research. After the data was collected, the information was systemised and conclusions were drawn through the empirical research.

**Scientific significance of the final project.** The observations made in the thesis reveal how comparative media content analysis can aid the understanding of how public communication projects public opinion in terms of European identity.

**Practical significance of the final project.** The findings of the thesis are expected to be of assistance for future research on the developments of European identity because of their replicability and a clear-cut framework that could be employed as the basis for similar analyses in different periods of time.

#### **Structure of the final project.**

The paper consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides the theoretical framework for the investigation. Firstly, it is investigated how SIT could be utilised to distil the key aspects of European identity by eliminating terminological obscurities. Secondly, European identity is analysed from the historical perspective. The last subchapter of the theoretical part concentrates on social identity shifts in the context of the digital media.

The methodological chapter deals with the media discourse analysis. To start with, content analysis as the tool for socio-political research is examined, while the second subchapter concentrates on the construction of the coding categories for the empirical research.

The chapter devoted to the empirical analysis consists of three parts, each of them clarifying answers to research questions presented at the end of the second section of the research project.

# 1. THE PROBLEMATICS OF THE CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Generally, *identity* is a concept that is widely employed both by the general public in their everyday lives as well as professionals representing a broad scope of disciplines, hence the term seems to be used without hesitation in any familiar context. However, such complex constructs as European identity do not fall under the category of commonly accepted umbrella terms thus conventional definitions in such cases prove to be limited and flawed.

This chapter attempts to delve into the present notion of identity in European context, while establishing relative criteria for European identity per se. Firstly, the problematics of collective identity in social sciences are investigated. Secondly, the historical outlook on the preconditions for European identity to occur is investigated. Lastly, the current societal shifts in terms of network society are analysed.

## 1.1. The problematics of national and transnational identity in social sciences

While attempting to discover the meaning of any term, one is most likely to consult a dictionary. The problem is that the prevailing definitions of identity presented in dictionaries usually lack context-specific explanations and fail to grasp essential characteristics of the term, which is also true in the context of national or supranational identity (such as European identity). This is especially confusing when, in most cases, scholars fail to present the working definition of the term, even though identity serves as either a dependent or an independent variable in the research (Fearon, 1999). It could be acceptable to a point if the academics share a relatively similar point of view and agree about what the concept conveys, nevertheless, given the number of different approaches and fields of their expertise, it is highly unlikely that such a viewpoint is accurate.

In political science, the current scope of uses of identity is largely two-fold: identity can be defined as “(a) a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or (a) and (b) at once)” (Fearon, 1999, p. 2). In other words, identity can mean both, a social group with its features and predispositions (social identity) as well as the sources that a person’s self-confidence and self-respect arise from (personal identity).

However, the two types are by no means separate as social identity can be one of the defining factors of the personal identity. Hence, Fearon (1999) is critical of scholars theorising that identity is

merely a social category. The two preconditions for a social category are rules of membership, which can be either implicit or explicit; and the content, i. e. beliefs, moral principles, desires, goals, physical characteristics, etc. This approach, treating identity as a social category, does not work in the case of personal identity since the need to define oneself in terms of being affiliated with a group is not prerequisite. It is especially true, Fearon argues, as far as national identity and similar cases are concerned since “social categories enter into our sense of ourselves as individuals [...] in complex and possibly nefarious or coercive ways” (1999, p. 18). Consequently, identity should be considered more than a social category as it involves not only membership rules and its content, but also specific characteristics that are implicit and inexpressible.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000), on the other hand, criticise the abuse of the term by referring to this phenomenon as *identity crisis*, the term coined by Erikson in late 1960s<sup>1</sup>. They maintain that the “identity talk”, having prevailed in the western world in recent years, has resulted in the meaning of identity being overproduced and, consequently, devalued, which may result in depriving the term of any meaning whatsoever. The scholars themselves narrow down the spectrum of possible definitions and categorisations while distinguishing between two scopes of identity, namely, identity as a category of practice and identity as a category of analysis.

Identity as a category of practice is used by non-scholarly actors in everyday situations to define themselves and their surroundings, to analyse the similarities and differences between themselves and others around. It is also employed by politicians and public servants in what is called *identity politics*. Their actions are premeditated to achieve certain agenda, namely, to affect people’s way of thinking by making associations and forming the preferred alliances based on the perceived similarity, the feeling of being identical with people from one’s group and simultaneously different from other groups.

Identity as a category of analysis, on the other hand, is the one that is employed by social theorists to engage in experience-distant analyses. This approach deals with reification of identity, specifically, the scientific process of proving the existence of the term in question. The empirical research of the thesis deals with identity as a category of practice as the main medium of the analysis is public discourse, however, the first chapter of the thesis also delves into identity as a category of analysis in order to avoid possible ambiguities in terminology.

Another issue that scholars encounter is measuring the identity in question. The most important characteristic of any identity which makes it so difficult to measure is the flexibility of the salience of group membership (Herrmann & Brewer, 2004). In other words, as people belong to numerous groups, the importance of those groups is largely based on the circumstances and the context in which the actors interplay. For example, a person who identifies himself as a European is more likely to perceive this identity as more salient while surrounded by non-Europeans. Conversely, the salience of this

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<sup>1</sup> Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

identity decreases if a person interacts with other Europeans, when national identity comes into play and, in certain cases, overshadows European identity.

The mere need for a complex group identity such as European identity, as Eder (2009) claims, is similar to that of the individual one – groups (be they social, national or transnational groups) attain their identities only if they successfully define themselves vis-à-vis to other groups and ensure the stability of the group over an extended period of time. Moreover, the need for collective identity arises from constant exposure towards the multitude of different indirect social relations. It, in its own turn, encourages social interaction within the said group and stimulates the creation and reproduction of the group network structure.

Consequently, to successfully form an identity, social links from the past must extend to the present as well as the future, which, consequently, strengthens the need for the said identity as it is closely related to feelings of safety, prosperity and commonness. To put it simply, commonness is a driving force to accept rules and regulations imposed on people because there is a clear external stimulus; namely, social relations normalize the obligation to obey certain social norms from those subjects or larger systems that one feels a close social relation to.

Social identity theory (SIT) proposed by Tajfel states that the group-specific feeling of belonging gives individuals a sense of identity which helps them relate themselves to the social world and feel part of it. Unavoidably, people divide their world into ‘us’, or, as suggested by Tajfel, *the ingroup* and ‘them’, that is, *the outgroup(s)* (Tajfel, 1978a). What is more, groups that people identify themselves with are an important source of pride and self-confidence.

Ashforth (1999) argues that social classification has two functions: the first function is cognitive segmentation of one’s environment that results in systematisation of the surrounding world. The second function deals with social environment, providing the person with the capacity to locate and define oneself in it.

Moreover, Tajfel outlines the cognitive framework, i. e. three cognitive processes that follow one another in the process of distinguishing between those belonging to the ingroup and the ones that fall into the category of the outgroup:

1. social categorization (assigning the perceived category to the individual/group in question thus enabling the understanding and identification of the individual/group);
2. social identification (adopting the identity of the individual/group and acting towards it based on the said identification);
3. social comparison (comparing the individual/group to other individuals/groups once the categorization and identification is over) (Tajfel, 1978b).

Naturally, the mere fact of identifying oneself with a group is sufficient to attempt to achieve a favourable result of comparison with regard to other groups, which Ford and Tonander (1998, p. 373)



refer to as *minimal group paradigm*. Consequently, the higher the status of the group, the more an individual is likely to identify oneself with it as it largely benefits one's self-image.

Such self-identification manifests in the need to enhance the status of the ingroup and lessen the status of the outgroup(s), often resulting in prejudice and/or discrimination of the latter. Foreman and Whetten maintain that

*a member compares his or her perceptions of an organization's current identity (beliefs about the existing character of the organization) with his or her expectations for its ideal identity (beliefs about what is desirable, informed by the member's sense of self); and the resulting identity gap/congruence (the cognitive distance between the current and ideal identity claims) significantly affects a member's level of involvement with the organization* (2002, p. 620).

Even though discrimination is never justified, stereotyping or similar bias is an ordinary cognitive process that is the outcome of a person's innate needs to categorize the surrounding world and group familiar notions, items, people and phenomena together (Stangor & Schaller, 1996). Turner, the creator of Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), which is one of the elaborations on SIT, claims that "[p]eople stereotype themselves and others in terms of salient social categorizations, leading to an enhanced perceptual identity between self and ingroup members and an enhanced perceptual contrast between ingroup and outgroup members" (1999, p. 11). However, such comparison is only possible in the presence of another group that is perceived as relevant.

Naturally, collective identities carry a strong emotional charge since feelings of commonness or even oneness are closely related to various emotions such as pride or shame, which, in turn, help to reproduce those identities. Eder (2009) calls such interactions a 'narrative bond', arguing that collective identities are metaphors for specific social relations that form a dynamic social network, whereas the stories, or 'narratives', are in themselves dynamic as well since their constant production and reproduction is ensured by endless social communication. However, the psychological implications of collective identities are beyond the scope of this thesis.

National identity could be considered the last tangible case of collective identity compared to that of supranational identity. In its nature, national identity is hegemonic as it is constructed based on at least two important preconditions. First, people cherish the narratives that are passed from generation to generation, for example, songs, poems, familiar texts that they recognize as theirs. Second, the territorial dependence unites people as citizens of a political community with shared history, their common struggles and successes, which is why people treat the symbols of this community as valuable and worthy of respect. For instance, it is unquestionably accepted to pledge allegiance to the flag or the anthem of one's country, that is, similarly to the symbols of cultural heritage, the respects are likewise paid to symbols of that political community.

Anderson refers to nation as “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1996, p. 49) as members of such communities do not personally know the majority of its other members, however, they still possess the feeling of rapport. Any community, Anderson claims, is an imagined one, except the ones where face-to-face communication is possible. Every nation imagines itself as limited in the sense that all communities, even the largest ones, have imaginary boundaries in space and scope and none of them could ever imagine themselves to be the only omnipresent entity, representing the entire mankind. As far as imagined sovereignty is concerned, members of every nation imagine themselves as free and, despite any injustice, inequality and exploitation, are ready to defend this imagined freedom that is so cherished and deemed as unique and profound.

While the narrative bond of national identity is rather uncontested, it is far more difficult to fathom the specifics of a large political and economic union, which is a complex narrative network, overflowing with narratives of different levels that interact or, even more, overlap with one another becoming intertwined. As for the theoretical approach towards European identity, the research mostly concerns different variants of social identity paradigms which will be dealt with in the following section.

## 1.2. The historical developments of European identity

Historically, the idea of Europe could be traced back to ancient times, particularly, Ancient Greece, where the myth of Europe comes from. However, Delanty (1995) claims that the concept of Europe had little significance to people of those times as the Greeks rarely used the name and everything non-Greek was considered 'barbarian'. The idea of Europe strengthened with the decline of Classical Greek civilization during the reign of Alexander the Great when Europe assumed, what Delanty calls, a "proto-political form" (1995, p. 19). In other words, as the territories of Macedonian conquests were extensive in their size and variety of cultures, there was a need to identify those territories as geographically distinct ones, that is, European.

Certain forms of understanding Europeanness, or developments in *Europeanisation* (Flockhart, 2010) could be seen throughout history from then on, be it the times of the Roman Empire, the Enlightenment or the Industrial Revolution, especially in terms of Europe's colonial past, oppression and enslavement of others. The understanding of Europe then operated on the ideological level, while the main goal of colonists was to transform 'Others' into themselves. As Asad puts it, "Europe's colonial past is not merely an epoch of overseas power that is now decisively over. It is the beginning of an irreversible global transformation that remains an intrinsic part of 'European experience' and is part of the reason that Europe has become what it is today" (2003, p. 170). In other words, it is impossible to speak about Europe's future without taking into account the implications of the historical outlook that prevailed for centuries. During those times, assimilation was understood as an effective and perfectly moral way to incorporate any allegedly hostile groups (Muslims in particular) into the process of Europeanisation, stripping them off their history, denying their very essence as if it were unimportant.

Consequently, the current issue that Europe is facing is the obligation to manage the results of such antagonism, especially when the supposed 'Others' are already inhabitants and citizens of European states. This may take more than finding acceptable cultural symbols which everyone can relate to. A European Muslim can still be viewed as an oxymoron, therefore, Europe will also have to adapt its pluralism which so far has been based on Christian tradition (Jordan, 2003). Such a viewpoint is no longer valid because of the prevalence of interculturalism, which, Tully argues, is based on the three aspects of cultural diversity: "citizens are in cultural relations that overlap, interact and are negotiated and reimagined" (1995, p. 54).

The concept of European identity only occurs in the 1950s in the light of the processes of European integration. Euroenthusiasts such as Jean Monnet wished for "L'Europe" were advocates of a new European super-state as the remedy that would eliminate the possibility of future conflicts. In their eyes, nationalism was the key contributor to violent wars, especially World War II, which

claimed so many lives, while, contrastingly, European unity was to result in a common European identity. As stated in the Schumann Declaration that proposed the creation of the ECSC in 1950, “World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it” (European Union, 2017).

However, even if the boundaries between states became more flexible and less dividing, the notion of state was not abolished. On the contrary, some scholars view regional integration as the solution that helped to rescue the states in question and enabled them to achieve their goals more efficiently: “the European nation-state rescued itself from collapse, created a new political consensus as the basis of its legitimacy and through changes in its responses to its citizens which meant a sweeping extension of its functions and ambitions, reasserted itself as a fundamental unit of political organization” (Milward, 2000, p. 3).

The first instance of defining European identity dates back to 1973 when the European Communities issued a Declaration on European Identity. The nine countries that were the members of the union defined European identity in terms of:

*reviewing the common heritage, interests and special obligations of the Nine, as well as the degree of unity so far achieved within the Community,*

*assessing the extent to which the Nine are already acting together in relation to the rest of the world and the responsibilities which result from this,*

*taking into consideration the dynamic nature of European unification* (Summit of the Heads of State and Government, 1973, p. 119).

As the text of the document presupposes, common heritage is the foundation of European identity, while, during that period, as Passerini puts it, the preconditions for European identity were understood largely as “common market based on a customs union, established institutions, as well as policies and machinery for cooperation” (2003, p. 194). One of the main aims mentioned in the document was to strengthen ties with other countries worldwide which should have, in its own turn, strengthened the cohesion of the European Communities and “contribute[d] to the framing of a genuinely European foreign policy” (Summit of the Heads of State and Government, 1973, p. 122).

Unsurprisingly, the very appearance of such a document was not accidental. Str ath (2002) maintains that the hierarchical listing of the countries and regions that the European Communities expressed the wish to strengthen ties with reflects the collapse of the Breton Woods system in 1971 as well as the surge in oil prices in the autumn of 1973, for example, the reference to the Middle East is made earlier in the text of the document than that to the USA. Hence, the understanding of European identity as communicated in the declaration was limited to expressing the responsibility of the Nine to its allies and the rest of the world in the context of unexpected crisis.

In the post-war Western Europe, Alter (2004) argues, the two major opposite developments could be distinguished: the economic and political cooperation of the restored nation-states that resulted in multiple organisations such as the ECSC, the EEC and NATO versus the crumbling of the long-accepted status quo in the interaction of those nation-states while treating their political and ethnic homogeneity as the foundation of their identity. In addition, World War II and the Cold War significantly changed the understanding of borders. Apart from traditional borders of states there were additional borders marking alliances and allegiances as well as internal state borders, the most prominent example of such a shift being the ‘Iron Curtain’.

As far as the processes of European integration are concerned, there have always been certain intentions at play, the realisation of which was supposed to strengthen the union. The list of such instances includes but is not limited to:

- political (e.g., setting up the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951);
- economic (e.g., establishing the European Economic Community in 1957);
- strategic/security-related (e. g. the accession of the former Eastern Bloc countries to the EU after the collapse of the USSR).

With the end of the Cold War, the new reality emerged since the ideological west-east divide was no longer relevant and new developments in cultural and territorial borders became a necessity. Unavoidably, national identities had also shifted since World War II, the trend that is also referred to as Europe’s “postnational change of consciousness” (Pond, 2002, p. 1), which led to the new epoch of interdependence and globalisation. This was and still is especially relevant in the sense that Eastern Europe has been considered as Western Europe’s counterpart since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was part of Europe but at the same time non-Europe (Stråth, 2002). Parallels were made between Eastern Europe and the Orient, which is why the idea of Eastern Europe is quite paradoxical: it never was a definite ‘Other’, however, it also was not treated as ‘Us’ from the western perspective. In addition, while Western Europe had already experienced a few decades of integration with efforts to launch the common market in the 1980s, former Eastern Bloc countries had to face their own challenges of reinstating democracy and re-establishing their national and cultural identities.

As far as the roles of major actors are concerned, Green (2015) outlines the current identity-related challenges that the three major powers of the EU, namely, France, the UK and Germany, are facing. France, which is used to seeing itself as one of the European leaders, must come to terms with sharing this leadership with Germany. In its own turn, Germany seems to be struggling with leadership enforced onto it by historical, economic and geographical circumstances which originate from the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Nazi Germany was Europe’s ‘Other’. Pond (2002) goes as far as to claim that the transition of German identity into a more Europe-oriented one is, in fact, the result of the nefarious Hitler’s regime that brought disgrace to the very core of Germans’ national self-perception. It is only

natural that as perpetrators of such atrocities, they were more positive towards greater integration and harmonisation. For example, the former German chancellor Helmut Kohl, insisted that further European integration was “a question of war and peace” (Helm, 1996), while advocating the expansion of the EMU (European Monetary Union).

Numerous authors (Green, 2017; Haas, 2004; Rifkin, 2005) maintain that the very fact of Britain joining the European project was only a belated one, executed with distinct hesitation and not something undertaken wholeheartedly. In Britain, Europe is referred to as ‘the Continent’, that is, something that is separate and distant, or the ‘Other’. Even though Britain has distanced itself from the continent for centuries, it is now experiencing its own identity crisis in the light of Brexit. However, recent studies suggest that even if British people do not know if they made the right choice for themselves and future generations and are experiencing the so-called ‘buyer’s remorse’ (Green, 2017, p. 8), the majority have simply gradually transitioned into the new, uncertain state.

Some developments of the European integration fall into multiple categories of the perceived goals, which sends a message to current non-EU states involved that their accepted norms and values are also shared by the supranational entity they are to-be or at least would-be members of. Waever (1998) posits that the origination of the current strategy, under which the European identity is formed, could be seen since the end of World War II. The identity of ‘We’, which Waever calls “a revolt against Europe’s own past” (1998, p. 90), is based on what is considered opposite to Europe’s past, that is, wars, radical nationalism, power-thirsty super-states, etc. Consequently, there is no longer a definite force that could take up the role of the ‘Other’ and Europe’s ‘Other’ is nothing else than Europe’s past that should in no way become its future.

Soysal, in contrast, argues that European identity is predominantly based on the outlook towards its future, concentrating on “universality rather than particularisms” (2002, p. 274), namely, human rights, equality, progress, rule of law, individual freedoms, liberal market economy, etc. Hence, ‘Others’, considering this reasoning, could be described as the opponents of human rights, anti-democratic actors, where discrimination of people is prevalent, the rule of law is limited to non-existent.

Nevertheless, even if the two approaches are seemingly contrasting, the notion of ‘Others’ could be defined as non-immediate threats that change and develop based on the regional and/or international circumstances, matters of national and international security, political situation, etc. The outgroups are no longer national entities or communal entities that could be identified effortlessly as they largely depend on contextual and temporal changes. The main goal of the EU is, Chebel d’Appollonia (2003) maintains, to become a new political project that is more appealing not only in terms of the economy and politics, but the one that could also provide a better alternative to that of the national level on a variety of different fields such as culture, aesthetics, the intellectual plane, etc. Since state sovereignty

is limited by the influences of globalisation, a better alternative for Europe could be sovereignty on the European level, a postnational framework that would still be based on democracy and facilitate member states in the light of declining national sovereignty.

However, apart from institutional changes that would be necessary from the perspective of the EU, a clear distinction should be made between sovereignty and identity or, to be more specific, between political power and cultural identity. Cultural identity is far more complex and porous than something that Eurosceptics reduce it to, that is, British identity is more than a ritual of an afternoon tea, French identity is more than its obsession with cheese. The disappearance of numerous currencies of countries that entered the euro zone is a prominent example how inconsequential such changes are to the bigger picture of national identities.

What is more, the EU lacks recognisable and effective symbols that Europeans can identify with. Undoubtedly, the EU has its flag and anthem, nevertheless, they still largely have to compete with their national counterparts, especially in terms of their familiarity and acceptance. Herzfeld maintains that “a distinctive European selfhood is a mirage” (2003, p. 170) because national symbols have so far been treated as a national possession, which is why it is so difficult to replace them. National symbols reify the culture and its heritage by appealing to the perceived similarities shared by people, which results in a much stronger sense of identity than that created by the political elite behind the closed doors. For the European project to be successful, intercultural and international dialogue should be replaced by a transcultural and transnational one. At the same time, culture should not be understood as something restrictive or having definite distinctions but rather as a ‘floppy concept’ (Delanty, 1995), or something that is ambiguous and has no clear borders.

### 1.3. Social identity in the era of digitally mediated communication

The influence that the media have on social identity manifests in terms of creating groups that an individual can identify with. Jenkins (2008) maintains that individuals can only attain identities when they are created for them. It means that the process of their subjectification is invalid without the existing social categories within which an individual becomes a subject. The media often become the creator and promoter of new social categories as well as the facilitator of the existing social categories (Moran, 2013) that would be otherwise inaccessible to the individuals in question, transcending geographical, political, socio-economic limitations forced upon them. As a result, the mass media have both a direct influence on the perception of group prototypes (the perception of the ingroup prototype is affected) as well as the indirect influence (the perception of the relevant outgroups is affected), which leads to redefining relevant criteria of the ingroup.

Moreover, the media have the power to influence the desirability of social groups, by presenting some groups in a favourable way and others in the negative light or avoid any representation of certain groups. Such absence of representation or underrepresentation is what Gerbner calls “symbolic annihilation” (1972, p. 44), which is the denotation of social impotence and affects self-perception of individuals, choosing to identify themselves with particular social groups based on their perceived desirability. Consequently, the less direct contact with the ingroup there is, the more likely it is that the individual in question will be affected by the content, provided by the media. Lack of media representation is at the same time the root of the problem as well as an expression of power. For example, underrepresentation of minority groups results in further stereotyping and marginalization, provided by mainstream media sources that profit from biased and unfounded content.

The effects of the media on social categories also manifest in defining the very meaning of being a member of a social category (Huntemann & Morgan, 2001). Namely, the media outline the attributes that are necessary to create a group prototype, especially for those members of the group who cannot interact with other members of the group directly. What is more, the media not only act as an informational source, it also plays a role in facilitating the performance of social categories (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993), enacting the type of behaviour the individual perceives prototypical of the ingroup. In such a way, it also affects the salience of one’s social identity, manipulating the choices of individuals thus making some identities more prominent. Slater (2007) adds to the theory by introducing the “reinforcing spirals” framework, the main contention of which is that the use of the media relevant to a salient social identity not only increases the salience of the identity, but also reinforces further use of the relevant media.

Generally, individuals believe that they are exempt from the influence of the media or, at least, perceive others to be more affected. This type of reasoning is what Davison (1983) refers to as the



*third-person effect*. Another similar phenomenon, *biased optimism*, developed by Hoorens and Ruiter (1996) reveals that people tend to believe that, compared to others, they are mostly affected by positive mediated messages and do not respond to information that is either negative or neutral. Even though the two phenomena seem similar, they are quite different in their outcomes as third-person effect encourages behavioural changes in individuals, while biased optimism inhibits such changes (Wei, Lo, & Lu, 2007). In other words, in the case of biased optimism, one is more likely to be passive and unresponsive to mediated content.

Digital media have significantly altered the outlook towards news because of its disjointed, chaotic and contradictory nature. Consequently, the entities that manage, edit and publish the content that is understood as the product of the mainstream media are in somewhat position of power. The relationship of discourse and power is mainly related to the fact that the social groups which are in control of the most influential sources of discourse (e. g., the political arena, the media, science) can manipulate the knowledge, opinions and actions of those exposed to the mentioned sources. In other words, discourse itself in such cases is an influential source of power as the only area of discourse an ordinary person can actively control is the day-to-day communication with people who are treated as equal or inferior to them, such as family members and relatives, friends and acquaintances, their colleagues.

Conversely, under the circumstances involving individuals or organisations/institutions that are superior to a particular person, the general public become passive targets of such discourse as their thoughts and actions are then indirectly influenced by such authoritative individuals as teachers or employers as well as representatives of the authorities, e. g., law enforcement officers. In addition, it is even more difficult to notice the effect of other sources of information that do not fall into the previously mentioned categories, e. g., the mass media.

Another major notion in the analysis of power is access to discourse. It goes without saying that not all people have equal access to the media or any other source of textual and verbal information. As it was mentioned, discourse is a powerful social resource, consequently, the ones who have better access to discourse have more social power. Van Dijk (1996) argues that access and control may be defined both for the context as well as for the structures of content (text and/or talk).

On the other hand, in the digital plane, individuals are not only passive observers, but also active participants of the interaction and creators of the content. Crack refers to cyberspace as “an infinitely more heterogeneous discursive environment” (2007, p. 346) compared to the conventional media outlets such as physical newspaper or magazines. The increasing computing capacity, growing internet availability and larger ICT diffusion than ever before have resulted in diverse networks that transcend space, time, social status and various other aspects that were once treated as definite and invariant boundaries. In addition, computer-mediated communication (CMC) benefits the actors

involved in terms of achieving favourable social identities by transforming the ones that have hitherto been marginalised and stigmatised by the society (Striley & King, 2013). CMC is viewed as a two-way channel within which users can exchange appraisals of the self.

Castells (2010b) goes as far as to propose a new understanding of human activity and experience by introducing the new emerging society that he refers to as *the network society*. He defines it in terms of “breaking down rhythms, either biological or social, associated with the notion of a life-cycle” (Castells, 2010b, p. 476). This new society has occurred due to numerous developments in the modern world, such as development of reproductive rights and availability of birth control, changes in the labour market, etc. Even the notions of life and death have become blurred because of longer life expectancy and better living conditions which tends to repulse the very thought about death from human reasoning. People are constantly fighting aging and death with the use of scientific breakthroughs, advanced healthcare and the media, while the advertising and marketing industries are flourishing because of this obsession.

Instead of the rise of a new homogenous culture, different cultural and historical narratives are still the reality. Therefore, Castells maintains that the new culture should be viewed more as a process than content:

*the culture of the global network society is a culture of protocols of communication enabling communication between different cultures on the basis, not necessarily of shared values, but of sharing the value of communication* (Castells, 2004, p. 39).

Castells is sceptical towards the idea of globalisation as a unifying power which would transform the society into a melting pot of cultures, leaving all the disagreements aside, especially considering all the destructive violence and conflicts that arose because of ideological differences. Instead, he proposes an outlook towards the network society as exchange of cultures that interact with one another, which results in co-existence rather than convergence. In such a way, different cultures modify one another based on conscious appreciation of giving and receiving their narratives in exchange of a better world rather than idealising the distant possibility of an abstract cosmopolitan society.

In his other work, Castells (2010a) posits that networks of cooperation, such as the European project, have resulted from the necessity to adapt to the changing historical context while simultaneously trying to maintain the nation-state as the main governing actor in the times of globalization and co-dependence. Generally, the creation of the EU allowed the nation-state actors to maintain their power on the global arena while refusing part of their sovereignty and allowing the co-national and transnational governance to become as new form of state.

However, even though the motto of the EU is ‘united in diversity’, greater European integration is largely identified with harmonisation and homogenisation. This approach has successfully proven to

be effective in terms of the economic and fiscal integration of the EU, nevertheless, social austerity, stagnant political organisation of the EU with the ever-expanding bureaucratic apparatus of the EU institutions seem to be failing (Kowalsky, 2012; Lee, 2013). In such a period of uncertainty and ambivalence, a 'United States of Europe' is a mere utopia that few Europeans believe in.

*All in all, as the theoretical analysis has revealed, there is much more to identity than a semantic or a terminological approach can offer. In the light of network society, it is extremely challenging to differentiate between 'us' and 'them', acknowledge something as 'our own' or 'alien' because of the everchanging context we live in. This thesis deals with European identity from the sociological perspective which refers to identity as a unique case, manifesting characteristics of social relations in and of itself that distinguish the group from others.*

## **2. MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS AS AN INVESTIGATIVE TOOL**

Numerous linguists and political scientists (Carta & Morin, 2014; Carta & Wodak, 2015; Karner & Kopytowska, 2017) are interested in European identity. However, their research is largely based on discourse analysis or, critical discourse analysis (CDA) in particular. The focus is generally public policy or public diplomacy practices of the EU. Another area of interest, though less prevalent, is the theoretical and methodological issues regarding changes in the policies and discourse of the EU (Schmidt & Radaelli, 2004). Public opinion on ‘feeling’ European and the preconditions of such phenomenon could be outlined as a significant field of research (Fuss & Grosser, 2006), namely, the reasons and preconditions of ‘feeling’ European. A clear case in point is Eurobarometer, which is considered a traditional tool to measure public opinion in Europe, however, it has received criticism (Bruter, 2003; Friedman & Thiel, 2016) due to its simplistic nature and the fact that it only measures European identity in relation to national identity.

What concerns Brexit-related discourse, economic and political implications of Brexit on the EU future seem to be the object of most researches. Public opinion is analysed in terms of discourse of Brexit referendum campaign (Moore & Ramsay, 2017), delving into the narratives of the two opposing opinions of ‘Leave’ versus ‘Remain’ proponents. Hence, content analysis as a method for assessing shifts in European identity is particularly challenging as there are hardly any comparable studies.

The methodological part concentrates on media content analysis as the primary means to undertake the research. The chapter consists of two parts. Firstly, content analysis is examined as a method of textual analysis in relation to other methods, namely, discourse analysis. Secondly, the design of the content analysis is represented via coding schemes, created by the author of the thesis.

### **2.1. Content analysis as investigatory mechanism of the media**

Generally, content analysis concerns techniques employed to analyse the products of human communication. A classical scheme of analysis, provided by Lasswell, deals with the following questions: “Who Says What In Which Channel To Whom With What Effect?” (Lasswell, 1948, p. 216). Since the object of content analysis is communicative practices, this process deals with covering a range of communication sources in order to understand meanings conveyed regarding diverse issues, while simultaneously considering a given context. Content analysis is not a mere description of the content as it delves into the patterns and trends that may not seem immediately obvious. Content

analysis mostly deals with written sources, however, additional sources, such as video materials, are also considered as tangible. Neuendorf defines content analysis as follows:

*Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented* (2002, p. 10).

Content analysis is frequently contrasted with discourse analysis even though they both explore social reality and deal with the analysis of textual sources. Content analysis is understood as objective, positivist, quantitative, while discourse analysis is intersubjective interpretivist and qualitative (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). While discourse analysis provides an extensive opportunity to analyse the contextual situations and possible implications of the texts on the target audience, content analysis offers a clear-cut framework of data collection and categorisation.

However, content analysis and qualitative research are not mutually exclusive. Hijmans (2015) outlines five major types of the qualitative content analysis:

- rhetorical analysis;
- narrative analysis;
- discourse analysis;
- structuralist-semiotic analysis;
- interpretative analysis.

Rhetorical analysis deals more with the way the message is presented rather than what the message is. This method requires exceptional attention for larger fragments of the text, especially the presence of rhetorical figures. Narrative analysis deals with the formal narrative structure of the text. The focus is the characters, their conflicts and developments, which is why the text itself is of a lesser importance. Discourse analysis aims at typifying media representations by relating the language used in the text to the topic or even broader themes. Structuralist-semiotic analysis concentrates on the meanings and their signifying processes. It attempts to extract latent meanings that could relate to omnipresent cultural and societal topics.

Interpretative analysis focuses on exploratory research, theory development, descriptive and comparative analysis, which is why this method has been chosen as the prime method for collecting data to infer the changes in the understanding of European identity. This method is crucial in identifying the major subject areas and the explanatory frameworks behind them. Collected material is later used to establish patterns in which relevant topics are represented. While public discourse analysis clarifies the context topical at a certain time, interpretative content analysis provides the framework that is replicable in different time periods.

However, media content analysis does not provide the extent to which those media messages are received and the influence that it has upon the recipients, that is, the scope of either the reception or the rejection of the information that the readers are exposed to is only feasible in comparative qualitative studies that delve into the public opinion simultaneously. The analysis of this research project aims at establishing the incidence and grouping of selected topics that are present in the articles. The database of the analysis is perceived as something that an entire international community absorbs, while random selection of the sources in the sample ensures greater diversity in narratives.

The content analysis in the case of this research is particularly challenging as it requires an extensive amount of time. Generally, in similar studies there is more than one coder executing the analysis, which is why this research was limited in its scope concerning the number of sources and articles. Nevertheless, the results still prove to be valid and the research itself could be replicated either in a different period or invoked for a more comprehensive research of similar topics of scientific interest.

## 2.2. Coding categories for the empirical research

In this study, media content is narrowed down to 60 digital news articles provided by both British news media and those of continental Europe. To make the research feasible, only articles published in the English language are analysed. Only the so-called mainstream media sources (as opposed to, e. g. the far-right oriented media outlets) are the object of the research as they are understood to be the ones that are readily available to and consumed by the general public. The tabloid press (e. g. *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*) are also discounted for the purposes of this thesis. The earliest date of publications was set to February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 since on February 22<sup>nd</sup> the official announcement was made to the Houses of Parliament by David Cameron, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, who announced the date of the referendum, namely, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. The end date for the publications was set to December 1, 2017.

In total, four media outlets were chosen as the primary sources for the investigation:

- *BBC* ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com));
- *The Guardian* ([www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com));
- *Euronews* ([www.euronews.com](http://www.euronews.com));
- *POLITICO* ([www.politico.eu](http://www.politico.eu)).

The first two sources represent British broadcasters, while the following two are the representation of European outlook. The four sites were selected based on their online popularity as of November 15, 2017 (Feedspot, 2017a, 2017b). This does not imply any direct impact of the content onto the users of the selected news portals, however, it ensures adequate demand for and exposure of the news articles towards both the readers in the UK as well as the rest of Europe. Where possible, a comparison is made between the messages conveyed by the two ‘sides’, which is meant to benefit the research by providing the opposing viewpoints, if any.

The news articles were selected based on the search conducted on Google advanced search engine. Then, the search results were refined and shortlisted to the ones that are related to European identity specifically, due to the possible flaws in the search that could provide inaccurate results. For example, some articles appeared in more than one search, consequently, repetitive entries had to be removed. While some sources, for example, *The Guardian*, provided plentiful sources under every search, other searches were not so productive. Hence, 15 random search results (found on the first three pages of the result list) from each source were chosen for the analysis. The distribution among the searches was 5 articles per search. Using this operationalisation, a content analysis of 60 articles was executed (cf. APPENDIX). The search was conducted based on three sets of keywords:

- ‘European identity’;
- European AND identity AND Brexit;

- Identity AND Brexit.

To achieve a more extensive diversity in the content of articles, the searches were carried out in the texts of the articles as opposed to limiting the searches to the headlines exclusively. However, photographs and illustrations were not taken into consideration in this research because this could be a separate research in terms of data to process. What is more, imagery analysis is beyond the scope of this socio-political research as it requires specific expertise in visual design.

To code the articles, a two-part standardised codebook was created. The first set of variables are descriptive, which were meant to collect important data before analysing the text in the articles. Every article to be coded was assigned an ID code. The code consists of three parts: two letters that indicate the news outlet (BB – *BBC*, TG – *The Guardian*, EU – *Euronews*, PO – *POLITICO*), four numbers that indicate the day and month of publication and two more numbers that indicate the year in which the article was published. For example, BB-2605-16 refers to an article that was published on *BBC* website on May 26, 2016.

After each article was assigned a code, the first part of the codebook was filled out in an Excel spreadsheet. The rough outline of the variables is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Codebook categories for article description**

Article ID	
Author's name	
Headline	
Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU politics</li> <li>• World news (excl. US)</li> <li>• US news</li> <li>• Society</li> <li>• Entertainment/Arts</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Opinion</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>

Such coding enables the identification of the articles and accumulating valuable information even without delving into the text of the article yet. However, this part provides the general overview of the sample by taking into account the information presented in article headlines, while a more extensive comparative component among news outlets will be introduced in terms of the analysis of the article texts.

The second part of the codebook includes a framing scheme. A media frame, as defined by Bennet, is “a broad organizing theme for selecting, emphasizing, and linking the elements of a story such as the scenes, the characters, their actions, and supporting documentation” (as cited in Boykoff, 2008, p. 555). This type of analysis allows to acquire a clear insight into the most prevalent topics



from multiple perspectives. However, the research does not concern separate linguistic patterns, such as words or phrases and the frequency of their occurrence.

Based on a large-scale media content research carried out on the EU referendum campaign, numerous problematic issues of the campaign coverage were discovered such as the economy, immigration, sovereignty, dishonesty, fear, etc. (Moore & Ramsay, 2017). This thesis aims at the multitudinous investigation by employing some of these issues as the basis for the article-level analysis.

The article-level analysis reflects the main concerns expressed in the articles, excluding headlines as they are dealt with in the first part codebook. In the second part, there is a dichotomous indicator coded in the codebook of whether a frame or a subcategory is present in the article. The general outline of the media frame is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Codebook framing categories for Brexit threats**

Frame	Variable
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general</li> <li>• economic forecasting for the UK</li> <li>• economic forecasting for the EU</li> <li>• economic issues</li> <li>• international relations and trade</li> <li>• business</li> </ul>
Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general</li> <li>• border control</li> <li>• future threat</li> <li>• expatriation</li> <li>• illegal entry</li> <li>• deportation</li> <li>• asylum</li> </ul>
Sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brexit referendum</li> <li>• UK citizenship</li> <li>• EU citizenship</li> <li>• unity of the UK</li> <li>• unity of the EU</li> <li>• globalisation</li> </ul>
Dishonesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the elite</li> <li>• populism</li> <li>• inequality and austerity</li> <li>• propaganda and disinformation</li> </ul>
Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• national identity related _____</li> <li>• European identity related</li> <li>• strengthening of the far-right</li> <li>• terrorism</li> </ul>

After the preliminary codebook was finished, a pilot coding test was executed with 10 random article entries from the list provided in APPENDIX, resulting in the codebook being only slightly

reassessed and some terms redefined. For example, the category ‘general’ was added in some variable lists to reflect the results more precisely when none of the variables in the list was applicable. Since the results of a pilot coding test were satisfactory, the actual coding test was carried out with all 60 entries. Consequently, this project poses the following research questions:

**RQ 1: In what way is British identity presented in the selected articles?**

**RQ 2: In what way is European identity presented in the selected articles?**

**RQ 3: What is the relation between the representations of British and European identities in the light of Brexit?**

*Having created the two-level codebook for the empirical research, all articles of the sample were coded and the results were extracted into a MS Excel spreadsheet that is enclosed in the documentation of the research project. The empirical research of the collected data is provided in the third chapter of the thesis.*

### 3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF BREXIT

The question whether European integration is a successful and welcome phenomenon has been around for quite some time, especially, considering the outlook of common Europeans who would even consider it a threat to their national identities. The media response to Brexit and its implications illustrates the ways in which Brexit is presented by opposing groups. This research aims at outlining the shifts in the understanding of European identity as presented in the mainstream media.

The first subchapter provides the descriptive overview of the sample, based on the first level of the codebook. Each of the following three subchapters provides the interpretative content analysis, which focuses on the three research questions that were formulated in the second chapter of the thesis rather than on presenting statistical data on linguistic peculiarities, such as the frequency of occurrence of separate words or phrases in the sample.

#### 3.1. The general overview of the first-level coding

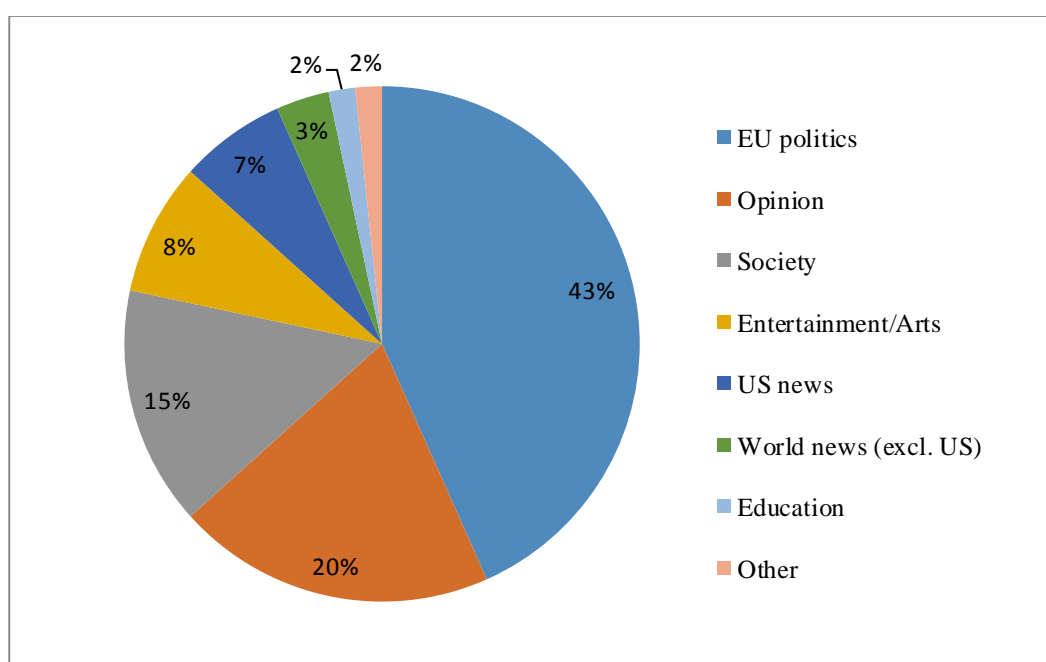


Figure 1. Distribution of articles among topics

The sectional analysis (cf. Figure 1) revealed that most of the sources from the sample ( $n = 60$ ) were news articles related to EU politics (43%), most articles having been published by *Euronews* and *POLITICO*, the headlines of which present the negative outlook of Brexit negotiations (*Brexit talks: A tragicomedy in 5 acts*) or difficulties that other EU countries are facing in the context of Brexit (*Jean-*

*Yves Camus on Europe's shift to the right / Belgium says Europeans not welcome if they don't take on work*). Another distinct topic was the reasons behind Brexit (*Inequality, not personalities drove Britain to Brexit / Brexit 1.0: Britain's 450,000-year separation from Europe revealed*) as well as speculations on Britain's future (*Britain, 10 years on / Post-Brexit, Britain will love Europe*). British news outlets, unsurprisingly, concentrated on the challenges that the post-Brexit UK may face (*Could Brexit threaten unity of the UK?*) and questioned the nature of British identity (*Britain's place in Europe and the question of identity / UK Brexit negotiator attacks Boris Johnson's 'old-fashioned' views on identity*).

The second most popular category was 'Opinion', amounting to 20%, which mostly refers to varied topics expressed by official representatives or independent article authors speaking on their behalf in the capacity of an observer. Most of such articles were published by *The Guardian*, every single one of them carrying a negative message in the headline of the article either towards Brexit (*Brexit rots our rights. How can Theresa May ignore the stench?*) or towards the crisis in Europe (*Refugees aren't the problem. Europe's identity crisis is*).

Articles presented by *POLITICO* and *Euronews* were related to possible future threats for Europe and the EU (*How the EU lost its way*) as well as reiterated the rhetoric of Trump as the approach that the EU should undertake (*The European Union first: time for a change of approach / European roots of Trump's 'America First'*). The topic of Trumpian rhetoric is also prevalent in the category of the US news (*Brexit, Trump and hate crime: what does the data tell us? / Trump's foreign policy – should we trust his own words?*). This category amounts to 7% of the sample and is likewise presented by European news outlets only.

The societal aspect of the European identity was also rather relevant (with 15% of news articles), British publishers mostly presenting cases of nationalistic views (*Half of young adults in the UK do not feel European, poll reveals / Europhobia: a very British problem*). The article headlines of European news outlets, on the other hand, were concerned with Dutch identity crisis (*Dutch values and identity are hot topics this election season*), the reason for which was parliamentary elections of the Netherlands in fear that anti-EU populist Party for Freedom (PVV) would win.

As far as the Art/Entertainment section (8%) is concerned, the articles in this category were produced exclusively by the British publishers, conveying two distinct messages. Firstly, some articles are meant to advertise Brexit-themed or Brexit-related attractions (*V&A museum asks artists to travel through time to tackle Brexit / The Dunkirk spirit: how cinema is shaping Britain's identity in the Brexit era*). Secondly, an appeal to reinstating European unity is expressed in the wording of some of the headlines (*Can Euro 2016 unite European culture where politics has failed? / Brexit? Britain has already voted to stay. Just look in its galleries*).

From the general overview of the sample, it is evident that there are numerous points of contention that could be highlighted in the analysis:

- British news outlets are more concerned with the prospects of the UK as well as the possibility of British identity crisis,
- there are clear references to British nationalism in terms of British citizens not identifying as European;
- articles published in the British media also delve into the topic of European identity crisis as well as the longing for the unification of Europe on other planes, e. g., art, sports, etc.
- European news outlets concentrate on the reasons why Brexit happened and the need to strengthen European identity, while also referring to national identities of the EU member-states;
- Trumpian rhetoric and parallels between Trump's policies and Europe are discussed solely by European sources.

Thus far, due to the quantitative nature of this part of research, the ideas towards Brexit and the changes in European identity seem to be presented in an equivocal way. However, the following three subchapters will delve into the interpretative analysis of article texts.

### 3.2. Analysis of British identity as presented in the selected articles

Unsurprisingly, the topics of British identity and sovereignty were prevalent throughout the British articles, many of which maintained that Brexit was not about the EU but more about British identity (cf. Figure 2). The absolute majority of articles contained information about the Brexit referendum and the issues of national identity that arise because of this phenomenon.

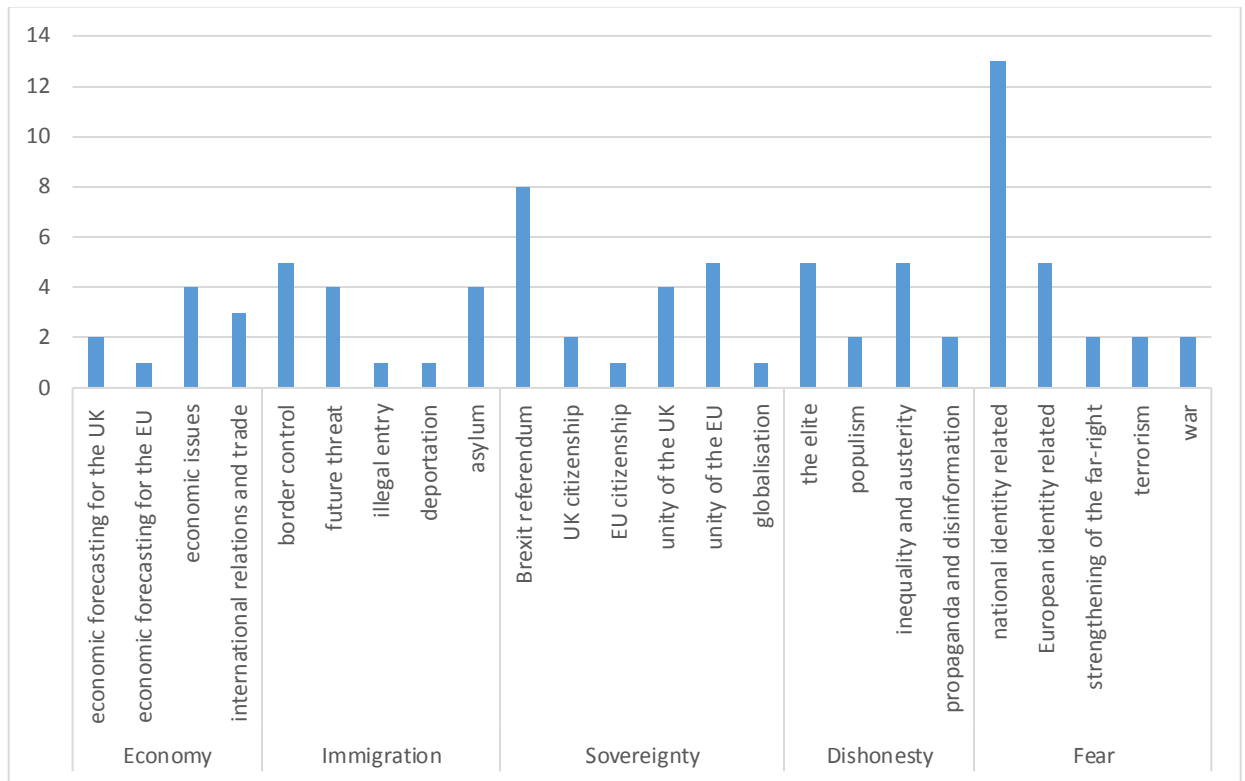


Figure 2. The frequency of the occurrence of the codebook variables in the British news media

British sense of ‘self’ was at times described as insufficient and Brexit was supposed to be a way to reclaim the identity from the EU (BB-2605-16). Numerous texts presented the phenomenon of “standalone” Britain (TG-1906-16; TG-2106-16; TG-2007-17), which was arguably one of the cornerstones of British identity and the primary reason why Brexit vote was to leave the EU. “Standalone” Britain is a myth that is based on English isolationism and exceptionalism, referring to Britain’s past and its insular pride, which is best illustrated by the quote of Tory Minister Penny Mordaunt:

*In our long island history, there have been many times when Britain has not been well-served by alignment with Europe. (...) When Britain stood alone in 1940 after the defeat at Dunkirk, we were cut off and ridiculed. True leadership sometimes does feel isolating. Yet we have never suffered for it. We are resourceful; we are well connected; our brand is strong in the world (TG-2007-17).*

The Battle of Dunkirk and the period of the Second World War in general were used in the rhetoric of 'Leave' campaigners to highlight the importance of Britain as a separate independent force. Winston Churchill was another exemplary figure employed by 'Leave' campaigners to prove that Britain has historically chosen its separate path. Such reasoning was also highly criticised by British media outlets (TG-2106-16; TG-2007-17) due to the very idealisation of his personality as well as out-of-place quotes to prove the stance of Britain. The entire narrative of English nationalism was described as rather peculiar by the British media as there were centuries when Britain was part of a larger entity such as an Anglo-French kingdom or the United Kingdom. What is more, Brexit is not about England specifically, but about Britain or the UK (TG-1906-16), even considering the argumentation of Brexit proponents.

Among different proposals on strengthening British cultural and historical pride, a campaign was launched to reintroduce dark blue British passports (BB-0208-16). To some Brits, including UKIP leader Nigel Farage, the burgundy EU passport has been a humiliation while the traditional dark blue passport is still a powerful symbol of sovereignty and national identity, therefore, the aim of restoring it seems to be an action of patriotism. The blue colour of the passport is also important in the sense that former colonial and Commonwealth countries (e. g., Australia, the USA, Canada) also have blue passports, which was one of the key aspects in the 'Leave' rhetoric: seeking to strengthen ties with the USA, namely, in the words of Churchill, restoring "a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and empire and the United States" (TG-2106-16). However, there are no imminent plans to return blue passports and some dispute their significance referring to the fact that their status has diminished since travelling has become more common during the recent decades.

Another topic so intrinsic to British culture was football (TG-1006-16). Paradoxically, even though Britain chooses to reject Europe in many contexts, the realm of football is something completely opposite. It could be seen as a uniting force where multi-ethnicity, internationality, egalitarianism and solidarity are the key actors. However, it is also a platform for expression of different beliefs and stances, be it "Refugees welcome" banners in German Bundesliga or a racist banner in Wrocław, Poland, featuring anti-immigrant and Islamophobic signs and texts.

In the British press, there was a constant dichotomy with Scottish identity that was presented as strong and pro-European, therefore, it was claimed that Scots do not feel the threat to their identity (BB-2605-16), which is why there were no influential Scottish politicians campaigning to leave during the Brexit campaign. In addition, this may be due to Scotland's flourishing economy, lower immigration rates and the fact that Scotland is accustomed to operating in a political community, that is, the UK, which is why such a position is something that Scots have long accepted as the reality.

In the articles that were published before the referendum there were also speculations that the British vote to leave could result in another referendum for Scottish independence. In the case of

independent Scotland, numerous issues would arise, which was another topic prevalent in the articles of the British press. First, a possibility of physical border between Scotland and the rest of Britain was discussed. Another question was trade, namely, the trading relationship between Scotland and the UK as well as the currency since it would be unreasonable to expect that both countries would use sterling when only one of the countries was a member of the EU.

The trend of analysing Scottish independence in the case of Brexit was particularly obvious among British news publishers, however, the likelihood of such an occurrence was presented as minimal, taking into consideration the geo-political situation and the previous failed attempt of such a referendum in 2014. In addition, low oil prices (BB-2605-16; BB-0906-16) were introduced as another reason to support the argument that Brexit was unlikely to trigger a new Scottish independence referendum.

What is more, the topic of hard borders was also mentioned in the context of Northern Ireland, with Guy Verhofstadt, the chief Brexit negotiator at the European Parliament, claiming that there was no need for a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland since it would “destroy all the efforts that have been undertaken over the last 20 to 30 years to have peace there” (BB-1003-17). The situation of Northern Ireland is generally an extremely sensitive because Brexit will significantly affect the economy of Ireland due to possibly longer queues at the customs, complementary bureaucratic limitations which would be especially detrimental to Irish agricultural market. There were suggestions by former Irish Prime Minister John Bruton that Ireland and other EU countries should be eligible to compensations based on extra costs experienced because of Brexit (PO-2608-17). However, economic matters aside, Bruton agreed that Brexit as a phenomenon was related to questions of identity, especially English one.

Outlooks on British identity as well as on Brexit as an occurrence were diverse throughout the sample. For some, Brexit is the manifestation of their strengthening national identity, cultural and ethnic belonging (TG-2403-17) as well as dissociation from the European elites that have failed them in a multitude of ways. People are disappointed in the idea of the single currency, which proved to be flawed in the light of economic crisis. The weakness of the Schengen Area with its less restricted border and passport controls was revealed with the ever-intensifying refugee crisis. In addition, the European system of the freedom of movement appeared to be ill-equipped to protect its people from terrorist attacks.

For the rest of British residents, Brexit is a painful and confusing process that is happening against their will, alienating them from their country and depriving them of something that they have considered part of self. British foreign secretary Boris Johnson adds to the debate by accusing people who hold such views of ‘split allegiances’ (TG-2109-17) and claiming that it was one of the reasons why people voted to leave the EU. This view towards European identity is criticised by Guy



Verhofstadt as binary and old-fashioned. In his opinion, which is shared by many Europeans, European and national identities are not mutually exclusive.

This is especially relevant to the UK citizens of non-British background who are now feeling alienated by their own country because to some of them this is the only mother-country they have ever known or have chosen to accept as their own. Since Brexit there has been significant increase in outbursts of racism and xenophobia in the UK. Landlords are refusing to let properties for migrants, even employers ask to provide proof of residence, which is, in fact, not required by law (TG- 1309-17). The perspective of British nationality as the only way to stay in the country as well as regressive laws of residence seem to be forced upon people with other citizenships as they are pressured into choosing among numerous identities that are inherent and overlapping.

One of the biggest failures in the rhetoric against Brexit was the insistence on future economic disadvantages that Britain would face. However, there are numerous people in the UK, especially in London and southeast England (PO-2806-16) who already feel disaffected by the EU. Therefore, grim future is not something that comes as a surprise, it is more of a reality that they have already accepted and Brexit seems to be an appropriate solution to the supposed cause of their misery. The sense of inequality is especially obvious among working-class people, pensioners and those who have lower income and/or no formal qualifications. These voters feel betrayed by the social change that they cannot adapt to or use it to their benefit. Contrastingly, the lowest voter turnout was in those areas that in polls conducted shortly after the Brexit vote were advocating for another referendum, mostly the voters from London and Scotland.

Brexit has come as a shock for a large variety of British expatriates who have lived outside the UK for years and are now facing uncertainty. Most of those people have been detached from the political affairs of the UK, however, they are currently concerned of what awaits them due to the possible changes in migration policy, social securities that they have had so far as citizens of the EU, for example, the right to free healthcare in Spain (PO-2805-17). In the years to come, British expats could be facing numerous hardships. As non-EU citizens, they would be forced to either pay for their healthcare themselves or to come back to the UK, which would put additional strain on the British NHS. Alternatively, they could apply for Spanish nationality, which would be another blow to their identity because as of now, there is no possibility of having a dual British-Spanish nationality.

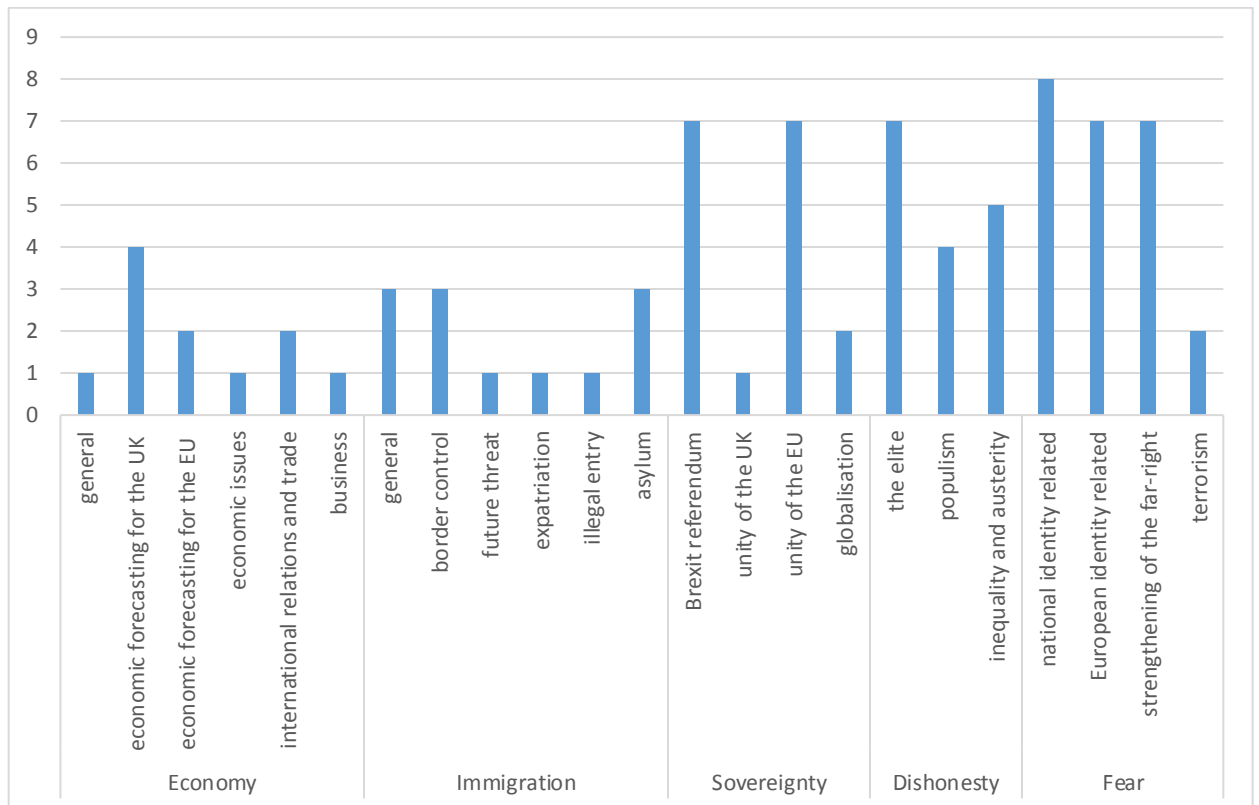
Consequently, British expats would be forced to choose which nationality to waive. In turn, such changes would be detrimental to Spain as well if large numbers of expatriates decided to return to the UK. Many of such people voted to stay in the EU, therefore, they treat Brexit as infringement of their rights and the decision that undermines their identity. What is more, based on British laws, after spending more than 15 years abroad, they could no longer vote in the general election of the UK in

June 2017, which means that they have had no influence over the selection process of the officials that are supposed to represent them in this complicated and confusing process.

On the other hand, there is always a possibility that the UK could re-join the EU in the long run. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker expressed his hope that “the day will come when the British will re-enter the boat” (BB-1003-17). However, so far this is an unfounded prospect and there are much more important issues to tackle in terms of the current state of the EU.

### 3.3. Analysis of European identity as presented in the selected articles

In recent years, the European Union has encountered significant hardships such as migration crisis, economic recession, the emergence of far-right political parties in different member-states with Brexit performing a powerful blow to the unity of the EU. This has been diversely reflected in the sample of articles (cf. Figure 3) and has provided an ample array of insights towards the understanding of European identity.



**Figure 3. The frequency of the occurrence of the codebook variables in the European news media**

Some argue that there have been no definite developments in European culture, let alone European identity, only sporadic and fragmented instances of it. One of the best examples could be the Eurovision song contest (TG-1006-16), which is an exchange of votes based on political preferences, demonstrating distinguished power blocs. From the artistic perspective, it is a rather shallow celebration of diversity in terms of LGBT+ acceptance, European pop music and kitsch. However, traditional European culture is claimed to be respected even by Brexit proponents, including Boris Johnson, who refers to Europe as “the home of the greatest and richest culture in the world, to which Britain is and will be an eternal contributor” (TG-25-02-16).

Johnson suggests that people’s love for European culture and rejection of the EU are two separate grounds. However, such reasoning is questionable, especially considering the fact that the EU

has been funding the preservation of cultural heritage in all its member-states, therefore, the maintenance of European culture could be largely attributed to mutual efforts. Art knows no boundaries and the British Isles was home for numerous artists from continental Europe. In its own turn, British art and literature were significantly influenced by Ancient Greek literature, thus it is impossible to insist on having an isolationist approach while there is hardly anything in European culture that is not shared between Britain and continental Europe.

As far as blended identities are concerned, much light was shed on the demonstration against corruption in Romania on February 26, 2017 (TG-2403-17). At night, people formed a star-studded flag of the EU while holding Romanian flags to protest their Social Democrat government and their attempt to impose new laws that would have stopped the crackdown on serious offences. Thousands of people expressed their discontent with those changes by exhibiting their pride and loyalty to both entities they identify with and there were no clashes in this choice. This action, whether premeditated or not, was a strong counteraction to the populist rhetoric as it proved that in the fight for one's wellbeing, it is possible to be a believer in the European project.

However, throughout the sample, there were distinct narratives about the disillusionment of people towards the EU because of several unique challenges, the biggest bone of contention being binding quotas of the resettlement of refugees (BB-1309-16). In 2016, a resettlement programme was announced by the EU that was supposed to ensure the redistribution of 120,000 refugees in a two-year period. However, numerous EU countries were against the binding quotas, some of which took matters to the European Court of Justice (e. g. Hungary) or exercised their right not to accept the plan based on the conditions provided in the founding treaties of the EU (e.g. the UK). On the one hand, this plan is a sign of closer cooperation that is long overdue, while on the other hand, the fact the quotas are legally binding has strengthened anti-immigration sentiment throughout the EU countries. In addition, only a few thousand refugees have been resettled based on the quota system, which indicated the stalling and ineffective bureaucratic apparatus of the EU that is incapable of stimulating sufficient change. Social tensions only strengthened after the attacks on women in Cologne, allegedly perpetrated by groups of migrant men (BB-1803-16) on 2015/2016 New Year's Eve.

Terrorist attacks in Brussels was another significant issue that changed the social and political landscape of pre-Brexit Europe. In the wake of refugee crisis, security fears among the public heightened substantially. As a result, according to social psychologists (PO-2503-16), people under such circumstances are more likely to hold conservative and authoritarian views, especially during a period of vast changes. This generally leads to intensifying anti-immigration and Islamophobic sentiment and greater support for far-right parties. In the context of the Brexit referendum rhetoric, Eurosceptics and populists have successfully utilised every terrorist attack to convey their message that free movement of people in the EU is to blame for such occurrences, while presenting terrorism as an

antithesis to common Judeo-Christian heritage and blaming the entire religion of Islam for the actions of the few.

There were also fears expressed that by trying to solve its internal issues, the EU could lose its status as a power worldwide, which could as well result in severe consequences to third parties in question. For example, a coherent approach towards supporting Ukraine and imposing systematic sanctions against Russia is perceived as an immense struggle (BB-2606-16), considering the current situation the EU is in. In addition, it will be even more challenging to make joint decisions in terms of NATO-EU cooperation as well as meet the 2% margin of the GDP as a contribution to NATO on the EU part due to differing political stances among its member-states.

To add more, another topic that was addressed by the articles in the sample was Trump and his foreign policy. Trumpian rhetoric appeals to many working-class people who feel threatened by globalisation. A general proponent of Trump could be described as an older white male (TG-0112-16), who is someone that feels betrayed by the 'inclusive' system that seems to be inclusive of everyone (females, people of colour, ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities) except them. Consequently, his proposals to build the wall on the border with Mexico or ban Muslim immigration are welcomed by this part of the society. In addition, Trump is presented as someone "who's fighting for European identity politics in North America" (PO-2301-17). Hence, his demeaning remarks towards the EU and a clear pro-Brexit stance are praised by populists, nationalists and Eurosceptics in Europe.

There were straightforward claims made by both British and European media sources that Europe is facing an identity crisis (TG-3110-16; EU-2409-17). Due to the current struggles, xenophobic narratives are gaining popularity, disregarding Europe's colonial past and diverse cultures that have integrated into numerous European nations, for example, Algerians in France. Statistically, the influx of 1.3 million refugees to Europe in recent years roughly amounts to 0.2% of the entire population of the EU (TG-3110-16), which is far less than the number of people who fled to Europe in the early 1990s during the Balkan wars. To match Lebanon in terms of resettlement of refugees, Germany should have had to accept 20 million refugees (EU-2409-17). To some extent, this is not about the refugees since they are the ones who are fighting for their future and many of them die trying to do so. This is about Europe that is desperate for younger workforce to be able to address its pension problems, and is, however, still unable to accept the reality and utilise it to its benefit.

### **3.4. The relation between the representations of British and European identities in the light of Brexit**

In the age of constant global interaction, there are no explicit 'us' or 'them' anymore, which the results of media content analysis have proven accordingly. Both British and European media sources provide diverse analyses and opinions on the status of European identity and what implications Brexit has on it. This is the period of 'post-truths' and 'post-identities' that are tightly intertwined with one another.

Part of the society treat the membership in the EU as an obligation forced upon them, perceiving the EU as an undemocratic force that only benefits the political elites, while any possibility of change is hindered by an enormous bureaucratic apparatus. They may wish to be part of Europe; however, it is definitely not the present form of it. It is the way people who vote for Brexit feel about the EU, however, this reasoning is not exclusive to Brits.

Strengthening of the far-right, the emergence of nationalism and the ever-growing Euroscepticism and xenophobia are the defensive mechanisms against the perceived unfairness as well as an expression of insecurity, often stimulated by alienation and austerity. Flows of migration, economic crises only add to this sense of helplessness, which at times leads to radicalisation. Consequently, the instinct of survival prevails and people who feel they have been wronged wish to take actions into their own hands. In their eyes, isolationism (or, in the case of the UK, insularism) seems to be the best option for their future.

However, there is a large part of European society that perceive the EU as a project they have chosen in their free will. It is their right that they exercise by choosing to be part of an entity that they themselves have created and still create. They feel protected by enjoying such benefits as universal healthcare and education, human rights and freedom of expression. Even though the EU is made of nation-states, they have been able to refuse part of their sovereignty for a way in which these needs are secured more efficiently. Plurality of their identities is something that is a natural part of their self, which is why they do not feel disloyal to any of the entities behind those identities.

The cohesion of western liberal democracies depends on how well the EU is able to rebuild itself. The future holds new challenges of networking and digitalisation, which, in turn will bring numerous obstacles that only a cohesive union can overcome. The national borders, time or ethnic identities are irrelevant online, which is why the current reality forces people to accept multiplicity, interculturalism and cultural diversity. Europe needs to address its problems, however, only managing the euro crisis or focusing on the refugee crisis will not change the entire system.

Europe has already defeated fascism in Germany and Italy, communism and undemocratic dictatorships. European history has faced imperialism, slavery, holocaust and two world wars, which

are meaningful lessons that were learned in order not to repeat them. It is time Europe revisited the purposes and foundations on which the European project was based on and rediscovered it because 'united in diversity' in more than an empty slogan.

*In history, there were times when Europeans had to flee the atrocities of World War I and World War II. Currently, Europe is one of the strongest parts of the world on many planes: politically, socially, economically. The EU is a protector of human rights and the promoter of global development. It is high time it accepted diversity as an opportunity for a more dynamic and more youthful Europe and became the benefactor for those in need, while helping itself simultaneously. In addition, the impact of the media cannot be discounted as far as the representation of the multiple nature of European identity is concerned. Consequently, global media might be as well considered the levelling power which erases the borders between different identities.*

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The theoretical analysis of the research has revealed that the EU is a large political and economic union, with its complex narrative network. These narratives interact and overlap with one another. This research deals with European identity as a social category, analysing it in terms of social identity paradigms.

The EU lacks recognisable and effective symbols for Europeans to identify with. Those symbols that do exist, compete with their national counterparts, especially in terms of their familiarity and acceptance, which is why they are so difficult to replace. National symbols appeal to the perceived similarities in people, which results in a much stronger sense of identity compared to that of a socio-political entity. Transcultural and transnational dialogue is bound to replace an intercultural and international one, to make the EU a success. However, culture should be perceived as equivocal in its nature and having no definite limitations.

Historical analysis of European identity has proven that harmonisation and homogenisation are effective in terms of the economic and fiscal integration of the EU. However, this approach is flawed as far as socio-political integration is concerned, which has resulted in social austerity and stagnant political organisation of the EU. However, in the times of globalisation it is no longer possible to distinguish between 'us' and 'them' and the only enemies perceived by the EU are Europe's own past or the opponents of the rights and values that the EU stands for.

2. Manual coding for media content analysis was carried out to highlight the most important aspects in the changes in European identity. A two-level codebook was created by the author in the sample of 60 sources, half of them representing the British media and the other half representing European perspective.

Media content analysis was chosen as the principle method of the research as it allows the researcher to identify the topical areas of discussion, while a defined framework aids the classification of the data and serves the purpose of determining relevant patterns. The codebook together with the interpretative media content analysis may also prove useful for future research as the methodology can be replicated in different time periods.

3. The distinction between British and European news media sources has resulted in diverse representation of the same issues on both sides. There were no clear-cut differences in terms of topic-building or portrayals of different values. Both British and European



media conveyed diverse messages in terms of European identity, which has provided an impetus for presumptive analysis.

The content analysis has revealed that European identity is not a lucid notion in the world of 'post-truths' and 'post-identities'. There are two main approaches in terms of people identifying themselves as Europeans. Proponents of multiple identities believe in co-existence of various identities without the necessity to prioritise any of them. The multiplicity of identities is part of who they are is this is how they perceive the world.

Others, however, believe in the hierarchical order of identities, favouring their national identity to that of European. They treat multiple identities as mutually exclusive and, in the context of Brexit, such binary understanding of identity is perceived as an expression of loyalty, whereas those who believe in the plurality of identities are accused of 'split allegiances'. Brexit to them has been the opportunity to exercise their right to choose a better life for themselves, while the EU membership is regarded as a burden that was unrightfully imposed onto them.

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## APPENDIX. THE LIST OF ARTICLES

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#### **'European identity':**

(BB-0208-16) *Should the dark blue British passport be brought back?* <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36952010>

(BB-0307-16) *Scotland's papers: Brexit fallout and Royle Queen.* <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-36697282>

(BB-2605-16) *Do Scots really feel more positive about the EU?* <http://www.bbc.com/news/election-2016-scotland-36387187>

(BB-2606-16) *How Brexit will affect US-UK relations.* <http://www.bbc.com/news/36622711>

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(BB-1309-16) *Reviewing the state of the EU.* <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-parliaments-37340756>

(BB-2910-16) *'Mrs May, we are all citizens of the world,' says philosopher.* <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-37788717>

(BB-1212-16) *V&A museum asks artists to travel through time to tackle Brexit.* <http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-38295390>

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(BB-0906-16) *Could Brexit threaten unity of the UK?* <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-36494571>

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<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-41075286>

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(TG-1702-16) *Britain's place in Europe and the question of identity.*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/17/britains-place-in-europe-and-the-question-of-identity>

(TG-1006-16) *Can Euro 2016 unite European culture where politics has failed?*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jun/10/can-euro-2016-unite-european-culture-where-politics-has-failed>

(TG-3110-16) *Refugees aren't the problem. Europe's identity crisis is.*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/31/refugees-problem-europe-identity-crisis-migration>

(TG-2403-17) *The EU should rebrand itself as the protector of its nations.*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/24/eu-protector-member-nations-nationalism-europe>

(TG-2109-17) *EU Brexit negotiator attacks Boris Johnson's 'old-fashioned' views on identity.*  
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(TG-1104-17) *Half of young adults in the UK do not feel European, poll reveals.*  
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(TG-0112-16) *Blame the identity apostles – they led us down this path to populism.*  
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(EU-2309-16) *Jean-Yves Camus on Europe's shift to the right.*  
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(EU-0807-16) *Obama tells EU leaders Brexit proves ordinary people need more from Europe.*  
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(EU-2301-17) *Trump's foreign policy – should we trust his own words?*  
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(PO-1307-16) *The idealistic pull of the 'Anglosphere'.* <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-idealistic-pull-of-the-anglosphere-leave-brexit-emotions/>

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