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THE PECULIARITIES OF GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The article analyses Great Britain's specifics in the context of European integration. The key factors, which separate the United Kingdom from its continental neighbours, are its being an island state, having a historical past of a great superstate, strong and long-lasting relations with the USA. All these factors had their specific impact on forming Great Britain's unique political attitude and behaviour. They have also determined a multi-vector British identity for the British see themselves as a part of a British nation, a part of a Trans-Atlantic alliance as well as a part of a large European community. In the last decades an ethnic component of the identity has become significant. Thus, such identity levels as national, ethnic and pan European have been singled out. The Maastricht Treaty was perhaps the key element of certain finalising of the European integration process as it de-facto created the European Union that we know today. The process of its adoption and ratification have been analysed in the article. It has been concluded that signing the treaty has deepened the differences between the euro-enthusiasts and euro-sceptics in the society in general and within political circles in particular and has also caused a conflict within the Tory Party which has first led to a defeat at the parliamentary elections in 1997 and had many other manifestations in the following years, the Brexit being one of the most prominent and visible results of the aforementioned phenomena.

Keywords: *Great Britain, European integration, identity, the Maastricht Treaty, transatlantic cooperation, Brexit.*

The United Kingdom has always been a special country in Europe. On the one hand, it can boast a truly glorious past, in which it was a super state, an empire and a dominant player on the international arena. On the other, its geographical position has always singled out Britain among other European states. In other words, there has always been Europe and there has always been Britain, which has never been fully European. The British are considered unusual and eccentric and they are proud of this. Thus, when the time came to make a decision about the membership in the EU, the issue has caused a lot of disputes, troubles and uncertainty. The uncertainty occurred on both sides, as Britain was twice declined membership in the European Communities. The uncertainty, obviously, lasts till this day as the results of the 2016 referendum show.

A number of Ukrainian as well as foreign scholars have studied the issue or even the phenomenon of Britain's integration into the EU. Ukrainian scientist V.O.Gorbyk [1] was a remarkable figure among the Britainists. After the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed traditions of Ukrainian British studies were continued and developed by S.V. Tolstov[2], N.L. Yakovenko [3] and others.

The topic of the European integration and the United Kingdom's participation in it is traditionally disputable in the British scientific literature. Opinions vary from clearly federalist to yet clearer Euro phobia.

Such pro-European authors as C. Coker [4], J. McCormic [5] and others expressed the opinion that Great Britain has to build its economic and political future in the context of European integration processes and underestimated the meaning of the Euro-Atlantic cooperation at the end of the 20th century. Euro skeptics, on the contrary, said that close cooperation with the continental Europe is an erroneous line of development of the British policy.

The aim of the article is to determine the peculiarities of the British identity and the attitude towards the national sovereignty in conditions of globalisation and regionalisation, to study the peculiarities of realisation and implementation of the European Union Treaty conditions as well as to study how exactly has it influenced both the political elite of Great Britain and the average citizens of the state.

The dichotomy, which existed during the times of the "Cold War", broke the existing balance of forces. The beginning of the 90-s was marked by an attempt to create the mono polar world

structure with the United States of America as the centre, as it was the most highly economically, politically and military developed country. In Great Britain such changes did not meet any opposition. London thought of the USA as their chance to stay in the big politics as a country of the universal importance by following lead of the policy of the USA.

Processes of globalization and integration completed one another as all the uniting movements repeated all the general tendencies characteristic of the creation of the universally connected system of economy, politics, social cooperation etc. only in a smaller scale. At the same time, regional integration was an obstacle to globalization by protecting the interests of the region. The United Kingdom did not associate their interests with the goals of the European continent.

The creation of the mono polar world, which would be oriented at the United States of America, was comfortable for Great Britain. The Atlantic orientation in policy was highly developed in London. The British and the Americans were and are connected not only by the economic and political cooperation but also by much deeper cultural connections that influence the way of thinking of both nations. It has so happened that in the consciousness of the British the trans-Atlantic identity has very deep and strong roots and it clashed with the European identity of the British. In other words, the British associated themselves with the Americans much more than with the Europeans.

Great Britain inherited its imperial past, ambitions of a powerful country and did not react at the proper time to the changes in the world, which took place in the second half of the 20th century. Their ideas about the strength of the country, its sovereignty and national identity remained unchanged since the period of the 18th-19th centuries when the United Kingdom was truly a powerful country. And processes of globalization and integration made it necessary to adapt to the new conditions, where a country could protect itself, its own sovereignty and identity only by close cooperation with other countries, by participating in international associations.

During the whole post-war period Great Britain wanted to pursue its national interests through the so called “three pillars” of British external policy, which were the development of the Commonwealth of Nations, maintaining special relations with the USA and playing the leading role in Europe. In reality though, building special relations with the USA has had its priority before the European policy of the United Kingdom. Great Britain considered the United States a country, which can make the UK an active and powerful participant of the world policy. And the United States paid less attention to special relations with Great Britain as it had lost its positions on the European continent in comparison with the strength of the sea power, which it used to be.

Great Britain has always separated itself from the continental Europe orienting its policy more to the countries of the Commonwealth and the United States of America. That's why after the activation of the European integration tendencies in the post-war period, the process of Great Britain's gaining membership in the institutions was difficult. It required new evaluation of the situation in Europe and in the world in general from the British government.

The term “European integration” was perceived and understood in Britain as cooperation at the level of governmental agreements between different countries. The priority of these agreements was economic integration, cooperation between the states, regions and enterprises [6]. For the Great Britain's EU partners the European integration had a noticeably wider and deeper sense. This difference of aims and the final goal of the integration processes created conflicts between the British government and the authorities of other EU member countries. The possibility of federalization of Europe created an even more cautious attitude towards European activity in Great Britain, which they possess till this day.

At the beginning of the 1990-s Great Britain still faced a dilemma of either European or Atlantic choice. The question of European integration was an important issue of the British governments' policy. But the dominants of the governmental policy were aimed at decrease of the cost of Great Britain's participation in the EU and support of the subsidiarity principle (division of the authorities between the EU, national government and local authorities). Thus, Great Britain kept losing the initiative in the European development and was forced to live in Europe, which was designed by others. As years passed this became more and more obvious and unacceptable for the British. After the Conservative Party in the face of David Cameron came to power in 2010, the issues

of European identity and membership in the EU became more talked about and promoted again, thus leading to the famous Brexit in May 2016, the resign of David Cameron and the transfer of the Prime Minister seat to Theresa May who now has to deal with all the political, economic and cultural consequences of the referendum.

Attempts to present European integration as the only possible way of socio-political development do not agree with the reality, nor does the total rejection of its significance. European integration has been expedient from the point of view of effective management but it was not inevitable. Apart from the things that unite the European countries there are also many which prevent the countries from connecting and unification. The “nationally based” countries still remain the main participants of international relations. Acting in the national interests was the main task of the governments and parliaments of these countries. Interests of separate countries often conflicted in spheres of economic, security and other policies.

It is possible to single out three levels of the British identity – national, ethnic and pan European. National identity unites the people within a country. It is one of the most common and traditional identity levels, which is formed and developed under the strong influence of education, culture and upbringing. Under the influence of ethnic mobilization process the ethnic level became higher and Euro integration formulated the pan European level of identity. The question of identity is closely connected with the question of the external and internal. In the opinion of many British people the supragovernmental level of governing ruins the principles of national sovereignty as by delegating its authorities the United Kingdom’s parliament stops being the supreme power [7].

The last decade of the 20th century showed positive results in the issues of political and social integration. European influence if not broke the traditional aloofness of the British then at least created the base for accepting the European idea together with the historically oriented worldview.

At the end of the 20th century and especially after the Labour Party won the elections in 1997 Great Britain turned to Europe, but it did not justify the expectations of the British leaders as to the fast change of people’s attitude and the political establishment to the totally pro-European vision and attitudes of the British [8]. As soon as the Conservatives returned to power, the traditional topics of national identity, preserving historical and cultural heritage, the “uniqueness” of the British nation have been raised again and were so well received by the average citizens that 52% blindly voted for leaving the EU without giving much thought to all the economic and political consequences of this decision.

National traditions remained strong and the citizens of Great Britain are not very enthusiastic about turning all the nations into one “European” nation. Despite all the attempts of Europhiles to change it into one federative country, Europe differs a lot from the United States of America and to unite together the British, the French, the Germans still remains the Euro enthusiasts’ plan for the future.

A vivid struggle between Euro sceptics and Euro enthusiasts could be observed in Great Britain during the process of the Maastricht Treaty ratification.

Opponents of Great Britain’s integration to any supranational structures insisted that the end of the Cold War gave birth to the new era of national sovereignty as absence of the common threat may lead to denial by the national countries of their international obligations, would give them the opportunity to act separately. They were sure that the governments of the countries do not play a significant role in the globalization processes, which have to be defined only by the markets.

Great Britain was among the last countries to ratify the Maastricht Treaty, which was signed in February 1992 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 12 member countries. At the general elections in April 1992 all three parties, the Conservatives, Labourites and the Liberals, supported the idea of the country’s participation in the “European building”, but they did not draw much attention to this matter to prevent the escalation of the existing disunity in the Conservative and the Labour parties caused by the European question. The majority of people from the power circles supported John Major’s government, which in fact had signed the Treaty. However, at the level of the social opinion the balance was very unsteady.

The Treaty was subjected to unmerciful criticism. The arguments were similar to those in other countries: a threat to the national uniqueness, the wish to preserve the national currency, unfavourableness and unreasonableness of spreading a single policy to the social and legal spheres, external policy and defence.

The Maastricht allowed Great Britain to continue carrying out its policy without complete stepping aside from the events in the European building and at the same time to be at most distance from the focal point, which gave it the opportunity to react just in time when the interests of the European integration would conflict with the national interests of Great Britain or when the United Kingdom would not be ready to accept the changes as it was done with the exchange rate mechanism.

But the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty caused the Tory interparty crisis resulting in the loss of image of a single political force because of splitting into “Euro enthusiasts” and “Euro sceptics” and as a result they suffered a defeat at the parliamentary elections in 1997 and managed to regain trust of their fellow citizens only in 2010. But the conflict within the party remained as well as the opinions on the issue of European integration varied.

To sum up, we may say that the value structure of the European people still has its national focus, which is only being adapted to the European requirements. Social rights together with the civil and political ones have formed a triad, which have practically become the basis for the key paradigm of building co-existence of nations in the United Europe.

Creation of a “still closer union” is possible only after ruining the existing stereotypes in the social consciousness and in the political leaders’ understanding of the place and role of a single country in the world community as a participant of the process of the European integration. Great Britain’s participation in the European Union was and still is complicated mainly by the difference in understanding of the level of integration. Taking into consideration its long-lasting traditions, Britain does not accept the idea of a “suprastate” formation such as a federative Europe, but would rather only want to have close cooperation at the level of single countries. And even though we may have hoped that with time Britain would somehow become more inclined to accept European integration and feel itself closer to Europe the results of the referendum in May 2016 prove the opposite.

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Неприцька Т.І., Неприцький О.А. *Особливості Великої Британії в контексті європейської інтеграції.*

В статті аналізується специфіка Великої Британії в контексті європейської інтеграції. Визначені головні чинники, котрі відрізняють Сполучене королівство від її континентальних сусідів, а саме, острівне положення, історичне минуле великої супердержави, давні та міцні зв'язки з США. Всі ці фактори справили свій специфічний вплив на формування унікального політичного ставлення та поведінки Великої Британії. Вони також визначили багатовекторність британської ідентичності адже самі британці бачать себе і частиною британської нації, частиною трансатлантичного союзу, а також частиною великої європейської спільноти. В останні декади етнічний компонент ідентичності став важливим. Таким чином, було виокремлено такі рівні ідентичності як національний, етнічний та панєвропейський. Маастрихтські угоди були, напевне, ключовим елементом певного завершення процесу європейської інтеграції, адже вони де-факто створили Європейський Союз, який ми знаємо сьогодні. Процес їх прийняття та ратифікації був проаналізований у статті. Було визначено, що підписання Угоди поглибило розбіжності між євро-ентузіастами та євро-скептиками у суспільстві загалом, та в політичних колах зокрема, а також викликало конфлікт всередині партії торі, котрій призвів до поразки на парламентських виборах 1997 року, а також мав ще ряд яскравих проявів впродовж років, кульмінацією яких є Брексіт та його наслідки.

Ключові слова: Велика Британія, європейська інтеграція, ідентичність, Маастрихтський договір, трансатлантична співпраця, Брексіт.

Неприцкая Т.И., Неприцкий А.А. *Особенности Великобритании в контексте европейской интеграции.*

В статье анализируется специфика Великобритании в контексте европейской интеграции. Определены основные факторы, которые отличают Объединенное королевство от его континентальных соседей, а именно, островное положение, историческое прошлое великой супердержавы, давние и крепкие связи с США. Все эти факторы оказали свое специфическое влияние на формирование уникального политического отношения и поведения Великобритании. Они также определили многовекторность британской идентичности, ведь сами британцы видят себя и частью британской нации, и частью трансатлантического союза, и частью большой европейской общины. В последние десятилетия этнический компонент стал важен. Таким образом, было выделено следующие уровни идентичности как национальный, этический и паневропейский. Маастрихтские соглашения были, наверное, ключевым элементом определенного завершения процесса европейской интеграции, ведь они де-факто создали Европейский Союз, который мы сегодня знаем. Процесс их принятия и ратификации был проанализирован в статье. Было определено, что подписание Соглашения углубило разногласия между евроэнтузиастами и евроскептиками в обществе в целом и в политических кругах в частности, а также вызвало конфликт внутри партии торы, который привел к поражению на парламентских выборах 1997 года, а также имел еще ряд ярких проявлений в течении многих лет, кульминацией которых является Брексит и его последствия.

Ключевые слова: Великобритания, европейская интеграция, идентичность, Маастрихтский договор, трансатлантическое сотрудничество, Брексит.