# ITALIANISTICA

# DEBRECENIENSIS

## —— XXIII. ——

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# The exaltation of Italian national identity in Matteo Renzi's discourse

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**Abstract:** Nations are one of the most well-established constructs in our society, and they represent a very attractive benchmark for personal and social identification. Political speeches, as well as, for example, media discourse and popular culture, constantly reiterate myth, culture and history of nations in order to reaffirm and preserve their positive image, and this tendency doesn't seem to be weakened by some contemporary events like globalization and the reinforcement of transnational systems. As a proof of this trend, the present work proposes an in-depth analysis of the speech held by the then Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi at the European Parliament on the occasion of the inauguration of the Italian semester of presidency on July 2, 2014, aiming to demonstrate that also supranational contexts are exploited to reiterate national identity and priorities.

## 1. Introduction

Identity is a constantly re-negotiated and re-conceptualized notion, very problematic to define due to its fluidity and its marked relatedness to the context to which it pertains.[1] Nevertheless, when we speak about collective identities it is ascertained that they have to be considered as a cultural and political construction that defines "who we are". National identity is of course no exception to this conception: nations have been defined as "imagined communities"[2] in which a people's common historical past, with all its myths and traditions, has mostly been created *ad hoc* in order to justify the aim of reaching a territorial and political unity and to create a deep-rooted sense of belonging among the population.[3] In this process of identity creation, language has a double fundamental role: on the one hand, national languages can be considered as one of the main symbols of national identity,[4] having in fact proved to be one of the main reasons of disagreement between mem-

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[1] Z. Baumann, *Identity. Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004.

[2] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

[3] *The invention of tradition*, edited by E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

[4] P. Bordieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991; S. Wright, *Community and Communication. The Role of Language in Nation State Building and European Integration*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 2000; S. Barbour, *Nationalism, Language, Europe*, in *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, edited by S. Barbour and C. Carmichael, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp 1-17.

ber states, mainly concerning language policies in the EU;[5] on the other hand, as shown by Wodak et al.[6] as well as by many others, national identity is discursively constructed, which means that the use of language in a social and political context is paramount to the characterization of a nation.

National identity is one of the most distinctive categories to which European citizens feel tied.[7] This is probably the main reason why the European Union has found difficult to constitute a stable asset and to harmonize all the different positions on social, political and economic cooperation so far. Despite the rampant globalisation and the intense imposition of English as the global lingua franca, with all their many possible and current implications,[8] nationalism doesn't appear to be in danger; on the contrary, according to Smith,[9] ethnic and national roots are still the basis for the construction of political institutions, and minority movements of the current era often base their autonomy programs and their independence claiming on national identity. Although some other scholars, like for example Habermas,[10] tend to privilege a more confident view sustaining that a peaceful coexistence between national and European identities can exist in that they pertain to different spheres of belonging, also representatives of European institutions sometimes show some doubts about the possibility of creating pan-European structures, often expressing, for instance, the non-subsistence of a coincidence between Europe and the European Union.[11] It is even the case that some aspects of globalization have in fact reinforced national sensibilities, and in some areas this has led to rejectionist positions that insist on the need for defending national specificities and boundaries.[12]

The relationship between the single nation states and the European Union has been the main focus in the studies on European integration and the formation of a

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[5] A. Caviedes, *The Role of Language in Nation-Building within the European Union*, «Dialectical Anthropology» 27 2003, pp. 249-268; U. Ammon, *The dominance of languages and language communities in the European Union (EU) and the consequences*, in *Contributions to the Sociology of Language [CSL]: Along the Routes to Power: Explorations of Empowerment through Language*, edited by M. Pütz, J. A. Fishman and J. Neff-van Aertselaer, Munche, Walter de Gruyter, 2011.

[6] R. Wodak, R. de Cillia, M. Reisigl and K. Liebhart, *The discursive construction of national identity*, Edinburgh, Scotland, EUP, 2009.

[7] E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983; A. Smith, *National identity*, Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1991.

[8] R. Phillipson, *Globalizing English: are linguistic human rights an alternative to linguistic imperialism?*, «Language Sciences» 20 (1) 1998, pp. 101-112; R.Phillipson, *Lingua franca or lingua frankensteinia? English in European integration and globalisation*, «World Englishes» 27 (2) 2008, pp. 250-267; D. Crystal, *English as a global language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[9] Smith, *National identity*, cit., pp. 157-168.

[10] J. Habermas, *Why Europe Needs a Constitution*, «New Left Review» 11, September-October 2011, pp. 5-26.

[11] M. Krzyżanowski, & F. Oberhuber, *(Un)Doing Europe. Discourses and Practices of Negotiating the EU Constitution*, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2007.

[12] Cfr. J. A. Scholte, *Globalization. A critical introduction*, New York, Palgrave, 2000/2005, p. 230.

European identity.[13] Very briefly, the different positions towards the possibility of a peaceful and cooperative European integration have been displayed by Nanz,[14] who describes the Euro-sceptics as defenders of nations against the illusion of a single European polity; the Euro-pessimists as those who support the idea of a European community but only as an inter-governmental cooperation between the culturally integrated communities of the nation-states; and, finally, the Euro-optimists as those who believe in a post-national globalized era in which the single national identities are overtaken by a unique European cultural and social identity as the basis of a deeper level of integration (for an extensive overview on European identity and its historical and theoretical development see Checkel & Katzenstein).[15]

As the majority of the works on the European Union, we consider the role of national political elites as the main factor in the creation of European identity, which is then to be defined as supranational.[16] We propose in this paper an in-depth analysis of the discourse held at the European Parliament by the Italian Democratic Party's leader Matteo Renzi on July 2, 2014, as an inaugural speech for the Italian semester of presidency, in order to show how the European supranational context is exploited to restate national identity and to foreground national interests. Basing our approach on the key points of critical discourse analysis theory[17] and, in particular, on the precious guidelines given by Van Dijk,[18] we have found three specific directives that appear particularly suggestive of the sentiment of nationality. After a brief description of the current political situation of Italy in Section 2, we will then dedicate the subsequent three sections (3, 4 and 5) of this paper to the following levels of analysis:

-      Use of personal pronouns and possible contrast between them (Van Dijk):[19] does the Italian leader use first and second plural person to mark a

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[13] L. Cram, *Introduction: banal Europeanism: European Union identity and national identities in synergy*, «Nations and Nationalism», 15 (1) 2009, pp. 101-108; L. Cram, *Identity and European integration: diversity as a source of integration*, «Nations and Nationalism», 15 (1) 2009, pp. 109-128.

[14] P. I. Nanz, *In-between Nations: Ambivalence and the Making of a European identity*, in *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, edited by B. Stråth, Brussels, Peter Lang, 2000, pp. 279-309.

[15] J. Checkel & P. Katzenstein, *European identity*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[16] R. Wodak, & S. Boukala, *(Supra)National Identity and Language: Rethinking National and European Migration Policies and the Linguistic Integration of Migrants*, «Annual Review of Applied Linguistics», 35 2015, pp. 253–273.

[17] See T. Van Dijk, *Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Discourse & Society, 4 (2) 1993, pp. 249-283; N. Fairclough, *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language*, London/New York, Longman, 1995; *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by C. R. Caldas-Coulthard and M. Coulthard, London, Routledge, 1996; *Critical Discourse Analysis. Theory and Interdisciplinarity*, edited by G. Weiss and R. Wodak, London, Palgrave, 2003.

[18] T. Van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse. A Multi-Disciplinary Introduction*, 2009. (http://www.discourses.org/UnpublishedArticles/Ideology%20and%20discourse.pdf) (accessed 20 october 2017).

[19] Ivi, p. 49.

dividing line between Italy and Europe? Is the pronoun *we* used to express national identity?;

- "Positive self-presentation"[20] and "national self-glorification":[21] at the European Parliament, which can be defined as a "denationalised" institution,[22] all members are supposed to cooperate in a transnational environment, considering themselves as part of a common entity, the EU. But more often than not national specificities and priorities emerge in European discourses,[23] thus we will show some evidence of this tendency and we will analyse them from a linguistic point of view;

- "History as lesson":[24] this category can be somehow related to the previous one. National history, in particular, can be used as a key instrument to favour a specific member state over Europe, possibly by claiming the fundamental role of the nation in the process of creation of the European Union.


## 2. Italy in search for stability

Italy has been experiencing a troubled political period since the last national elections in February 2013. With no party obtaining the outright majority of votes, it was quite difficult to form a government, mainly due to the Five Stars Movement's (*MoVimento Cinque Stelle*, M5S henceforth), which obtained 25,56% of votes, refusal to cooperate with any other party. For a two-month period, ten "wise-men" (*saggi* in Italian), which is erudite and expert men and women not directly involved in the political process nominated by the President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano, performed the main functions of the government. Afterwards, the creation of a new government was entrusted to Enrico Letta of the Democratic Party (*Partito Democratico*, PD henceforth). For the first time in the history of Italy, some opposite political forces came to a pact and accepted to collaborate in order to make the political situation of the country more stable. Notwithstanding their good level of international credibility and their commitment to starting some important reforms, Letta and his colleagues were gradually hindered in their

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[20] Ivi, p. 81.

[21] Ivi, p. 78.

[22] M. Krzyżanowski, *"European Identity Wanted!" On discursive and communicative dimensions of the European Convention*, in *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis*, edited by R. Wodak and P. Chilton, Amsterdam/ Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2005, pp. 136-163.

[23] *Transnational identities. Becoming European in the EU*, edited by R. Herrmann, T. Risse & M. Brewer, Oxford and New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2004; *Ideas of Europe in National Political Discourse*, edited by C. Toriz Ramos, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2011.

[24] Van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse. A Multi-Disciplinary Introduction*, cit., p. 72.

work by a PD internal opposition lead by Matteo Renzi, who had been meanwhile elected as secretary of the party in December 2013. In February 2014, 136 out of 152 PD representatives voted in favour of Letta's resignation and Renzi immediately received the task of forming a new government.

Since then, the Prime Minister Matteo Renzi led a strong and reformist government coalition until the end of 2016, when Renzi decided to resign due to a remarkable defeat experienced during a popular referendum which his party had proposed to modify some essential parts of the Italian Constitution. Nevertheless, from that point on there hasn't been any significant change in the government management, as another PD representative, Paolo Gentiloni, has held the reins of the Italian government continuing a political program that is essentially the same as his predecessor's.

During this political period, one important appointment that has represented a testing ground for the PD but also for all the other parties, is the European Parliament election, which took place on May 25, 2014. Perhaps surprisingly, Italian people gave 40,81% of their votes to the PD, which resulted in the most voted European party on that occasion. It is said to be surprising because there has been a quite marked tendency, during this round of elections, to vote for the so-called Eurosceptic parties and coalitions (for a brief synthesis about pro-European and anti-European positions see Smith;[25] for an overall account of the history of Euroscepticism in most member states see Szczerbiak & Taggart).[26] For instance, in France the *Front National* of Marie Le Pen triumphed over the other candidates and parties with 26% of votes. In Great Britain, Ukip lead by Nigel Farage, who has always fought for the withdrawal from the EU, was the most voted party with 31% of votes. Aversion for the EU and its rules obtained significant results also in Austria (20,5% of votes for the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*). Despite the weighty victory of the PD in Italy, the M5S, which has based its campaign on quite strong anti-European ideals, has obtained an important result with 21,16% of votes. This probably means that also Italian people are not completely satisfied with EU politics and membership, and this is even more evident if we look at the results of two other Eurosceptic parties: the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) with 6,16% of votes, and Brothers of Italy (*Fratelli d'Italia*) with 3,66% of votes.

The turnout at the polls for European elections is not usually significant and criteria followed by the electorate at the time of voting is not completely clear. For

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[25] A. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995, pp. 121-123.

[26] A. Szczerbiak, & P. Taggart, *Opposing Europe? The comparative party politics of Euroscepticism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

instance, Marks & Steenbergen[27] sustain that «European elections are 'second-order elections' in which political parties and voters are chiefly motivated by national issues». This refers to the *regulation model* elaborated by George Tsebelis and Geoffrey Garrett and described by Marks and Steenbergen.[28] According to this model, positions towards European integration and EU politics are subsumed into in-state orientations, in particular into the left/right opposition and competition. Thus, a tendency to vote for Eurosceptic parties could be inherent to inner national dynamics that are not necessarily based on Euro-oriented positions. However, the strong Eurosceptic trends that we are still witnessing can hardly be a coincidence, and we are allowed to think that those who then decided to go to the polls genuinely care about EU institutions and their organization and composition. Therefore, attitudes towards EU and its policies must have played an influential role in procuring such a great amount of votes to the PD. The tone that this party used during the electoral campaign was not particularly passionate, and positions expressed were always moderate, pro-EU and pro-Euro as the single shared currency, in favour of international cooperation and of a respect for economic and political parameters. Nevertheless, Renzi specified from the beginning of his mandate that one of the aims to be pursued was an Italian rebirth as a European leader, and that this was going to be possible not only if Italy did not blame the EU as the cause of the financial crisis, but also if the EU allowed Italy to have a prominent role in writing the main rules of the Union. The beginning of the Italian semester was advertised as a propitious occasion to accomplish these objectives, namely to convert Italy into one of the most important European leaders, and that is probably the most efficacious promise that attracted such a substantial number of votes.

Having said that, we now aim to display how this position was held also in a supranational context, namely the European Parliament, giving priority to national issues and interests.

## 3. The use of personal deixis: first and second plural person
The use of personal pronouns can convey important information about the speaker's ideology and how they want to organize their discourse. Especially when we are dealing with political discourses, it is a fundamental trait which requires accurate analysis. Following from Van Dijk's theory of contrast, in which the author

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[27] G. Marks & M. R. Steenbergen, *European Integration and Political Conflict*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 8.
[28] *Ibid.*

maintains the importance of polarization in the use of personal pronouns 'us' and 'them',[29] we have adapted this line of reasoning to the use of the first and second plural person (*we* vs *you*) in order to notice how this opposition is representative of the contrast between national identity and membership to the European Union. First, however, the use of the pronoun 'we' per se can be noted, in that it can communicate different pragmatic as well as social meanings and contribute to creating a frame that establishes the speaker's position in respect to the communicative situation and to the other's position. Generally speaking, it is possible to distinguish between "inclusive we", when reference includes speaker and addressee, and "exclusive we", when the pronoun refers to the speaker plus other(s) but it excludes the addressee. However, Wilson[30] defines "exclusive we" in a different way: the speaker would use the first plural person to include themselves in an action that they don't actually perform, possibly because they want to appear personally involved in what they are describing even if they don't fulfil a personal role in the event (for a comprehensive outline of the possible references of *we*, see Wodak *et al.*).[31]

Whatever the definition of inclusive and exclusive *we*, this pronoun has an "aggregating" function,[32] inasmuch as it allows the speaker to consider their audience as an active part of their discourse and to intensify the sense of community.

This is even more so when we consider the specific aspect we are interested in, namely the expression of national identity.[33] This function can be fulfilled also when the use of *we* is very generic and comprehensive, as much as to include a whole population or even the entire human kind. According to Chilton, in fact, «the repeated use of the first-person inclusive pronoun» is a classic example of strategies through which «appealing to patriotism, to pulling together, brotherhood, the cause of the proletariat, civilised values, and similar concepts that have as part of their frame some notion of the special characteristics of the self's group».[34] This is considered by the author as an attempt to address positive face, which would be, together with the addressing to negative face, a necessity for politicians who want to convey a successful message (for a theory of politeness which explains the concepts of positive and negative face, see Brown & Levinson).[35]

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[29] Van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse. A Multi-Disciplinary Introduction*, cit., p. 49.

[30] Cfr. J. Wilson, *Politically Speaking*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1990, p. 47.

[31] Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart, *The discursive construction of national identity*, cit., pp. 45-46.

[32] P. Desideri, *Teoria e prassi del discorso politico. Strategie persuasive e percorsi comunicativi.* Roma, Bulzoni, 1984.

[33] See M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 90.

[34] P. Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse. Theory and Practice.* Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2004, p. 40.

[35] P. Brown & S. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Turning our attention to the text it can be seen how the Italian Prime Minister chose to attribute different meanings and references to personal pronouns.

In Italian, the first plural person can be expressed not only via the personal pronoun *noi* ('we') and every possible conjugations of 'us' and 'our' (*noi* and *nostro*), but also via verbal suffixes (the explicit expression of the subject is not obligatory). If we start with the more generic and inclusive use of *noi*, we can notice fourteen cases in which the speaker refers to the entire population of the world, whoever is living that particular historic period characterized by the financial crisis. These are obvious examples of an inclusive use of 'we' in which Renzi involves not only his direct listeners, but also the entire world population in his discourse. It can be considered as a way to communicate that the issues discussed are common to everyone, politicians and civilians, and solutions can be found only through a strong cooperation and a common commitment. This expression of personal participation in the most common difficulties of the period, strongly expressed in examples 1 and 2, appears more blended in the other cases, in particular in examples 3 and 4, where the use of 'we' has its more generic meaning and could be easily substituted with an impersonal structure: «*se ci si ferma un secondo a riflettere*» ('if one takes some time to meditate'); «*se si guarda la cartina geografica*» ('if one observes a geographical map'). All the examples in the text are transcribed using two or three points to indicate a short or long pause in the speech and a comma to indicate a change in intonation preceded by an almost inaudible pause.

(1) Dopo la crisi che tutti **abbiamo** vissuto.
(1) After the crisis **we** all have lived.
(2) Una comunità che ricorda a tutti **noi** il valore della memoria e del futuro.
(2) A community which reminds to **us** all how valuable memory and future are.
(3) Se **ci** fermiamo un secondo a riflettere.
(3) If **we** stop by a moment to reflect.
(4) Se **guardiamo** insieme la cartina geografica.
(4) If **we** look at the geographical map all together.

Another use of the first plural person is highly specific, since it indicates a peculiar category, namely political identity. There are four examples that belong to this subcategory: we found one reference to all representatives of the institutions, appointed with great responsibility towards people and their precarious financial conditions (ex. 5), and three references to Renzi's party, the PD, when the leader highlights their important electoral success and how their strategy of sincerity has led to it.

(5) In bocca al lupo a tutti **noi!**

(5) Good luck to all of **us**!

It is worth noting that this last reference follows a different, somehow opposite tendency compared to the others that we have described so far. Since Matteo Renzi uses the first plural person to include only himself and his party's members, consequently excluding most present parliamentarians, the reference results as a way to mark a dividing line between the two groups. In addition, the Prime Minister is describing a virtuous behaviour, which led his party to win the European elections, thus he is in some way putting the PD in a position of superiority.

Obviously enough, when we talk about expression of national identity, political discourse is one of the most significant genres: most states have been and are being founded on the strength of a national sentiment which gets a people united, and the representatives of those states use that sentiment to obtain social approval and to defend the state's borders. In a multi-national (and multi-lingual) context such as the European Union, national perspectives are bound to emerge face to face with each other, sometimes leading to the encounter of conflictual positions.[36] The speech that we have just begun to analyse does not represent a part of a debate and it is not therefore subject to any direct criticisms or objections. Nevertheless, Renzi constantly alternates EU and Italy as the two "protagonists" of his speech, mainly communicating a positive representation of his nation, on the one hand, and the urgency of strong decisions and a change of assessment for the EU, on the other.

In order to display how these traits have been linguistically conveyed, we now continue with our analysis of personal deixis: to begin with, we present a compared analysis of the use of the first plural person indicating, on the one hand, the Italian people and, on the other hand, European citizens and/or representatives. We have found 40 cases of *noi* (and all its conjugations) indicating Italian identity, and 59 occurrences which have been used to mean 'we Europeans'. As we can see from Figure 1, reference to European identity prevails from a mere numerical point of view.

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[36] A. Smith, *National Identity and the Idea of European Unity*, «International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944)», 68 (1) 1992, pp. 55-76.
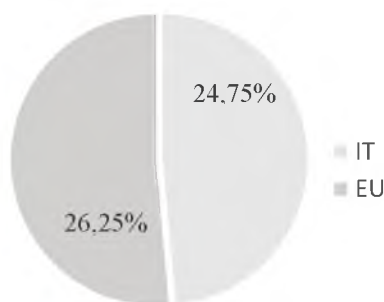
*Figure 1. Reference to Italian and European identity via the personal pronoun we.*

Nevertheless, reference to Italian people and identity is very strong too and it underlines the intention of presenting Italy as a protagonist of European political action.

The structure of the text is significant: Renzi proposes an introduction in which the use of *noi* is the most generic one, so that it is clear that the entire world population should be interested in what is said. Later, the first mentions of the 'Europeaness' through the first plural person are related to the beginning of the Italian semester and the end of the Greek one (ex. 6), and they are used as a preamble to another key portion of the speech: the one dedicated to Italy.

> (6) **Noi** non pensiamo a questo, quando in Europa **discutiamo** tra Grecia e Italia, e non **pensiamo** nemmeno alle domande sul senso della vita […] **noi pensiamo** alla crisi, finanziaria allo spread.
> (6) **We** don't think about that, when **we** discuss between Greece and Italy in Europe, and neither **we** think about questions about the meaning of life […] **we** think about the financial, crisis the spread.

Starting with the celebration of the glorious past of Greece and Italy, the prime minister introduces Italy's plans about the semester of presidency and he describes changes, improvements and innovations that Italy is having in its territory and, consequently, would like to impose to the European context. It is in this section that Matteo Renzi strongly highlights the expression of national identity, with a repeated use of *noi* in its basic form indicating the subject of the sentence. Considering that, as already explained, the Italian language does not require the expression of the subject of the sentence via the personal pronoun, the choice of

closely repeating it, using the scheme of anaphora (ex. 7) to indicate "we Italians" is particularly salient here.

> (7) **noi** abbiamo parlato un linguaggio di verità..abbiamo detto che **noi**, dobbiamo fare le nostre riforme, che **noi**, dobbiamo cambiare la burocrazia la giustizia il sistema fiscale, che **noi**, dobbiamo cambiare le istituzioni [...] quindi **noi** sappiamo, che prima di tutto dobbiamo chiedere a **noi**, la forza di cambiare, se vogliamo essere credibili.
>
> (7) **We** spoke a language of truth..**we** said that **we**, must do our reforms, that **we**, must change bureaucracy justice the fiscal system, that **we**, must change institutions [...] thus **we** know, that first of all, **we** must demand first of all to **ourselves**, the courage to change, if we want to be credible.

Moreover, the fact that the mention of Italy and its present condition precede the part focused on Europe can symbolise closeness to the centre of the discourse (the speaker), just as later mentions can represent personal distance from the referent (Europe in this case), as suggested by Chilton.[37] We propose that this greater closeness between the speaker and Italy is underlined by the fact that Renzi intersects the use of *noi* as 'we Italians' with the use of *noi* as 'we belonging to the Democratic Party', establishing a relationship of interdependence between the two entities (see (8) in which the portion reported in (7) is completed by the preceding part referring to the role of the PD. References to Italy are highlighted in bold whereas references to the PD are underlined).

> (8) qui rappresento un Paese..fondatore, dell'Unione Europea e un paese che, continua ogni anno a dare economicamente un contributo importante alle istituzioni europee..**siamo** tra quelli che **diamo** più, di quello che prendono, **noi italiani**..e ne **siamo** felici..e ne **siamo** orgogliosi..perché il valore più grande non è quello economico...però devo anche dire che rappresento o meglio sono uno, dei non pochi parlam/mm sono uno dei non pochi, esponenti, di un partito politico che è uno dei partiti che ha preso più voti, in tutta Europa il partito democratico italiano nessuno ha preso i voti del PD..e vi dico che <u>abbiamo</u> preso questi voti..non, dicendo che era responsabilità dell'Europa, la crisi che **stiamo** vivendo, dicendo che in Italia i problemi nascono dall'Italia non dall'Europa.. <u>noi abbiamo</u> parlato un linguaggio di verità..<u>abbiamo</u> detto che **noi**, **dobbiamo** fare le nostre riforme, che **noi**, **dobbiamo** cambiare la burocrazia la giustizia il sistema fiscale, che **noi**, dobbiamo cambiare le istituzioni [...] quindi **noi**

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37 P. Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse. Theory and Practice*, cit., p. 158.

sappiamo, che prima di tutto dobbiamo chiedere a **noi**, la forza di cambiare, se vogliamo essere credibili.

(8) I here represent one of the founder countries, of the European Union and a country that every year gives an important economic contribution to European institutions..**we** are among those who give more than (they) take, **we** Italians.. and **we** are glad of that..and **we** are proud of that..because economic value is not the greatest one...but I have to say that I represent or better I am one of the many parlam/mm I am one of the many, representatives, of a political party that is one of the parties that took more votes, in the whole Europe no one has taken as many votes has the PD has..and I can tell you that <u>we</u> took these votes.. not telling that it is Europe that is responsible for the crisis that **we** are living, but telling that Italy's problems come from Italy not from Europe..<u>we</u> spoke a language of truth..<u>we</u> said that **we**, must do our reforms, that **we**, must change bureaucracy justice the fiscal system, that **we**, must change institutions […] thus **we** know, that first of all, **we** must demand first of all to **ourselves**, the courage to change, if **we** want to be credible.

All these elements seem to indicate the will of attention-seeking by the side of Renzi, as his political thought and strategies would be the more appropriate to face Europe's issues and to face the economic crisis.

The expression of European identity via the first plural person is predominant but it appears as more distant from the speaker: although Renzi explicitly affirms, in the second part of his speech, the intention of turning the European Union into a strong and single entity, whereas so far it has proved to be, to a certain extent, a mere sum of single states and bureaucracies (as shown in (9) and (10)), the importance of Italy as a leader is an element of contradiction.

(9) la vera grande sfida che ha di fronte a sé, il **nostro** continente oggi è ritrovare, l'anima dell'Europa, ritrovare il senso profondo, del **nostro** stare assieme.
(9) The true big challenge that **our** continent must face, today is find, Europe's soul again, find again a deep sense of **us** being together.
(10) **Noi** siamo una comunità un popolo, non **siamo** un'espressione geografica.
(10) **We** are a community a people, **we** are not a geographic expression.

In fact, the whole speech seems to be oriented in order to propose Italy as a single virtuous example, therefore it is primarily considered as an independent and separate State and, only later, as a constituent part of the European Union.

When it comes to the use of the second plural person, it can be seen as an indicator of contrast between the speaker and the addressees. In such a specific

context, the use of *voi* ('you') and all its conjugations can be considered as a way to mark a dividing line between the role of Italy, and in particular of the Italian government and the PD, and Europe together with its representatives. Indeed, in his introduction, Renzi wishes good luck and 'good work' to the new MEPs on behalf of the Italian people and their institutions, thus he immediately establishes a certain distance between the two entities, as they would pertain to separate spheres that perform different positions and must therefore be dedicated to different occupations. Prime Minister Renzi directly addresses his interlocutors sixteen times during his speech: we counted eleven cases in which addressees are considered as MEPs, thus on the basis of their institutional position, and five cases in which the second plural person is used to mention listeners in a generic way, as the direct public of the speech.

The majority of the examples is oriented towards a remark of commitment and responsibilities derived from the election at the European Parliament, as shown by the semantic content of words like 'mandate' (ex. 11), 'election' (ex. 12), 'responsibility' (examples 13 and 14), 'represent' (examples 14, 15 and 16).

(11) Onorevoli membri del Parlamento Europeo, di cuore..il buon lavoro, e l'in bocca al lupo, […] per, il <u>mandato</u> che **vi**..accingete ad iniziare.

(11) Honourable members of the European Parliament, sincerely..good work, and good luck, […] for, the <u>mandate</u> **you** are..initiating.

(12) In bocca al lupo e complimenti per l'<u>elezione</u> a ciascuno di **voi** membri del Parlamento Europeo.

(12) Good luck and congratulations for your <u>election</u> to all of **you** members of the European Parliament.

(13) **Avete** una grande <u>responsabilità.</u>

(13) **You** have a great <u>responsibility.</u>

(14) **Voi** <u>rappresentate</u> signori del parlamento quale grande <u>responsabilità.</u>

(14) **You** <u>represent</u> gentlemen of the Parliament what a big <u>responsibility</u>.

(15) **Voi** <u>rappresentate</u> un faro di civiltà.

(15) **You** <u>represent</u> a guiding light for civilization.

(16) **Voi** <u>rappresentate</u> come Europa la […] civilizzazione della globalizzazione.

(16) **You** <u>represent</u> as Europe the […] civilization of globalization.

Comparing these examples with the one reported in (5), we can observe a striking disparity between the single reference to EU representatives with the first plural person and the eleven cases with the second plural person, which highlights the fact that Renzi is very reluctant to get involved in the role of European institu-

tions. Example (12) is particularly interesting: after the initial wishes, Matteo Renzi continues by stating, «I am glad and honoured to represent my country», and that apparently establishes a contrast between his aim and his government's, on the one hand, (representing Italy and its interests) and MEPs' aim (representing Europe as a guiding light in expanding civilization and globalization), on the other.

## 4. Lexical and syntactic strategies

If we exclude the introductory part, which is primarily dedicated to greetings and reference to European politics and politicians, we have found that the text is somehow divided into two parts: the first one is dedicated to the expression of Italian identity, whereas the other one focuses on European identity. We have also noted that the first of these two sections is characterized by the prominence not only of the role of Italy as a member State of the EU, but also of the PD as the most voted party at the European elections. How is this exaltation lexically constructed?

We propose that semantic structure is the most emblematic representation of the second point of our analysis, in that it realizes a process of national self-glorification via a positive self-presentation: Italy is presented as a «founder member state» of the European Union, and this is an initial way to imply and declare the importance of its role in the Community. Hereafter, a series of lexical couples (shown in table 1) is used to describe the position and the intentions of Italy in what is represented as a new political and economic phase:

*Table 1. Lexical couples indicating the condition and the plans of Italy.*

| Italian | | English | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Diamo | Prendiamo | We give | We take |
| Felici | Orgogliosi | Glad | Proud |
| Convinzione | Determinazione | Resoluteness | Determinedness |
| Coraggio | Orgoglio | Courage | Pride |
| Chiedere | Dare | Ask | Give |
| Rispettare | Cambiare | Respect | Change |
| Stabilità | Crescita | Stability | Growth |
| Giudicare il passato | Cominciare il futuro | Judge the past | Start the future |

It is worth noting that a cluster of three consecutive words interpolates this series of couples to strengthen particularly important concepts:

(17) Noi, dobbiamo cambiare **la burocrazia la giustizia il sistema fiscale.**
(17) We, have to change **bureaucracy justice the fiscal system.**

This triplet is pronounced without any considerable pauses between one object and the other, as if the speaker wanted to indicate that these objectives need to be achieved all together in order to realize a good reformation program.

Among the lexical couples, which are certainly used to confer some balance to the text via parallelism, there are opposing couples, on the one hand (ex. 1, 5, 6, 8 of Table 1), and symbiotic couples, on the other (ex. 2, 3, 4, 7 of Table 1). Three of the identified opposing couples are inserted in a larger syntactic structure which is defined as 'contrastive couple' ('*coppia contrastiva*') by Caniglia & Mazzoni[38], in which the second part of a sentence mirrors the first one in its grammatical structure and its extension, while the content changes to highlight the opposition[39]. Taking a look at the examples from our text:

(18) Un grande paese, che […] non va per **chiedere** ma va per **dare.**
(18) A great country, which […] does not go to **ask** but which goes to **give.**
(19) Vogliamo **rispettare** le regole e non chiediamo di **cambiare** le regole.
(19) We want to **respect** the rules and we don't ask to **change** the rules.
(20) Non ci interessa **giudicare il passato**..ci interessa **cominciare il futuro.**
(20) We are not interested in **judging the past**..we are interested in **starting the future.**

Contrastive couples are considered to be one of the strategies that politicians usually employ to condensate their message, in order to make it brief and easy to memorize as slogans generally are.[40] In this case, Matteo Renzi capitalizes on this method to give a positive image of Italy in the European context, counterposing what Italy doesn't do, which has a negative connotation (ask for something, change the rules, judge the past) with what Italy does do and has a good and positive connotation (give something, respect the rules, start the future).

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[38] E. Caniglia & M. Mazzoni, *Nuovi approcci alla comunicazione politica*. Roma, Carocci, 2011.
[39] Ivi, p. 101.
[40] Ivi, p. 102.

The same "reducing" function is attributed to word lists, like the one reported in example (17). Atkinson[41] already identified lists of three as essential "claptrap" frequently used in political discourse.

Now, if we focus on what we have called the symbiotic couples, we notice that they all have a positive connotation, so it is not surprising, considering the analysis conducted so far, that they are all referred to Italy and its projects for the coming semester. All these linguistic devices aim, therefore, to the same result: exalting Italian identity in a multinational context, implying that its role is fundamental to the whole union (it is defined as «un grande Paese», 'a great country',) and that its example should be followed by the other member states, but also that Europe should give something back to Italy as a reward for «having done its homework».

What is more, this attempt to create a positive Italian context via discourse is intertwined with another positive representation: that of the self. Soon after the first reference to Italy, Renzi introduces another topic and another referent, the Democratic Party. Since he is the main representative of this party, all the positive attributes that follow are automatically ascribed not only to the political formation but also to himself, especially because Italy has been interested in a relevant process of identification between parties and their leaders during the last decades.[42] This "positive self-presentation" underlines that no one has received the electoral validation of the PD in Europe, which reaffirms a certain political superiority (ex. 21); that the PD is realising the most important reforms in response to the Italian economic crisis, which refers to political diligence and success (ex. 22); finally, all these outcomes have been reached by "speaking the language of truth", so via sincerity (ex. 23).

> (21) Sono uno dei non pochi, esponenti, di un partito politico che è uno dei partiti che ha preso più voti, in tutta Europa il Partito Democratico italiano nessuno ha preso i voti del PD.
>
> (21) I am one of the many, representatives, of a political party that is one of the parties that has taken more votes, in the whole Europe the Italian Democratic Party no one has taken as many votes as the PD.
>
> (22) Abbiamo detto che noi, dobbiamo fare le nostre riforme, che noi, dobbiamo cambiare la burocrazia la giustizia il sistema fiscale, che noi, dobbiamo cambiare le istituzioni e in questo momento, signor presidente, il senato italia-

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[41] M. Atkinson, *Our Masters' Voices. The Language and Body Language of Politics*, London/New York, Routledge, 1984, pp. 57-60; 159-160.

[42] G. Mazzoleni, *La comunicazione politica*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1998/2004; E. De Blasio, M. Hibberd, M. Higgings and M. Sorice, *La leadership politica. Media e costruzione del consenso*, Roma, Carocci, 2012.

no sta votando in commissione la riforma costituzionale..che cambia, le regole
del gioco nel nostro Paese.
(22) We said that we, must do our reforms, that we, must change bureaucracy
justice the fiscal system, that we, must change institutions and in this moment,
Mr. President, Italian Senate is voting the constitutional reform..that changes
the ground rules in our country.
(23) Abbiamo preso questi voti..non, dicendo che era responsabilità dell'Euro-
pa, la crisi che stiamo vivendo, dicendo che in Italia i problemi nascono dall'I-
talia non dall'Europa..noi abbiamo parlato un linguaggio di verità.
(23) We took these votes..not, saying that it is Europe that is responsible for the
crisis we are living, but saying that in Italy problems originates from Italy not
from Europe..we spoke a language of truth.

Two observations can derive from this analysis: first, all the strategies described
seem to have as ultimate goal the construction of a positive contextual frame that
surrounds the Democratic Party and Italy. This is because politicians always aim
to present their position as the right (in the sense of moral) one,[43] the one which
must be appreciated and taken as an example; for this to happen, they obviously
need to show tangible positive effects deriving from their actions, and that is what
Prime Minister Renzi is trying to do here. Secondly, in addressing their public,
politicians ought to depict credible representations, especially in a historic period
in which confidence towards political and institutional representatives is reach-
ing particularly low levels; in Matteo Renzi's speech, we can observe an attempt
to achieve this aim when he illustrates the strategy adopted by the PD towards
economic crisis: they have not deceived the Italian people by blaming the EU for
the present economic situation, but they have been completely honest by acknowl-
edging their own responsibilities and indicating a recovering, though arduous re-
formative course.

As a consequence of this speech organization, we could develop a logical
scheme that represents a message implicitly transmitted to European Parliamen-
tary members:

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[43] See Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse. Theory and Practice*, cit.

The PD knows the solution for economic crisis (and that is why he has received so many votes)

Italy must follow the PD's strategy

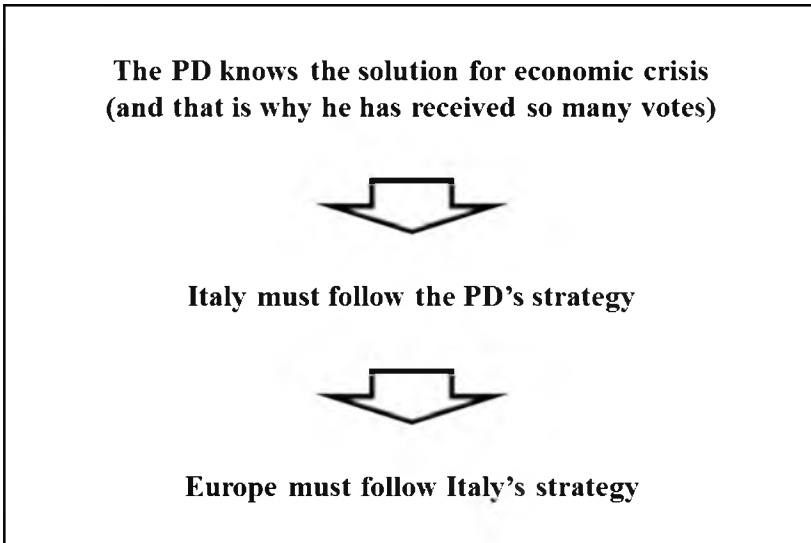Europe must follow Italy's strategy

*Figure 2. Implicitness in Matteo Renzi's speech.*

Priority given to the PD and to Italy in the illustration of Renzi's political program confirms the greater importance conferred to national interests and plans, to which the European Union should, in some way, adapt its programs in the imminent future.

## 5. History as lesson

The last category to analyse is the use of history as iconic representations that support the content of the conveyed message. The use of the topos of *historia magistra vitae* is quite common in political discourse, sometimes in an enthymematic way to indicate a change in opposition to the past.[44] In this specific case, once again we find various elements leading to the creation of positive images of Italy in the European context.

Historic illustrations can be found in the first part of the speech, where Renzi describes the transition between Greece and Italy for the direction of the European semester. These two nations are presented on the basis of their glorious historic past, which should create a diversion for every person who relates them only to the economic crisis and the credit spread. The use of parallel couples to underline the iconic meaning and to offer a more incisive message is present in this section

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[44] Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart, *The discursive construction of national identity*, cit., p. 85.

too (as in the section dedicated to Italy's political situation), where cultural and political historic symbols are listed and pronounced with determination.

*Table 2. Symmetric couples symbolizing Greek and Italian identity.*

| Italian | | English | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Anchise | Enea | Anchises | Aeneas |
| Pericle | Cicerone | Pericles | Cicero |
| Agorà | Foro | Agorae | Forum |
| Tempio | Chiesa | Temple | Church |
| Partenone | Colosseo | Parthenon | Coliseum |
| Aristotele | Dante Alighieri | Artistotle | Dante |
| Archimede | Leonardo Da Vinci | Archimedes | Leonardo |

In every symmetric couple, the second member functions as an amplifier of the importance of Italy and its role through history. The most important cultural and political categories have been involved: epics and myth (1), great historical figures (2), social and political organization (3), architecture (4 and 5), philosophy and literature (6) and science (7). What Renzi requires here is the attention of his addressees on every positive, if not magnificent, aspect which has characterized Italian history; moreover, if we go one step further, these aspects must be taken as a point of departure to grant to Italy the maximum confidence in its imminent task of leading Europe. Therefore, not only is Italy trustworthy on the basis of its current approach to the crisis, but also, and especially, if its illustrious past is taken into consideration. All those paramount symbols can be reproduced in the contemporary era if Italy is allowed to carry out its task. In some way, this specific use of cultural symbols to exalt Italy's strong point can be associated to Hedetoft's theory about a new European nationalism which would rely on culture rather than politics as an identity emblem.[45]

Chilton[46] elaborates a Cartesian coordinate system in which temporal references are placed on a *t* axe, whereas spatial references are put along an *s* axe. The centre is obviously represented by the speaker, and distance from it on the axes

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[45] U. Hedetoft, *The Nation-State Meets the World: National Identities in the Context of Transnationality and Cultural Globalisation*, Aalborg, Aalborg Universitet, 1997.

[46] Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse. Theory and Practice*, cit.

corresponds to the (whether actual or symbolic) distance that the speaker interposes between himself or herself and time and places with their descriptions. Apart from deictic reference, which is clearly the principal linguistic strategy to point to space and time (spatial and temporal deixis), Chilton insists on the role of tropes like metonymies, metaphors and analogies. Via analogy, in particular, the speaker is able to compare and associate two or more elements of their discourse, and therefore two or more places and/or periods. The association is mostly realized in an implicit way and left to the inference of the addressee,[47] and that is exactly what happens in our text: Matteo Renzi implicitly associates the glorious historic past of Italy with its present days, implying the possibility and maybe the proximity of a likewise splendid epoch for his nation, a period of recovery, of stability and of innovation as a guide for the other states.

In a similar way, reference to geography, which would pertain to the *s* axe, is represented with a specific purpose: creating a correspondence between Italy and Europe, as the entire continent was a physical extension of the Italian peninsula, which is thus considered as the starting point, the origin of Europe from all the most important points of view (politically, economically, historically and, also, geographically). This view is expressed via a description of Europe as a frontier, which needs to face such delicate issues as migration flows, relations with Middle-East countries, the spread of globalization and civilization. Yet all these questions concern primarily Italy and its boundaries, as can be clearly seen from thr following example:

> (29)  se guardate la cartina geografica se guardiamo insieme la cartina geografica, vediamo il paese che ha, il maggior numero..di chilometri di coste, rispetto..all'estensione territoriale..siamo geograficamente, per forza, una frontiera..questo ci pone molti problemi..e ne sappiamo qualcosa noi, in Italia, in questo momento..in un momento nel quale, le difficoltà che ci sono, in particolar modo..in Libia, non genericamente generalmente nel Nordafrica ma specificamente in Libia stanno..portando..a una serie di stragi..nel nostro, Mare Mediterraneo mare nostrum per i latini..ai quali stiamo cercando di far fronte con operazioni italiane e ai quali, assieme ai capi di governo e sicuramente con il, condivisione della commissione riusciremo a far fronte in modo più deciso per il futuro attraverso l'operazione "Frontex Plus".
>
> (29) if you observe a geographical map if we observe together the a geographical map, we can see the country with the longest coastlines, considering its territorial extension..we are necessarily, from a geographical point of view, a

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[47] Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse. Theory and Practice*, cit., p. 150.

frontier..which brings many problems..and we know something about that, in Italy, in this moment..a moment in which, present difficulties, particularly.. in Libya, not generally in North Africa but specifically in Libya are..leading to..a series of massacres..in our, sea the Mediterranean Sea mare nostrum as for Latin people..to which we are trying to respond with Italian operations and which, together with the prime ministers and of course with some help from the Commission will be faced with more decision with the "Frontex Plus" ope-ration in the future.

To begin with, a semantic slip leads Matteo Renzi to talk about a country while referring to Europe. We are certainly dealing with an involuntary mistake, which, however, reveals the tendency to concentrate on national issues rather than Eu-ropean ones. In fact, as we continue to read our text, priority of Italian issues is crystal clear: the fact of being a frontier represents an impelling subject matter since it is causing dramatic outcomes in Italian waters and coasts.

More importantly, the Mediterranean Sea is defined as "our" sea, in a part of the text where the reference is directed to the whole European continent; but two elements suggest that the first plural person pronoun is quite ambiguous:
-	the explicit reference to the Latin people, which is considered as a di-rect ancestor of the Italian people (see also Table 2);
-	the expression *mare nostrum*, which is also the name of the rescue operation set up by the Italian government as a response to the immigration emergency.

Urgent interventions of the European Union should then be oriented to resolv-ing Italian problematic issues, which are here described as problems that compre-hend the entire continent, representing what is a figurative overlapping (physical AND political) between the two entities.

In addition, Libya and North Africa are described as the "closest neighbour" of Europe, but once again the benchmark of this definition is Italy and its geographi-cal position.

## 6. Conclusions
The presented analysis has aimed to show how the expression of national identity tends to emerge in political discourse, also in a supra-national context like the European Parliament. We observed this tendency via the analysis of three specific structures: the use and contrast of personal pronouns, positive self-presentation and national self-glorification, and history and geography as lessons and symbols.

As Van Djik[48] properly remarks, there are many reasons to believe that virtually all structures of a text can convey the speaker's ideology. Nevertheless, the fact that some ideologies can be expressed more explicitly than others is particularly significant. Considering its surface, the discourse held by Matteo Renzi seems oriented to exalt cooperation, progress and internationalism, all based on a determined participation of every single state of Europe. But equality at the level of participation collide with the way in which Italy is presented by the PD leader: first of all, he feels closer to his nation than to Europe, as proved by the use of the first and the second plural person, which signals distance from direct responsibility in EU actions and exaltation of Italian merits. Besides, we have displayed how lexical and syntactic choices are significantly aimed to show a positive representation of Italy, of its government and its leader party, the PD, which are often presented as a single unit. Two important parameters related to deixis, that is time and persons, are in fact exploited to pursue this aim, in that selection of historic topics and reference to person insistently revoke favourable aspects of Italian identity. The final result of this speech is, therefore, an advantageous representation of Italy, which rightfully presents itself as a leader nation in overcoming the financial crisis.

As a concluding remark, it is worth emphasizing the importance of supranational contexts in relation to the study of national and European identity construction. As already shown by Hansen and Weaver,[49] constructions of Europe are constrained by the way in which the concepts of nation and state have developed in a specific country, and that is why political actors tend to evaluate the EU specificities on the basis of their compatibility with national features. Whereas national context is particularly relevant for the individuation of this trend, I have tried to show and I therefore suggest that also political discourses held in supranational environments can reveal the same nationalistic traits notwithstanding the different presupposed expectations, and they are therefore tantamount interest-worthy for future research in the field.

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[48] Van Dijk, *Ideology and Discourse. A Multi-Disciplinary Introduction*, cit., p. 42.

[49] *European Integration and National Identity. The Challenge of the Nordic States*, edited by L. Hansen and O. Wæver, London, Routledge, 2002.