Political Hate Speech and the Identity Factor in the European Space

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Abstract
   Utilizing normative frameworks of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the European Union, this article introduces the term 'political hate speech' to describe identity-denying discourse produced, legitimized, or tolerated by state institutions and supranational bodies. Drawing on Jeremy Waldron's theories of dignity and civic assurance (2012), the study conceptualizes hate speech as political, linguistic, and symbolic violence that undermines the publicly guaranteed status of individuals and groups as equal bearers of rights.

   Rather than treating hate speech primarily as a subjective offense, the analysis foregrounds its structural harms, showing how it erodes the social conditions and identity markers essential for democratic inclusion, mutual recognition, and reciprocity. Identity-based political propaganda destabilizes civic guarantees of ethnic, national, religious, cultural, historical, and linguistic recognition by generating both symbolic and legal forms of exclusion and discrimination.

   Rather than treating hate speech primarily as a subjective offense, this analysis foregrounds its structural harm, revealing how it corrodes the social conditions and identity markers essential for democratic inclusion, mutual recognition, and reciprocity. Identity-based political propaganda destabilizes civic guarantees of ethnic, national, religious, cultural, historical, and linguistic recognition by producing both symbolic and legal forms of exclusion and discrimination.

The Macedonian case serves as a focal study of internationalized political and media hate speech, illustrating legal, social, and psychological consequences such as collective anxiety, stigmatization, defamation, and trauma. Comparative references—including Catalonia, the Baltic and Balkan states, Roma communities, and aspects of social rights affecting British immigrants—highlight broader patterns of identity-based political action across Europe and underscore differences between EU member states and some nonmember states. These examples expose significant normative and institutional challenges for European governance in safeguarding dignity, equality, and civic inclusion amid growing pluralism.

The absence of universal consensus and variation in definitions and regulatory approaches to political hate speech—when balanced against freedom of expression, democratic principles, and individual and collective rights—generates latent and explicit interethnic, intergovernmental, and media tensions. The prevailing tolerance of discourses that discriminate on identity grounds should be replaced by a more humane, nonviolent paradigm and narrative.

Keywords: Political hate speech; freedom of expression; identity factor; identity denial; epistemicide; collective trauma; Macedonian case; minority rights; Europe

Introduction
Methodology: Theory of Political Hate Speech with Comparative European Cases

This study develops a theory of "political hate speech" through a normative-theoretical and comparative legal–political approach. It combines doctrinal analysis of UN, Council of Europe, and EU instruments; critical engagement with political and legal theory (notably Waldron); and focused comparative case studies (North Macedonia as the primary empirical locus, with select references to Catalonia, the Baltic states, and Roma communities). Sources include primary legal texts, institutional reports, and targeted secondary literature. The method foregrounds institutional and supranational actors, traces how identity-denying discourse is produced and legitimized, and evaluates normative and institutional implications for democratic legitimacy, civic dignity, and identity rights. The study also emphasizes the need for greater theoretical consensus and for harmonization and ratification of UN strategies and other relevant transnational instruments.

Definition of Hate Speech and Political Hate Speech

It is well known that there is no universal definition of hate speech; consequently, there is no universal consensus nor regulation regarding the

diverse forms and intensities of hate speech acts. Hate speech is hurtful not only because of its expression but also due to its social and political effects, which shape the conditions of recognition, safety, and belonging. While international law prohibits hate speech expressed as rhetorically and semantically violent or discriminatory, it does not prohibit every instance of violent and harmful speech acts.

Fundamentally, hate speech is an intensified form of speech act and performative communication. It can be situated within illocutionary and perlocutionary categories (Austin 1975, pp. 94–107, 148) and classified as direct, indirect, figurative, allusive, or metaphorical (Searle 1979, pp. 12–17). This taxonomy reflects hate speech's considerable persuasive force and its capacity to shape audiences' perceptions, emotions, and behaviours.[1]
According to the United Nations *Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech* (2019), hate speech targets inherent, internal, and external characteristics of identity—such as race, ethnicity, religion, social status, and cultural attributes. The United Nations defines hate speech as:

> "Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour,
> that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with
> reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are,
> in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality,
> race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor (such as
> language, economic or social origin, disability, health status,
> sexual orientation)." (UN *Strategy and Plan*, 2019)

Identity rights are fundamental civil and political rights central to the human-rights framework of every state. They encompass multiple dimensions, including individual and collective claims. Accordingly, denial, negation, or contestation of identity constitutes more than symbolic harm; it breaches core values protected under UN human-rights instruments.

Cultural rights are safeguarded by transnational conventions and charters endorsed by UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. These rights are inseparable from—and constitutive of—political rights: without recognized cultural identity, meaningful political agency and civic equality are difficult to realize. When hate speech targets identity—especially when justified or normalized by political, religious, scientific, or cultural actors—it must be treated as a grave public concern. Such discourse should be publicly identified, critically scrutinized, and institutionally challenged because it undermines civic assurance and legitimizes exclusionary practices.

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[1] To provide a unified framework for the United Nations to address the issue globally, the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech defines hate speech as: https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech

Political Hate Speech

Political hate speech is defined as collective and institutional discrimination and exploitation based on ethnic, social, cultural, religious, or linguistic identity. It can be expressed, institutionalized, or imposed through institutional and media practices, and is often shaped by established, standardized, or regulated legal frameworks. However, the UN's framework (2019) appears to tolerate certain phenomena regarding legal, institutional, or state-level speech by countries, their official representatives, and symbols, as well as religious leaders: „It's important to note that hate speech can only be directed at individuals or groups of individuals. It does not include communication about States and their offices, symbols or public officials, nor about religious leaders or tenets of faith ". (UN, 2019)

This indicates that the UN's official definition permits the exclusion of 'public officials' and 'states' from hate speech scrutiny. By doing so, the United Nations effectively relativizes the definition of hate speech, demonstrating a high degree of tolerance toward discourse originating from high-ranking state representatives, official institutions, or public and religious leaders (UN, 2019). Consequently, identity-based discrimination remains unregulated or unevenly addressed by regulations. This dynamic often protects power holders, shielding them from prosecution while leaving affected groups exposed to structural and symbolic violence based on their identities. Political hate speech emerges when cultural rights—specifically those linked to identity and minority protections—are denied, conditioned, or subordinated to political objectives. These narratives are frequently constructed within state and supranational institutions and promoted through education, civil society propaganda, influential publications, political parties, and members of ethnic and international political elites, including representatives of the European Parliament.

If identity-based hate speech is granted political legitimacy, the system of universal human rights and collective protections established by the United Nations (1948) becomes subverted. Its manifestations range from latent forms to virulent aggression. This discourse is often reinforced through political obstruction, conditionality, veto mechanisms, propaganda, violence, online and social media discourse tools of identity denial and banning, and administrative repression (Ruscher, 2024). In the current, highly sensitive "social media" and "post-truth" era (Kentmen-Cin, 2025), it is more than ever necessary to act on the basis of universal humanistic values and to reaffirm on the historical stage/platform the significance of a supranational narrative of peace and nonviolent counter-hate-speech behavior.

The ambivalent regulation of political hate speech has long-term consequences, primarily by eroding trust in democratic institutions. When high-ranking state representatives, as well as transnational and supranational

bodies, marginalize or ignore identity-based discrimination, affected communities and states may perceive democratic guarantees as conditional or unreliable. This perception weakens civic engagement and undermines social solidarity (Kulavkova, 2025). Over time, this erosion of trust reinforces cycles of exclusion, perpetuates hegemonic power structures, including cultural and historical hierarchies.

The European Legal Framework and Its Paradoxes

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), drafted in 1950 and in force from 1953, protects fundamental civil and political rights. Since the 1990 Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Rome, the Council of Europe has emphasized the "unity of all human rights," affirming the indivisibility of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights to support an integrated conception of human dignity.

Within the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights (proclaimed in 2000 and given full legal effect by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009) constitutes the core internal human-rights framework. Notably: (a) Article 13 affirms that "the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint" and that "academic freedom shall be respected," and (b) Article 21 prohibits discrimination on grounds including sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, membership of a national minority, or political opinion. Against this normative backdrop, hate speech is fundamentally at odds with the European values and legal regimes upheld by both the Council of Europe and the EU.[2]

Despite these foundations, political hate speech is on the rise, and institutional tolerance of political hate speech it is increasing. The lack of an unequivocal political, legal, and procedural response by the EU toward Member States that practice hate speech on ethnic, cultural, and identity grounds can be perceived as tacit tolerance. Currently, political hate speech is not fully addressed in institutional terms. The absence of integrated EU mechanisms for monitoring and penalizing such discourse allows discriminatory behavior to become "mainstreamed" within political governance (Brown, 2020).

A critical legal vacuum exists because the EU, as a supranational entity, has not ratified most fundamental UN human rights treaties, such as the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR). While individual Member States have ratified these instruments, the EU remains primarily anchored to its own Charter.

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[2] See Council of Europe (COE, 47 Member States), and European Union (EU, 27 Member States in 2021).

Although the EU's External Action Service acknowledges that illegal hate speech "poisons societies" (EEAS, 2022), this rhetoric is often unaccompanied by a substantive legal infrastructure—particularly when hate speech is institutionalized in official political narratives. The EU frequently relies on soft-law instruments and policy guidance (Howard, 2019). While these measures encourage tolerance, they often lack the teeth to provide sufficient protection against formal identity-based discrimination and defamation.

This fragmented regulation paradoxically condones certain forms of exclusionary or delegitimizing political speech. Unless the discourse constitutes a direct, violent expression or uses specific derogatory labels and offensive imagery (Ruscher, 2024), it remains legal. Consequently, the EU continues to struggle with the tension between countering hate speech and protecting freedom of expression—a tension that is particularly acute in disputes over identity politics. As Brown (2015) notes, although European legal schemes aim to safeguard reciprocity, equality, and mutual respect, they remain incomplete and comparatively inadequate in addressing the sophisticated nature of modern political hate speech. [3]

European Legal Thresholds

In contrast to the broader UN definition, the European approach—introduced by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR)—utilizes specific legal thresholds to identify and monitor political hate speech. These institutions rely on EU Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA, which requires Member States to criminalize the public incitement to violence or hatred. However, they go beyond mere "incitement" by evaluating the structural impact of the discourse. The contextual FRA threshold emphasizes that for speech to be classified as a violation of fundamental human rights, it must be evaluated through a multi-part test: - recognizing that speech from political or religious leaders carries significantly more authority and influence than that of private citizens; - evaluating the role of the media used to spread the discourse (e.g., state-run media, influential social platforms, or online outlets), and - assessing the intention of the speech to lead to social and political exclusion, or the denial of protection for specific communities.

On the other hand, ENAR provides a critical approach to "structural racism": "The vast majority of online hate speech is not illegal as it does not pass the threshold of incitement to violence, yet its cumulative effect produces a climate of fear that silences marginalized voices." (ENAR, 2024)

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[3] The 18 of June was recently (2022) proclaimed as International Day for Countering Hate Speech.

Explicit or implicit political hate discourse increases power imbalances, granting legitimacy to exclusionary rhetoric when used by political elites. This process transforms individual prejudice into systemic oppression. Consequently, these European frameworks suggest that the higher the office, the higher the responsibility to avoid discourse that undermines the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (proclaimed in Nice on December 7, 2000, and granted the legal status of an EU Treaty in December 2009 via the Treaty of Lisbon).

Hate Speech, Freedom of Speech and the Paradox of Political Correctness
The difficulty in defining hate speech is inextricably linked to the complexities of freedom of expression. A common perspective argues that restrictions on hate speech constitute unacceptable limitations on free speech, suggesting that liberty cannot exist if speech is curated or checked. However, on a normative level, this argument falters. Absolute freedom, if left entirely unconstrained, facilitates its own abuse by allowing identity-based hate and discrimination to gain institutional legitimacy.

Consequently, freedom of expression must be anchored in normative ethical, political, and rhetorical orders that prioritize equality, human dignity, and non-discrimination. These normative boundaries are designed to bar violent, degrading, or dehumanizing speech from being integrated into international organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union (Council of Europe, 2010).

The rise of "politically correct" discourse has further complicated the debate. While generally framed as a mechanism for upholding human rights, these narratives can, in specific institutional settings, inadvertently mask or suppress authentic expression. Although intended to limit harm, they often function as normative filters that stifle critical inquiry, historical evaluation, and legitimate political discontent—especially when instrumentalized by institutional power.

This paradox is most evident when political narratives regarding identity-specific politics are shielded from critique under the pretext of sensitivity or tolerance. In such scenarios, freedom of speech risks transmuting from an indispensable tool of democracy into the regulated delivery of "tolerable" speech. Instead of safeguarding dignity, this instrumentalization may devalue social injustice, silence dissenting versions of history, and diminish the pluralism essential for democratic life. As Waldron (2012, 145–47) asserts, freedom of expression must be political, linguistic, emotional, and performative, while simultaneously respecting the human dignity that underpins the European tradition of civil equality (Brown, 2015).

This tension has deepened within European frameworks, revealing conflicts between traditional and contemporary conceptions of equality and

reciprocity. These conflicts are often exacerbated by political status asymmetries—such as those between EU member states and non-members—as well as interreligious and intercultural frictions. Therefore, a balanced political articulation of ethnic and social prejudices is a prerequisite for responsible media practices and healthy democratic governance. Such a balance provides a barrier against political discrimination, "identity narcissism," and the exploitation of minor cultural variations between neighboring nations and minority groups (Kulavkova, 2022).

Freedom as an active practice. Freedom can never be absolute; it is always tempered by ethical and aesthetic norms shaped by social and political realities. Linguistic, political, and media freedom should not be conceived as "negative liberty" (the mere absence of obstacles), but as an active practice in shaping social reality. This involves cultivating public spaces that are less violent, vilifying, and exclusionary.

When freedom is used to rationalize discrimination, it becomes self-destructive and corrosive. A mature political culture of freedom presupposes self-government and demands a fundamental respect for the dignity of others. Cultivating this common culture is essential to dampening political violence and hate speech, both of which stem fundamentally from hegemonic and colonial attitudes.

Political Hate Speech, Dignity, and Civic Assurance

The existing body of scholarship has become increasingly critical of hate speech, focusing on its ability to undermine human dignity, equality, and democratic inclusion rather than merely the offense caused to an individual or group. To Waldron (2012, 94–96), hate speech constitutes a harm to public dignity, which justifies its prohibition. In this view, hate speech is a harm in itself, not merely a cause of harm. Consequently, the primary concern is not the subjective self-esteem of individuals, but rather the socially guaranteed status of individuals and groups as equal members of society (Barendt, 2019). At the heart of this perspective is the notion of *civic assurance*: liberal democracies have a responsibility to offer public, visible guarantees that all members enjoy equal respect, recognition, and legal protection. Hate speech undermines this guarantee of equality by signaling that certain categories of people are barred from full membership in the civic body. In doing so, it threatens the moral and political framework of democratic society. Its harm lies in its public nature; it effectively announces that equality is contingent and subject to revocation.

Judith Butler (1997) describes hate speech as a form of "excitable" or "injurious speech" performance—a linguistic violence aimed at producing vulnerability. Such discourse does not simply "speak in animosities" but actively constructs relations of power, subordination, and exclusion through

the use of language (Guillén-Nieto, 2023). When utilized within the framework of power structures, hate speech serves as a weapon of political repression, marginalizing both individuals and communities. These insights provide a strong theoretical justification for analyzing political hate speech, especially when identity-denying discourses are produced or legitimized by state institutions, or become normalized within international and supranational processes. In these contexts, hate speech functions not only as a mode of discussion but also as a mechanism of social power—operating through legal, administrative, and diplomatic channels to dictate the terms of recognition and belonging.

Waldron's theory is particularly valuable when examining institutional forms of identity denial across the European Union. Similar dynamics regarding identity-based political contestation can be observed in various European contexts. In all these instances, identity recognition is often formalized and conditioned through politics, administration, or legislation. This conditional recognition undermines civic assurance, signaling that equality is a politically negotiable privilege rather than a universal entitlement guaranteed by the government.

Political Hate Speech in the European Identity Space

To demonstrate how political hate speech and institutionalized identity denial operate across Europe, the following cases illustrate the experiences of minority communities in both EU and non-EU settings. These examples show how formal recognition of identity often exists alongside conditional or restricted civic membership, exposing practical constraints to equality. Through the lens of civic assurance, these cases illustrate how political discourse, legislation, and administrative practice can erode the role of minority groups as equal participants in democratic society. [4]

Catalonia, Spain: Contested National Identity: The struggle for Catalan linguistic and political identity in the wake of the 2017 independence referendum illustrates institutional identity denial within an EU member state. Political discourse that frames Catalan self-determination as inherently illegitimate or destabilizing undermines collective political agency. Although cultural recognition persists, it weakens civic assurance by signaling that identity is acceptable only in the absence of political claims for self-determination. This conditional recognition erodes the moral and political foundations of a democratic society.

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[4] Recent EU monitoring shows that 68% of political hate speech online targeting ethnic minorities is never removed, often cited as "legitimate political discourse." In the Balkans, "identity contestation" accounts for 42% of diplomatic disputes within supranational monitoring frameworks (European Commission (2024), *9th Monitoring Cycle of the Code of Conduct*).

Russian-Speaking Minorities in the Baltic States: In Estonia and Latvia, contested citizenship regimes, language laws, and competing historical narratives about Russian-speaking populations demonstrate how identity recognition can be administratively conditioned. Policies often justified by "security" or "integration" frame these communities as perpetual threats. By curtailing linguistic rights under constitutional rules, these states reproduce historical prejudices rather than a developed EU civic culture. Such structural exclusion produces lasting social harm, even in the absence of overtly hateful language.

Hungarian Minorities in Romania and Slovakia: Hungarian minorities have formal protections and linguistic rights in both Romania and Slovakia. However, political speech depicting minority language use, educational autonomy, or decentralization as "counter-narratives" to national unity creates an atmosphere of insecurity. These indirect forms of political hate speech—performed through institutional skepticism and securitization—infer that equality is conditional rather than guaranteed.

Roma Communities in the European Union: Roma communities serve as a pan-European prototype of systemic, identity-based exclusion. Political rhetoric in several EU countries has historically described Roma identity as socially deviant or culturally mismatched. These institutional retellings diminish civil virtue and render exclusionary practices in housing, education, and policing commonplace (Albarello & Rubini, 2018). In contrast, within the (non-EU) Republic of North Macedonia, Roma citizens possess relatively robust civil, cultural, and political rights, including representation through ethnically-based political parties and media. This suggests that substantive inclusion is determined by the strength of the legal framework rather than just social norms (Government of RNM, 2020).

Ethnic Minorities and the Windrush Scandal (United Kingdom): The Windrush betrayal scandal (2018) involved the denial of legal rights and the wrongful deportation of British citizens by the UK Home Office Most affected were individuals who arrived from Caribbean countries between 1948 and 1971. Under a "hostile environment" policy (Gentleman, 2019), the state required citizens to produce papers that the Home Office itself had often destroyed. By categorizing long-standing residents as "illegal outsiders," the state shifted the burden of proof onto the individual, effectively stripping them of their civic assurance (Waldron, 2012) and turning ethnic background into a proxy for illegality.

Administrative Denial in Greece and the "Great Replacement": The erosion of civic assurance is also evident in Greece, where the refusal to recognize ethnic Macedonian or Turkish identities—often reducing them to purely religious labels—illustrates the power of administrative identity denial. Furthermore, the mainstreaming of the "Great Replacement" narrative across

various EU Member States demonstrates how contemporary migration is instrumentalized to justify dehumanization. This narrative transforms vulnerable populations and emigration communities into political targets, treating "the other" as an existential threat to the state.

Political Hate Speech and Macedonian Identity Denial

While the previously discussed EU cases involve the politics of hate speech and conditional recognition within member states, the Macedonian context illustrates how identity contention can be transnational and internationalized. This perspective highlights the friction between a sovereign European state and the phenomenon of nationalism (Anderson, 2006). Unlike internal minority disputes—where exclusion occurs through domestic institutions—political hate speech in North Macedonia manifests through bilateral diplomacy, EU accession conditionality, and the supranational exercise of veto power.

In this context, identity recognition emerges as a politically repressive mechanism controlled by external actors, with far-reaching consequences for civic confidence, minority rights, and national legitimacy. A prominent example is the *Explanatory Memorandum* concerning Bulgaria's approach to North Macedonia's EU enlargement. This document promotes a narrative of "common history," claiming that post-war "ethnic and linguistic engineering" subverted the legitimacy, continuity, and authenticity of Macedonian identity. Since 2019, Bulgarian state actors have utilized implicit and explicit political hate speech based on linguistic, ethno-national, cultural, and historiographical arguments (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, 2019).

These claims directly contradict the prevailing scholarly consensus and have been employed to legitimize constitutional and political pressure on North Macedonia, while simultaneously denying the existence of a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Although some Bulgarian intellectuals have expressed a more validating position (Open Letter, 2020), the institutionalization of identity contestation through international and supranational methods threatens the democratic and unitary character of North Macedonia. This constitutes a unique form of international political hate speech with neo-colonial dimensions. By conditioning recognition on political compliance, this case represents an extreme erosion of civic assurance, transforming identity from a right into a politically negotiable commodity.

The promotion of this discourse relies on several systematic mechanisms of identity denial that illustrate this approach:
- Although Bulgaria officially recognized the Macedonian minority and the cultural autonomy of Pirin Macedonia after World War II (starting August 9, 1946), this policy was later revoked, leading to the current denial of the minority's existence.

o The implementation of measures aimed at identity assimilation constitutes a form of "epistemicide"—the systematic destruction of indigenous ways of knowing and self-identification. This pressure on the identity awareness of Macedonians mirrors colonial practices seen in other contexts [2].

o Until the 2021 amendments to the Bulgarian Citizenship Act (entered into force March 2021), applicants commonly faced procedures that effectively required a personal declaration of Bulgarian origin alongside evidence of ancestral ties, creating a legal mechanism that pressured identity shifts. The 2021 reform restructured verification procedures and transferred determinations to the Ministry of Justice, reducing but not fully eliminating identity-based evidentiary burdens. A draft 2024 amendment—approved at first reading—would introduce broader Bulgarian-language requirements and new revocation grounds; it had not been finally promulgated at the time of writing.

Conclusions
Consequences of Political Hate Speech

The internal reproduction and external legitimization of identity-denying discourse constitute a betrayal of universal human rights and European values. Such practices foster collective anxiety, increase political demoralization, and spur emigration, demonstrating the profound psychological, social, and institutional costs of tolerating political hate speech. This phenomenon must be clearly distinguished from legitimate freedom of expression, which enables linguistic, cultural, and national identities to be articulated within a pluralistic society and is a precondition for collective self-representation, political awareness, and institutional stability. Political hate speech targets identity to exclude it; legitimate expression affirms identity within democratic and civil order.

The harm inflicted by political hate speech extends beyond personal offense: it compromises citizen dignity, social cohesion, and foundational trust in democratic institutions. Political hate speech corrodes civic security by signaling that certain groups are denied equal membership in society. Exclusion is socially produced and becomes institutionalized when permitted or legitimized by power structures. Empirical studies of minority communities indicate that prolonged exposure to identity-denying discourse produces measurable psychological effects, including elevated stress, hypervigilance, and trauma-related disorders arising from public defamation and stigmatization (Butler, 1997; Brown, 2015).

In contexts such as North Macedonia, where identity is contested domestically and internationally, these consequences intensify, creating pervasive uncertainty that affects individuals and intercommunal relations.

Political hate speech also produces lasting institutional damage by undermining confidence in democratic governance. When state actors or supranational bodies justify identity-based discrimination or conditional recognition, affected communities come to view democratic guarantees as fragile, reversible, or selectively applied—eroding civic engagement and threatening social cohesion and democratic legitimacy.

Accordingly, regulating political hate speech that denies ethno-cultural identity is not only a legal and ethical imperative but a preventive necessity to avert collective trauma and social fragmentation. Robust safeguards grounded in human dignity and civil rights are essential to protect vulnerable groups from the combined harms of symbolic and institutional violence and to preserve the normative authority of democratic and European human-rights frameworks.

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