

Remarks on "Rethinking nationhood..."

"I am not speaking about x" is a self-refutable claim. In a way, you are speaking about x even when you are announcing that you are not speaking about x. Likewise, Brubaker is constantly trying not to speak about "Nation" as substance, collectivity and entity. Unfortunately, he is not ready to get rid of the essentialist categories "nationhood", "nationness" and "nation" as analytical tools. His task is not to bypass the essentialist concepts of "nationhood", "nationness" and "nation" but to de-essentialize them by introducing garden-fresh meanings.

Is it possible to "rethink" the "nationhood" and the "nationness" (in terms of "institutionalized form", "practical category", "contingent event") without falling into the "trap of essentialism"? Is it consistent to leave "the nation" as enduring community to nationalists, and simultaneously to retain the "nationhood" and "nationness" in analysis? Brubaker's attempt to re-conceptualize "the reality of nationhood" presumes that "nationhood" has its own reality, even as "institutionalized form" and "as contingent event". All things considered, Brubaker still believes that we can "capture the reality of nationhood and the real power of nationalism" by employing the nationalist concept of "nationhood" as a theoretical term.

Furthermore, Brubaker's claim that dynamics of nationalism "are governed by the properties of political fields, not by the properties of collectivities" (p. 17) is too one-sided. Using his own inept concepts, we can say that often "nationness may suddenly, and powerfully "happen"" even if it is not induced by the "political field" created by the regime's policies. For example, despite all its attempts, Serbian regime in "Vardar Banovina" from 1918-1941 did not succeed to create a political field capable of inducing Serbian nationalism. Macedonian nationalism during the Second World War was induced as resistance to Bulgarian and Italian state policies that denied the existence of a separate Macedonian collectivity.

I partially agree that Soviet (and SFRY) policies created fruitful "political field supremely conducive to nationalism" by "institutionalizing territorial *nationhood* and ethnic *nationality* as fundamental social categories". In SFRY, the institutionalization of territorial *nationhood* and ethnic *nationality* served more as a shield against the streams of national separatism that were continually suppressed by regime's policies. However, it would be inappropriate to deny that during the SFRY development in 1970-ties and 1980-ties, regime's policies created a fertile political field for

expression of different types of non-national complex identities. In other words, Slavenka Drakulic would not be in position to speak about "sudden and pervasive "nationalization" of public and private life" if public and private life was already fundamentally nationalized. She would not be in position to speak about "the nullification of complex identities by the terrible categorical simplicity of ascribed nationality" if such complex identities were not already induced by the socio-political field.

Although Brubaker is not giving important details how "quasi-nation states"¹ became nation states without powerful national happenings, his arguments could be very appealing, for example, if we want to trace the influence of state's policies in the process of social construction of ethnic identities. Let's take the Republic of Macedonia after "Framework Agreement" (FA) as an illustrative case. Following the signing of FA, "the regime divided the citizenry into a set of exhaustive and mutually exclusive ethnic nationalities" and ethnic nationality was established as "an obligatory ascribed status".² However, it would be very misleading to deny that the FA policies were not induced by the powerful ethno-national happenings in 2001 which resulted in armed conflict. In other words, if we did not assume that ethnic collectivities before 2001 were mutually exclusive too, it would be very difficult to provide reasonable explanation for UCK's resistance to regime's policies. Namely, it would be very difficult to explain the change in the properties of "political field" in Republic of Macedonia in 2001 if we did not assume that the tyranny of "mutually exclusive ethnic nationalities" (explicitly established following the constitutional changes in 2001) was already implicit political form of life within an ethnically divided society.

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¹ "...successor states were defined as quasi-nation states, complete with their own territories, names, constitutions, legislatures, administrative staffs, cultural and scientific institutions, and so on" (p. 18)

² Brubakers' descriptions of the effects of Soviet policies are suitable in the Macedonian context.