

ARTICLE OF THE MONTH
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Brubaker, Rogers 2004, 'Ethnicity without Groups' in *Ethnicity without Groups*, Rogers Brubaker, Harvard University Press, p. 7-27.

The monographical work "*Ethnicity without Groups*" by Rogers Brubaker continues to develop the ideas, issues and reflections articulated by authors in the study on "*Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe.*" (Brubaker 1996), but in a more elaborated theoretical manner and using much systematized methodological tools. This time, Brubaker circumscribes his investigation on the concept "groupism", providing new insights into the construction of ethnicity, race and nation as "fundamental ways of seeing, interpreting, and representing the social world" (Brubaker 2004, p. 17).

In the first chapter the author stress his aim "to address one problematic consequence of the tendency to take groups for granted in the study of ethnicity, race, and nationhood, and in the study of ethnical, racial, and national conflict in particular" (p. 8). In this context, some explanations of "groupism" as analytical tool are developed in terms of "the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities to which interests and agencies can be attributed", "to reify such groups (...), as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes, "the tendency to represent the social and cultural worlds as multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial, or cultural blocs" (p. 8).

The (miss)use of 'ethnic groups', accordingly, for instance, to the constructivist approaches in studying of ethnicity routinely speaks about "the struggles 'of' ethnic groups, races, and nations" (p. 9) in the case that, to the authors' opinion, we can go beyond "groupism" as analytical tool. The invitation to avoid "vernacular categories and commonsense understanding" (p. 9) is not made to be followed without critical perspectives. Casting ethnic groups, races, or nations provide an important recourse in social and political struggles and scholars should understand the ways in which and the conditions under which this social process of reification can work, but it does not mean they should become part of the *performative* accounts. Brubaker proposes eight elaborated arguments on how can we go beyond *groupism*. Additionally, before concluding with an analysis of an empirical case from

Eastern Europe, the idea of critical attitude's crucial role toward groupism "for the ways in which researchers, journalists, policy/makers, NGOs (...) call ethnic conflict and ethnic violence" is fortified by other five developed arguments.

This study encourage our efforts of understanding ethnicity and ethnic conflict, going beyond the analytical frame of ethnic groups and thus assuming that following "a set of analytical perspectives not ordinarily associated with the study of ethnicity (...) we may end up not studying ethnicity at all" (p. 27). In any case, to my opinion, this still challenging theoretical and methodological perspective will be tested and applied in a lot of research projects on nation building. My project could also benefit from the new approach, emerging new questions and learning new perspectives in understanding, not at all a linear process, as post-totalitarian nation-building especially in a country with at least two political project of ideological 'making-nation': Moldovian and Transdnestrian.

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Respectfully,
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