

“Rethinking nationhood: nation as institutionalized form, practical category, contingent event” by Rogers Brubaker

In this short but, nevertheless, very important article, the author briefly argues the need for a new and crucially different view on the nationhood. On one hand he criticizes those who view the nation as an entity and a substantial collectiveness, be it “primordialists”, “modernists” or “constructivists”, in a word, all those who discuss “What is a nation?”, but also those who define nations in terms of shared objective characteristics or shared myths and memories. On the other hand, the author holds that the accounts that seek to demystify the nationalism by denying the existence of nations obstruct the alternative ways of conceiving the problem. Formulating the view different to these, the author holds that the major problem in perceiving nationhood lies in the fact that substantialist view (followed by all the above mentioned) adopts the categories of practice as categories of analysis and that we should therefore account for the course of reification of nationhood as a social process. Brubaker does not dispute the reality of nationhood but aims to re-conceptualize that reality, to decouple the study of nationhood as real collectivities and focus on “nationness” as a conceptual variable, seeking to treat the nation *not* as substance and entity but as a practical category and contingent event. Therefore he introduces the term of nationness which he sees as more accurate and promising in terms of studying than the one of a nation. In the last part of the article the author argues that nationness could be seen as an event, as something that appears suddenly in a certain moment of time, capturing the minds of a certain group of people. Thus he brings us back to one of the questions he posed at the beginning - “How do nations exist?”, which opens a new, more dynamic perspective to the conceptualization of the problem. Not only does Brubaker see the nationness as an event but also as a fluctuating basis for individual and collective action.

In bringing forth the ideas that “the triumph of nations” in East Europe after the Cold War has much shallower roots than it is commonly known, the author also mentions the case of Yugoslavia. Here he also denotes the Soviet and Yugoslav practice of promoting nationhood and nationality while at the same time suppressing all the excesses of nationalism. The author argues that nation and nationality became the main cognitive forms of these societies pressed unto people and that as a result they

played an important role in the break-up of these states. The same concept - the nation as an institutionalized cultural and political form - can be clearly observed in post-WWII Montenegro. Moreover, here we have an excellent example of a population (in this case all the Orthodox Slavs from the territory of the Republic), in which a person was, to use the author's words, "born into a nation". Carving of a new national territory defined as a home of the nation is the rule in which the example of Montenegro fits in perfectly which in 1945 got its new state borders, state institutions and symbols. The administrative and statistical promotion of the nation was followed by founding of institutions copied from the "older" nations and seen as crucial to the nation's full and equal development, such as Academy of Arts and Sciences, University and TV. This promotion of a new nation tolerated for the benefits it brought to its "users" in the Yugoslav state but also for the ambiguous stance on how different being Montenegrin is from being Serb, the position which gradually shifted during the period. *How* this happened is one of key questions that my paper tries to answer and coincides with the notions which Brubaker accounts for. The idea from the article that nationhood is something that happens rather than develops can be very important in explaining (1) the promotion of a new Montenegrin nation at the end of Second World War and (2) the shift from the resurgence of Serb nationalism in early 1990s to the escape to the ethnic Montenegrin one at the end of the decade and the atmosphere pregnant with nationhood in the 2000s. A certain period gives rise to an idea which gives momentum to the feeling of nationness. Later on, different political and economic questions grow a different kind of nationness. On the other hand, the same concept cannot be applied to the growth of initial Montenegrin nationhood in socialist era which must be primarily viewed as a development and a result of several converging factors that in the course of years brought to the light of day the first notions of ethnic individualism of Montenegrins.

While some theory may be better and more absorbing than the other, no theory is wide enough to include all the different aspects of constituting a nation. Thus we hold that Rogers Brubaker's concept of "happening of nations" cannot be put to work in all periods and in all places. "Developmentalist" literature, however incoherent and often actively involved in constructing of the nations, should remain a legitimate point of view, from which we can learn a lot. Nationhood as a "changeable product of collective action" is a worthy concept that explains much and opens new fields of investigation but cannot be pinned to all the examples and certainly does not exclude

the developmentalist point of view. Rather, it reminds us that we should bear in our minds that the same developments of the nations take place continually shaping and reshaping of how a nation is perceived.