

Секция «24.4 Политическое знание в современную эпоху: новые направления и методы»

Nationalism Without a Nation

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The problem of the ontological status of the nation remains one of the most debated in the social sciences. Despite decades of constructivist criticism, both academic and political discourse are dominated by what Rogers Brubaker calls "groupism": "the tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis" (Brubaker, 2004: 23). This report aims to explicate and analyze the alternative theoretical perspective proposed by Brubaker, which allows for the study of nationalism without reifying the nation and the group. The key thesis is that the concept of "nationalism without a nation" opens new heuristic possibilities for analyzing social processes, shifting the focus from the search for essential characteristics of groups to the study of the mechanisms of their institutionalization and cognitive schemas.

The starting point of Brubaker's theorizing is a radical break with sociological realism in understanding the group. He proposes to view the nation not as a substantial entity, collectivity, or community, but as a practical category, an institutionalized form, and a cognitive schema. In this sense, nationalism appears not so much as a phenomenon "generated by nations," but as a process induced by specific institutional arrangements. Brubaker insists that the language of social analysis often uncritically borrows categories from the language of social and political practice, where these categories (e.g., "nation," "ethnic group") are geared toward action – mobilization, justification, incitement. The researcher's task, on the contrary, is to problematize these categories, making them the object, not the tool, of analysis.

Developing this idea in his work "Ethnicity Without Groups," Brubaker argues that ethnicity, race, and nation should be understood not as "things in the world," but as "perspectives on the world" (Brubaker, 2004: 23). This implies reorienting the research gaze from the search for groups to the study of ethnically oriented ways of seeing and ignoring, explaining and imposing, remembering and forgetting. Key here is the concept of "groupness" as a situational, variable, and non-predetermined property that can be actualized (or not) in specific events. Groupness is not a given, but an event that "may or may not happen."

This approach is of fundamental importance for understanding ethnic and nationalist violence. Brubaker and Laitin show that violence becomes "ethnic" or "nationalist" not because of its intrinsic nature, but due to the meanings attributed to it by participants and observers – politicians, journalists, researchers (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998). The establishment of an ethnic frame of interpretation constitutes violence precisely in this capacity. Moreover, the actual actors in conflicts are not "ethnic groups" as such, but organizations (insurgent, terrorist, state) and their authorized representatives, who claim the right to speak on behalf of these groups.

Brubaker's conceptual framework allows for a rethinking of the classic dichotomy of civic and ethnic nationalism. Instead of searching for ideal-typical essences, he proposes studying the specific mechanisms of the "nationalization" of political space – the processes through which social, economic, or political issues begin to be understood and articulated in national terms. This opens a path to analyzing how state policies (e.g., censuses, passport systems, citizenship

laws) can create and reproduce national categories, even if they do not pursue openly nationalist goals.

The research program of "nationalism without a nation" does not deny the significance of national sentiments and practices, but offers a more rigorous analytical language for their description. The focus shifts from the question "what is a nation?" to questions like "how, when, and under what circumstances do national categories become relevant for social action?", "how do institutions produce and reproduce national schemas of perception?", and "who mobilizes the rhetoric of the nation and for what purposes?". This approach allows one to avoid both the pitfalls of primordialism and simplified instrumentalism, viewing nationalism as a complex, multi-layered, and contingent process.

Источники и литература

- 1) Brubaker R. Ethnicity without groups. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004. 296 p.
- 2) Brubaker R., Laitin D. D. Ethnic and Nationalist Violence // Annual Review of Sociology. 1998. Vol. 24. P. 423–452.