

¹Nationality and Ethnicity: Social Identity Modelling

Introduction

Representation of a people's ethnicity via social identity provides an interesting perspective for developing a conceptual framework for ethnopolitical science. This paper proposes a system of categories of such an identity approach, which allows us to consider the processes and problems of nation-genesis and ethnic mobilizations uniformly, enriching understanding. Special attention is paid to the logical rigor and consistency of the introduced categories, as well as their completeness in terms of describing the noted range of issues.

Before starting to formulate the basic concepts, let us outline the general discursive area of those processes and phenomena that we would like to commence with. First, we note that there are numerous facts of the existence of both, the multi-ethnic nations, and the inclusion of representatives of the same ethnic group in different nations, which results in the conclusion that the nation and the ethnic group correspond to different social identities.

Then, many ethnic mobilizations (which are one of the most interesting groups of ethnopolitical processes) have as a goal the creation of their own independent states and/or nations, which attracts attention to the dynamics of social identities, their interaction with each other, and how all these are "living" in the corresponding groups of people. It is clear that any person can quite "get along" with many social identities, among which we can particularly highlight the "basic level" associated with the family, the extended family, and the ethnic group; social identities associated with various kinds of leisure associations (a person's circle of friends, hobbies, etc.) can also be attributed to the "basic level"; social identities associated with professional and religious associations, and, finally, political social identities associated with a political clan, political party, local community, and nation. It should be noted also, that the term "politics" will be used in this text only in the meaning of "high politics", which is

¹ This text is a translation from Russian of the improved version of the publication: (Нация и этнос: идентичностные модели. // Общество и этнополитика. Новосибирск: СибАГС, 2011. С.8-15.

URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190429205751/http://modernity-centre.org/2011/04/25/kroopkin-126/>), which was discussed at the 4th International Internet Conference "Society and Ethnopolitics", Novosibirsk, April 1 – June 30, 2011.

covering issues and contexts of local, regional, and state self-governance of society. Ordinary politics, in which every person participates, resolving, for example, conflicts in the family, will not be touched upon here.

Answering the question: “Is every social identity immanently connected with politics?”, we can see that from the list above, politics cannot be excluded only from the political social identities (political clan, party, nation, community in context of local self-government), while all other social identities may well exist in completely non-political variants. However, the “flickering” model of a civil society² immediately brings up the situation when any non-political social identity can be “overclocked” to political, and the opposite: a non-political identity “filled with politics” can be again “privatized” by moving its essential content beyond the boundaries of high politics.

If we look at the “top” of political social identities – at nations, we can see that only in nations does the attitude towards sovereign statehood exist, which is also combined with the myth of equality. Moreover, a review of the first historical nations shows that these nations were not created on an ethnic substrate – let us remember the English Independents, the 3rd estate of France, the colonists of North and Latin America. Thus, the transit³ to a nation can also

² The theory of civil society mentioned here was proposed by B.G. Kapustin: “... *civil society turns out to be not a permanent structural component of modern society, but an emerging and disappearing characteristic of the way of its active self-transformation (changes in certain institutions, procedures, norms that are significant at a certain stage of its development). “Civil society” can arise to solve problems that modern society faces. But it may not arise, even when the need for it is great. Or fail to solve the problems that brought him to life. In a word, “civil society” is a possible practice of the modern world, and not its “sign” and, even less, a guaranteed attribute. // ... in modern conditions, the practice called “civil society” was carried out in a variety of organizational forms, depending on the circumstances of “place and time” – from the town meetings of the American Revolution, glorified by Hannah Arendt, to the Gandhian satyagraha movement, “popular fronts” in Central and Eastern Europe, who participated in the dismantling of communism, and the anti- or alter-globalization movements. There is not and cannot be a single organizational template according to which a “correct” civil society is built.*” (Kapustin, 2009).

³ Here we can also recall the successful experience of deconstructing the already emerged nation, which was carried out in the United States in relation to the “southerners” after the Civil War. The Dixie nation, which sparkled with its subjectivity in the mid-19th century, was not very different from the Yankee “northerners” anthropologically. It arose based on the solidarity of the owners of the southern states by adding to their already existing social identity the idea of their own state, and was

be carried out for every all-country social identity. This, when studying the general aspects of the genesis of nations, forces us to pay attention to those social identities that can be called quasi-ethnic. These social identities are also interesting because, under certain conditions, they can give rise to new ethnic groups.

In principle, a nation turns out to be a kind of “extension” of certain qualities of a self-governing community of neighbours to the entire country. An ethnicity is obtained through the “extension” of certain qualities of the extended family / family clan to an indefinite circle of people. The potential possibility of introducing relevant family features into any non-family community makes it quasi-ethnic.

Social identities and their properties

*A person's **social identity** is a complex of her/his mental structures that determine a person's emotionally rich attitude towards some long-term stable group that regulates the composition of its participants.*⁴ Since a person at any given time can participate in several such groups, the simultaneous presence of several social identities is precisely the case. This leads to the problem of competently separating the relevant mental structures of her/his personality into different social identities, i.e., to a clear definition of one's social identities. At the same time, the study of boundaries / border zones of different social identities, the mental structures of which set the identity dynamics of mutual transformations of social identities, starts to be important.

*Social identities can be **direct**, when all participants in the corresponding group know everyone, and **imaginary**, when many members of the community are unknown to the participant.* In the latter case, the symbols of the community, by which people could identify group-in others, become especially important. For direct social identities, the symbolism in the group and its other sacred aspects are important also.

eliminated by removing this idea from the heads of the people of the southern states of the USA.

⁴ Social identity should be distinguished from personal identity, which consists of internalized social roles and behavioural patterns associated with those roles. The psychological foundations of the proposed model are discussed in the article: (Krupkin 2010b).

Basic concepts of the identity model of ethnopolitics

An important part of ethnicity, as noted earlier, is its focus on the biological survival of relevant group members. This is an imaginary social identity; therefore, it makes sense to look at most general mental structures of those families, extended families, and family clans, which consider each other as “being like others”, something that ensures a culture of survival in the natural landscape provided to the community by fate. It turns out that there is a certain minimum number of characteristics of the social identity that allows it to be unambiguously classified as ethnic. However, all ethnic social identities also have other similar properties, but each of these secondary properties can also be found in other – non-ethnic – social identities.

***Ethnicity** is an imaginary social identity, which is geared towards the survival of the corresponding group in the natural landscape given to it. Ethnicity (1) covers people of all age strata, including children, and does not link to positions of its carriers in society; (2) it reproduces itself through the biological survival and biological reproduction of its carriers (including the regulation of sexual relations); and also through the socialization of children.*

These characteristics are quite sufficient to classify social identities as ethnic. But all ethnic social identities have other similar features:

Ethnicity also (3) has a name (ethnonym), and defines (4) a complex of behavioural stereotypes, social taboos, codes, communication norms, (5) a myth about a common origin and evolution; and (almost always, but there are exceptions) (6) its own language.

It is important to note that all other known definitions of ethnicity from different authors⁵ usually do not allow us to separate from ethnic groups some other groups of people of a clearly non-ethnic nature. An example of such a group would be a community of economists who have a self-name, a common culture, a myth of origin, and common behavioural patterns – all that is usually limited to the definition of ethnic groups. The only way that true ethnic groups differ from similar quasi-ethnic communities is the inclusion of children, and the significant importance in their cultures of the issues of their biological survival and reproduction (including the regulation of sexual relations). That is, as soon

⁵ See review and criticism of well-known definitions in the book: (Krupkin, 2010a, pp. 462-464).

as the issues of regulation of marriages and issues of socialization of children become a significant part of the culture of the community, and the children themselves begin to be considered as full members of the community, we can immediately begin to talk about the ongoing transformation of a quasi-ethnic community into an ethnic one, which, for example, is currently in the process of concluding in certain layers of the Russian intelligentsia.

We will call a social identity as **quasi-ethnic** if this social identity *has (1) its own subculture with a developed mythology and a set of behavioural stereotypes, and (2) self-name/self-determination*. Good examples of quasi-ethnic communities are professional associations and estate groups (castes), and the latter, as they include children, usually only needs self-determination as such to become an ethnic group. At the same time, quasi-ethnic social identities do not have to be imaginary.

A nation (as opposed to an ethnos) is clearly oriented towards possessing political subjectivity, and (this is what distinguishes it from other political communities) a nation claims precisely to establish its own sovereignty within a certain territory, i.e., for independent statehood. An essential characteristic of a nation is also the proclamation and guarantee of the equality of its members. In principle, psychological attitudes towards state sovereignty and equality already make it possible to clearly separate nations from other communities,⁶ but it turns out that all nations also have other similar features. The first group of such features is associated with ensuring the mental integrity of the community, with a general orientation towards unity, which requires the community to have a harmoniously agreed upon sacred value complex – the pantheon of “gods” of the nation. Among the values of the national pantheon, the following can be mentioned: symbols of the community and its name, an attitude towards one’s statehood, a myth about the purpose of the nation, a generally accepted model of the common good, other myths of self-reliance (about glorious ancestors, about the “golden age”, about the antiquity of the origins of the national spirit, etc.), ideas about the national territory, the unity of the community and the equality of its members.

The “gods” of unity and equality require the development in the internal politics of the community of practices and institutions of non-violent deliberation –

⁶ Here it emerges on a very non-banal case: the functionality of the nation in the USSR was carried by its Communist Party – which was an actor of the country’s sovereignty, and proclaimed the isonomy among its members.

coordinating the interests of community members, developing common strategies for action, resolving conflicts – in the spirit of preventing attitudes towards a zero-sum game. The political subjectivity of a nation is determined by the presence of government bodies legitimized by the community, including judicial institutions, which would act in accordance with the national system of values.

Historically, the level of social technologies for combining the political subjectivity of communities and the principle of equality of its participants (isonomy) for a long time could not ensure the sustainable existence for spatially-distributed social structures of this type, thus until the modern era, such a type of organizing politics existed only in local communities / city-states. The invention of printing, the development of mass media, communications and transport, the introduction of primary education and mass military conscription made it possible to build effective communication systems for coordinating the value systems of people over large spaces, which ultimately allowed nations and nation-states to emerge. So:

*A **nation** is a commonwealth united by an imaginary social identity, a significant part of which is the psychological attitudes towards (1) sovereign statehood, and (2) equality of people included in the commonwealth.*

Each nation has its own self-consistent sacred complex, which, among other things, includes such values as symbols of the commonwealth and its name (usually the self-name of the country – real or supposed), a psychological attitude towards its statehood, a myth about the purpose of the nation, a generally accepted model of the common good, and other self-reliance myths (about glorious ancestors, about the “golden age”, about the antiquity of the origins of the national spirit, etc.), ideas about the national territory, the unity of the commonwealth and the equality of its members.

Functionally, a nation has its own political and legal systems, operating within the framework of a system of national values, and ensuring the coordination of the interests of commonwealth members, the development of common strategies for action, and conflict resolution.

Taking such an element of national social identity as the desire for statehood brings a division of nations into those who have already achieved their statehood (nation 1) and those who have not yet achieved it (nation 2). An analysis of Western political thought shows that both types of nation are fully

present in it. However, if the discourse around the “nations 1” is quite unambiguous, then everything looks much more complicated around the concept of the “nation 2”. For example, the status of the nation 2 itself is recognized by Western political thought only for the corresponding communities of authoritarian states⁷, while Western politicians and political scientists usually deny this status to similar communities in democratic countries⁸.

Conclusion

Within the framework of the proposed approach, ethnicity and nationality appear as significantly different social identities that complement each other. At the same time, in terms of the genesis of nations, the following types of identity dynamics are historically visible: (1) the formation of a nation occurs without any reference to ethnicity (USA, France, Latin American countries, Switzerland), (2) the formation of a nation occurs through ethnic mobilization (countries of Eastern Europe, Israel), (3) emerging nations do not influence the covered ethnic groups (USA, Switzerland), (4) emerging nations assimilate the ethnic groups of the covered societies (France). Thus, in many cases, the ethnic social identities do not dominate in nation-genesis.

A more detailed analysis of the French national project shows that the assimilation of ethnic groups of the Ancient Regime along with school and conscription, was greatly facilitated by the stress of urbanization, i.e., a sharp change in the environment of people – former peasants with the complete unsuitability of previous survival practices for new living conditions. This means that the process of nation-genesis actually gave rise to and was accompanied by the process of formation of a new ethnicity in a changed landscape (urban industrialized environment) for people with the ethnonym linked to the name of the nation.

⁷ Here we can mention the recent shift in the meaning of the concept of “empire”. If before the collapse of the USSR this concept was unambiguously interpreted to designate legally heterogeneous states in which one part (the metropolis) politically dominates other parts (colonies), then at present a social scientific consensus is emerging around the designation of any authoritarian multi-ethnic state with the term “empire”. See details in the article: (Krupkin, 2008).

⁸ See a detailed discussion of the concept of “nation” in Western political thought in the article: (Krupkin, 2009). Examples of the nations 2 in the Western World: Flanders, Catalonia, Scotland, Quebec, which can be complemented by new nations in the ex-USSR: Transnistria, and Abkhazia.

In conclusion, it can be noted that most of the Russian population is now under conditions similar to the existential stress mentioned in the previous paragraph: the unsuitability of previous (Soviet) survival practices for the new conditions of human existence, and this is accompanied by interesting anthropological processes. In particular, the existing identity crisis is expressed in the emergence of rituals that are well-modelled and understood within the framework of the archaic ancestor cult. Indeed, imagine that people associate their well-being with the gifts sent by their ancestors, and consider their current low-level to be due to poor service to their ancestors earlier. Then actions become obvious in which people increase the fury of rituals of serving their ancestors, glorifying them in every possible way, and trampling on the sacred symbols and ancestors of other communities.⁹ An interesting model emerges for the “cold civil war” currently taking place in Russia.

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⁹ The classification of existing communities in the context of the cult of ancestors they profess was presented in the work: (Kroopkin, 2010c).