THE RELEVANCE OF NATIONALISM FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

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Abstract

The article argues that the theoretical discourses concerning democracy underestimated the relevance of the relationship between nationalism and democratic citizenship and are thus largely responsible for leaving these two crucial concepts up in the air. Understanding of citizenship in democratic theory was never limited to the legal or formal status of a person(s) or his/her (their) full membership in a particular community. Citizenship contains a dimension of wider cultural identity along with the political one. The early classical theory of citizenship, unfortunately and for obvious reasons, did not pay much attention to the cultural dimension of citizenship. Most common critiques of the classical approach already pointed out that the passive acceptance of citizenship should be replaced by an active role, which would include civic responsibilities and civic virtues. This article elaborates the broader understanding of the concept of citizenship, which also includes the complex notion of cultural pluralism which is at the disposal of modern societies. Further effort is directed toward identifying different historically conditioned constructs of democratic citizenship and nationality, in particular, in Europe and their implications for the potential unfolding of global and European citizenship, respectively. The argumentation that follows rests on contemporary liberal arguments focused on the view that citizens in a democratic society share culturally defined responsibilities toward other citizens and that a consistent concept of democratic citizenship will have to accommodate this relevant fact.

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Both concepts in the title, nationalism and democratic citizenship, are controversial concepts in the sociological literature. We could emphasise their many ambiguities, that is, their different meanings and roles in different empirical contexts, in history, and in particular theoretical discourses. One of the essential tasks of the social sciences is, in this regard, to make a connection between concepts or theories and each particular case. Without such a necessary step, the concepts would remain detached. At the same time, scholars would not only lose the possibility of understanding the *logos* of empirical events, but also the possibility of influencing them — although indirectly — in the best possible way.

If at the end of the 1970s only a few social scientists were still interested in the topic of citizenship, by the beginning of the 190s this topic was among the most discussed in the social sciences (Kymlicka and Norman 1995, 283). There are theoretical and political reasons for the increased interest. Among the former — and one I should mention — is that the concept of citizenship connects the requirement for both justice and membership within the community. Among the latter I should mention four: the growing apathy of voters in Western democracies; the dependence of these citizens on everything offered to them during the last few decades by the welfare state; a large influx of immigrants to Western Europe; and not the least, the rise of nationalistic movements in Eastern and Central Europe during the crisis of communism and after its fall.

The problem of citizenship was promoted in the 1990s by two additional important factors both of which greatly involved healthy and stable democratic societies. They are justice and identity. Justice is first of all related to the following question: Do the established social institutions and structures imply justice at all when we look at the treatment of citizens in different kinds of mutual transactions? Considering identity, we can say that the previously mentioned institutions and structures should not keep citizens from professing and developing their multiple identities, be they national, regional, cultural, ethnic, or confessional. All of them, unless they violate some normal or tolerant frameworks, help construct a common social good. This is also true when there is a kind of a competitive spirit among them.

Cultural and Political Dimensions of Citizenship

The understanding of citizenship — as we can see — was never limited to the legal or formal status of persons or their full membership in a particular political community. Citizenship also contained a dimension of cultural identity. The early or classical theory of citizenship did not pay much attention to the cultural dimension of citizenship. For T. H. Marshall (1965), one of its most visible representatives, this approach was entirely a matter of course. He divided the evolution of citizenship — seen as something that assures individuals a just and equal status in society — into the following sequences or categories of rights: civil rights, political rights, and social rights; the first became naturalised in the 18th, the second in the 19th, and the third in the 20th century. Larger or smaller declarations of these complexes of rights — which do not require citizens to actively participate in the management of social matters — simply overlook that membership in society is a much more complex sociological relationship than presupposed by the classical concept of citizenship. Critics of the latter have already called attention to some of its fundamental deficiencies. First, they have suggested that the passive acceptance of

citizenship should be replaced by an active role, which would include civic responsibilities and virtues. Second, they have developed a critique that is closer to the broader understanding of citizenship used here and that is advocating a concept of citizenship which would also include cultural pluralism at the disposal of modern societies.

Many groups, mainly ethnic, cultural, and racial, among others — whose basic elementary civil rights are formally provided — complain that they feel excluded or underprivileged whenever they look at their membership in a particular group or cultural community within a society or country. The most salient among the critics are the "cultural pluralists" who stand for the concept of "differential citizenship" (Kymlicka and Norman 1995, 301). The rights they include in an extended definition of citizenship are special rights for endangered groups, multicultural rights for immigrant and religious communities, and the right to autonomy for national minorities. Only under these conditions would the responsibility of citizens toward their country extend beyond their responsibility to their particular community. This is much easier to write down than to actualise in reality, of course.

The problem is compounded if we think of different and controversial sociological discourses about this question. Let us, for example, mention the liberal-individualistic, republican and communitarian situations (van Steenbergen 1994, 2).

Before we can pose the question of citizenship, however, the particular society must be clear about the boundaries of such a pluralist polity. In classical political theory this problem had been widely discussed (Bauböck 1994, 204). Let me recall that Carl Schmitt's comprehension of politics was almost fully subordinated to the differentiation between friend and enemy, while Thomas Hobbes looked at the mutual relationships between different countries exclusively through the prism of a latent state of war. Today's countries still hold the right to decide for themselves whom to accept into their social community and grant complete legal civil rights. The policies of inclusion and exclusion are great themes of political everydayness; they are repeatedly advanced whenever there are more intensive waves of immigration or more extensive influxes of refugees who are leaving their countries because of internal conflicts.

The problem of definition is even more acute for young and recently independent countries that are only beginning to mark their political and territorial boundaries. Joseph Schumpeter has based his general theory of democracy on the fundamental assertion that it has to be left to the *populus* to define itself. Nevertheless, we could say that in recent times these types of rigid definitions — at least in some older and well-established countries — have lost their edge. Trends in Western Europe indicate a tolerance — unacceptable until recently — for dual citizenship (see, for instance, Raymond Aron). It would be premature, however, to entertain hopes that time is approaching for a universal unfolding of citizenship. Several authors remind us that such an understanding — transcending the differences between groups — would actually be unjust, because it would offend groups oppressed or excluded during previous historical developments.

Relationship between Nationalism and Democratic Citizenship

In the following section I will offer a detailed discussion of the relationship between nationalism and democratic citizenship, which goes by unnoticed for many

social theoreticians. Nationalism as a political doctrine enables development without hindrance of democratic consciousness in particular, politically defined areas (Brendan O'Leary 1998, 79). Nationalism is the political discourse of a nation, which is spatially defined with internationally recognised borders. The life of political elites and political institutions unwinds within the framework of these borders and with development of the nation. Therefore, it is not surprising that previously mentioned political agencies often proclaim to be the guardians of "national interests" and the nation. They point their fingers at those internal and real or imagined external enemies and to extend the life of their own political hegemony. Such a "subjective" perspective, however, would not in itself be sufficient for the survival of the nation. The achievements of the struggles of nationalistic ideologies would be insignificant if they did not include in their programme the conquest of the state itself as the principal tool which enables the nation to protect its vital interests and secure development in an unrestrained as possible manner. There are, for example, many such cases in modern history, among the most noticeable are: the French after the year 1789, the Germans and the Italians in the nineteenth century, and, of course, the Americans.

It seems that no other ideology has instrumentalised history as much as nationalism (Smith 1998, 168). It is easy to find several proofs for such a claim. In the history text books of most nations — used in primary schools — we can see the efforts of historians to trace the "roots" or "ethnic sources" of their barely formed nations at least to the Middle Ages if not antiquity. In these cases, more deliberately than accidentally, one forgets those salient processes which influenced the modern formation of nations, such as advances in technology, developments in communication, the internationalisation or globalisation of the economy, and the demographic changes. The first instance cited above — conditionally called "historical" — may be used to explain the long-term process of revolution that lead to the formation of modern nations which could not suddenly emerge without leaving some preceding traces in history. The second instance — known in the literature of this field as "modernistic" — addresses the willingness of a modern nation to connect its own destiny to other accompanying social phenomena, including a modern form of democracy, which — in our case — re-establishes the bridge to democratic citizenship.

Therefore, to respect common political principles is not sufficient for the existence of some kind of political community. It is important that its members share a feeling of belonging to the same community and be prepared to continue to live in it (Kymlicka 1997, 18). Consciousness about a common identity, which is advanced by the nationalistic discourse, strengthens confidence and solidarity among members of the political community and leads citizens to adopt democratic decisions and responsibilities. By national identity we refer to a common history and language or to the feeling of belonging to a particular historically formed society shared by the citizens. They speak a common language and are backed by a common history to assist them in using and creating their social and political institutions. This does not mean, however, that their narrower ethnic (subnational, e.g., regional, or any other) identity, religious allegiance or understanding of social good are identical.

Kymlicka rightly emphasises that the question of language taught in schools is too much neglected in liberal theory. One rightly feels that there is abundant talk about "the language of politics" and very little, if any talk about "the politics of

language." There are simplified understandings, which frequently appear in the literature, that a common national identity requires teaching in just one common language. However, examples are far from rare, where a common language is forced on people; this fact does not contribute toward an environment in which citizens would develop or feel that there were justice and equal rights in their national identity. We must take into account that we are faced with different social contexts. In some cases, for instance, immigrants are prepared without any resistance to accept the language of society. Larger multi-ethnic or multinational states — we can generalise — are most stable when they are organised as federations of different "nations." Each of them controls within its own territory linguistic rights and the possibility of self-determination. In this sense, a democratic civic education must have at least two fundamental functions: it must promote the national identity of all constitutive national groups (mainly through a common language and history), and it must solidify some kind of transnational identity, which connects different national groups in a common country. This is not a simple task as we quickly learn from modern history, e.g., Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are considered defeated, while in the case of Belgium and Canada it is impossible to tell their future with some kind of confidence.

Decentering the Nation-State

Recently theorists of citizenship — and we think mainly of those sympathetic toward the paradigm of postmodern citizenship — are concerned with how to base the concept of citizenship in society and not mainly in the state as has been the case until now (Donati 1995, 300). The shift from state to social citizenship requires a new thinking that shows the positive inclusion of identity as one of the main components of nationalism. The latter regains a new role: it no longer supports the glorification of a nation-state, but must be understood as a complex social formation with sufficient space for a larger number and levels of compatible identities. Consequently, citizenship looses its former, self-evident role of a control mechanism for people's relationship with the country of their residence. This label also includes those who do not, for instance, agree with a particular political system. In a slightly more refined theoretical language of sociology we could say that methodological holism has left or at least is slowly leaving its place to methodological individualism, which affirms individual identities and is not inclined toward simply drowning them in social solidarity.

Consequently, it becomes obvious that the nation-state is no longer the centre of the political universe, although I do not maintain, as some do, that the life of the nation-state is expiring. Nevertheless, we must realise that the achieved complexity or differentiation of modern society requires a certain amount of decentralising the institutions of nation-states (Keane 1995, 198). Otherwise, the nation-state would, as a final consequence, block itself or be an impediment to everything positive and actually progressive and developed during last few decades. In this connection sociologists often talk about postnational circumstances. They do not think mainly of a purely and qualitatively new social situation, but of the fact that the nation-state will not be the only, privileged actor on the stage of history, but will have to tolerate new historical actors by its side. The latter will not necessarily be loyal to the old concept of the nation-state, but will have to share the existing political arena with them.

In addition to the decentering of the nation-state, Keane proposed two additional, important prerequisite conditions for the formation of democratic citizenship in modern times. They remove the intensity from the ideology of nationalism used previously to conduct wars and to subordinate unconditionally the lives of individuals to the dictates of the state. The first requisite is related to required international respect of extant juridical norms associated with the protection of national identity. The second one holds that no nation-state may execute its sovereignty to escape control or sanctions for threatening any one of the constituent national identities in a multinational society.

The suggestions of the Badinter Commission for resolving the Yugoslav crisis were, in principle, assuring international control and the right to preserve or to protect national identity. International recognition of Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia was conditional on their own recognition of civil and political freedoms for members of national minorities and in addition to the obligation to contribute toward the development of a pluralistic mosaic of national identities within their respective civil societies. The countries could accomplish this goal indirectly, that is, by securing space for the self-organisation of civil society and, within it, for the activities of the inherited national identities and those chosen by individuals. Thus it is possible to hinder the state and political parties from hyperpoliticising or even manipulating national identity on the basis of short term and partial interests. The last condition of the Commission was the hardest to fulfil. Instead of leaving the political arena of the nation-state exclusively to the wilfulness of a nationalistic ideology, consideration had to be given to international civil society, which would ensure a much wider frame for action and the connection of citizens who belong to many different nationalities. Especially during times of crises (natural catastrophe, economic breakdown, political crisis) the established international networks of civil society help maintain unity or solidarity, which would otherwise be based on aggressive nationalism or accumulated hostile feelings among members of different national groups.

Social scientists, who simply omit the problem of national identity in their analysis of democracy and citizenship, are not rare. Keane's argument (1995, 186), which underlines the importance of being conscious of national identity as the context for democracy and citizenship, is apt. Regardless of the fact that national identity is an ideal, characteristic construct and as such not physically quantifiable, people feel it as something which connects them with language, common territory, historical memory, ecosystem, common habits, and customs. National identity, in this sense, is of recent origin and gives citizens the impression of a specific purpose. A particular community, then, serves this purpose and provides a level of confidence and dignity that gives most people on this planet the feeling that their society is their "home." Taking away national identity results in an unbearable or even hostile situation which, in its extreme version, pushes people to emigrate. Life in fear does not give even the slightest assurance of the possibility that democracy could begin to live. At the end it is not surprising that we can even add the language of democratic freedom to the constituents of national identity. Adam Michnik arguably described exactly such a situation in Poland in the mid-1980s.

Ethnic and Multicultural Models of Citizenship

From the perspective of liberal theory — which proceeds from the principle of moral equality among individuals and open borders — it is hard to become recon-

ciled to the fact that it ends at moral equality, which is supposed to be available only to citizens (Kymlicka 1995, 125). But liberal theory has, in this regard, blunted the rigidity of its doctrine; otherwise it would imply that liberalism is actually indifferent towards personal, cultural membership, that is, towards national identity. It sounds nice that borders should be opened, which would increase mobility and opportunities for individuals. On the other hand, liberalism cannot be indifferent to the requirement of protecting people's membership in different cultural communities. This demands some restrictions for immigration if we want to remain true to the liberal principle that people belong to particular societal cultures, that is, to social contexts where they realise and, on the whole, recognise their needs. Otherwise, liberal thinking should renounce its position that the existence of states has whatever meaning or rational foundation.

This is one of the most reliable ways of realising nationalistic demands within democratic principles. Although many liberal thinkers discuss a nation's right for self-determination as negative or call it illusory, it is, nevertheless, necessary to establish the fact that it can be — within some reasonable boundaries — treated as response to the convergence of nationalism and democratic theory (Bauböck 1993, 9). If society were robbed of its common cultural or national identity, it would remain only as a union of atomised individuals. This does not mean the acceptance, however, of every kind of pluralism or every kind of culture, if these do not allow both options: "exit" and "voice," according to Albert Hirschman. A consistent liberal perspective supports only a constitutional and legal framework in which its citizens can be loyal towards different cultures without hegemonic positions. We will be easily assured of the real democracy of such a constitutionally legal frame when we look at the situation of small, national communities or cultural groups vis-à-vis a major national community.

In Europe we can observe different historically conditioned constructs of citizenship and nationality (Mitchell and Russel 1995, 19). The first construct depicts the *ethnic model* of citizenship, which defines nation as an ethnic phenomenon deeply anchored in culture and language. This model does not enable minorities to obtain citizenship; at best they can only count on limited legal and social rights. Although there have been some important changes recently, Germany has been the closest example. The second, the so called *civic model*, is characteristic of France, which grants citizenship to all its inhabitants, regardless of their ethnic origin, and who identify themselves or actively participate in national culture. In effect we also have an "alternative" *multicultural model* of citizenship or nation of recent origin. It provides a social framework for the maintenance and preservation of cultural and ethnic differences. In immigrant countries, like Australia and Canada, cultural pluralism is one of the fundamental and self-evident components of the process of nation building. In other words, different ethnic groups incorporated in a nation retain cultural particularities at the same time. In Europe we are acquainted with only one multicultural model, Sweden, which operates its policy of multiculturalism "from above;" recently, however, with serious problems and under severe criticism.

Nevertheless, the situation in today's democratic world — even in its most developed parts — is far from the proclaimed democratic ideals. Besides deeply anchored racist perspectives, which resist the integration of ethnic minorities into mainstream society, there are assimilatory pressures, which bring civil rights into confrontation with cultural conformity. It is encouraging that the violation of col-

lective rights in relation to identity and the related issue of citizenship have received greater general attention by the public and in the media. Many more people and official institutions have been engaged in their defence than in the past.

We have to be slightly more precise regarding this issue. Supporting unity or collective identities are a basic part of a new democratic philosophy and connected to the more complex understanding of citizenship in which there is enough space for multiple identity and, eventually, for a global citizenship. This need for a broader definition of citizenship is necessary for maintaining a balance in society, the democratic recognition of communities, and protecting the basic unit of democracy, the individual.

Discourse about global or merely European citizenship is not the same as an authentic understanding of democratic citizenship (Oommen 1997, 224). Therefore, we could speak of citizenship in relation to the European Union only if the Union was, in reality, a multinational federal state. It is even more deceptive to speak of global citizenship as long as there is no global state, and we are currently unable to know if one is going to exist. Recently, when nation-states transferred part of their sovereignty to interstate, suprastate, and other international (regional) organisations, we have been confronted with the urgent task of redefining our previous understanding of (national) sovereignty. However, the largest and central feature of sovereignty still resides in the competence of nation-states. When nation-states are confronted with severe economic and internal, political shocks, their national elite, regardless of its political colour, resorts to national power. A consequence is the re-creation of national sovereignty and the minimisation of further erosion. It is understandable, then, that this kind of political process penetrates every constitution and understanding of democratic citizenship.

Although it is possible from some other theoretical or ideological point of view to contradict this argument of democratic citizenship, we could not reproach a person for being burdened with a priori nationalism. In such a case, for example, we can first of all resort, to on one of the most esteemed liberal thinkers, John Rawls, who argued that a well-ordered society coincides with a "self-contained national community" (Scheffler 1997, 195). The modern liberal viewpoint speaks, in this sense, about citizens in a democratic society who have culturally defined responsibilities toward other each other; especially important among these responsibilities is the transmission to future generations.

Second, a liberal theorist like Yael Tamir (1993) did not overlook that the previously mentioned liberal position contains a tension between explicit voluntarism and implicit nationalism. In other words, it is often ignored that nationalism ascribes to unity a particular moral and political meaning, which is simply absent in voluntarism. These explanations by two distinguished liberal theorists contain important contributions to constructing a theoretical paradigm — which is only beginning to appear on the horizon and, therefore, incomplete in its major features. But it will be possible in a much more complex and exact way to explain the nature of the relations between democratic citizenship and nationalism.

This is not a gloomy situation. We already know that legitimacy and the focus of mobilisation are based on the principle of nationality and the ideology of nationalism (Smith 1995, 154). In addition, although some states may have renounced their sovereignty or other national communities may have decided to join whichever federation, we cannot, in a democratic process, ignore or do away with the

fact that nation and nationalism will, for a long time, remain the main focus of support and endeavour for asserting the people's will — the people's sovereignty. There is only one further logical step to take from here to a paradigm of democratic citizenship.

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