Editorial: The ethnicist, the patriot and the citizen

Christina M. Akrivopoulou

Department of Political Sciences,
Democritus University of Thrace,
7th klm Komotene-Xanthi, PC 69100, Greece
and
Department of Businesses and Organizations,
Hellenic Open University,
Aristotelous 18, PC 263 35, Patra, Greece
E-mail: christina@eap.gr

Biographical notes: Christina Akrivopoulou holds a PhD and two postdoctoral titles in Constitutional Law, Philosophy and Methodology of Law and Comparative Law. She is currently lecturing at Democritus University of Thrace, Hellenic Open University and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She has among others edited, *Personal Data Privacy and Protection in a Surveillance Era: Technologies and Practices* (IGI: 2011), *Human Rights and Risks in the Digital Era: Globalization and the Effects of Information Technologies* (IGI: 2012) and *Digital Democracy and the Impact of Technology on Governance and Politics: New Globalized Practices* (IGI: 2013). Her main research interests concern the protection of human and constitutional rights, the protection of the right to privacy, data protection, the private-public distinction and citizenship.

In the turn of the new millennium, one could argue that the historic turn that brought forward the nation state and the notions of nationalism, patriotism and eventually citizenship was finally over. Globalisation, for some a new empire, seemed to negate the basic features of the nation state as it was historically and politically understood since the era of enlightenment. A new world seemed to be rising, where the nation state has retreated in its ethnical homogeneity due to an augmenting and in some cases overwhelming migration flow, where the once almighty national sovereignty was gradually passing to supranational entities such as the European Union and where the once overly emphasised cultural differences seemed to be substituted by a globalised modus of living. These transformations became the fertile ground on which constitutional theory, philosophy, political science, sociology and history begun to search for new, beyond the nation state entities, and for new beyond the nation state citizen identities, in order to foster the new subjects of globalisation.

Nevertheless, it seems now that this quest may have been in vain. While globalisation revolutionised our convictions regarding sovereignty, nationalism and citizenship and appeared as the main theoretical vehicle in order to overcome their barriers and borders, at the same time the risks it entailed, dictated also a reverse turn. This transformation was at first salient and its dynamic has passed as unnoticed but its turning point was marked by the 9/11 2001 and the subsequent adoption of the US Patriot Act (2001). The main elements of globalisation, free flow of information, free movement of people, ideas, open markets where becoming the basis for two synchronised yet opposite to one another

forces: the first was challenging the nation state borders in a most creative and open to diversity manner and the second was deconstructing the most positive values of nationalism by injecting xenophobia, racism and fear in the national political communities. In Europe, at first, this turning point has been criticised as an American phenomenon and thus its global dynamic has been probably seriously underestimated.

But this is clearly not the picture that we have today. While Europe faces one extremely complex economic, political and social crisis that seems to be jeopardising the most ambitious yet supranational political experiment of globalisation, the European Union itself, the ugly face of racism and xenophobia seems to emerge again accompanied by a long forgotten ethnicism and newly forged national stereotypes. Like the Lernaean Hydra, the Greek mythology serpent multi-headed beast, which whenever decapitated gave birth to more and more heads and finally was killed by Hercules, this ugly nationalism, this negative ethnicism seems to be augmenting by globalisation, the very womb that was aiming to its destruction. The people of Europe confronting the fear of a spreading systemic economic crisis are turning to what appears to be the safe nest of the nation state, gathering around of what the public interest and common good only means for them individually or for their fellow national citizens, consequently turning against immigrants and the other European nationals which seem to be threatening it. National stereotypes function as a new subtle form of racism and are becoming either the explanation for the economic crisis or a remedy against it. Thus, some nation states have *good* citizens, others have *bad* ones and most importantly those who belong in the first category should have nothing to fear as long as they remain *good* and take the necessary distances from the latter. This return to nationalism in the form of ethnicism is may be the most significant dilemma that Europe has to face if it wishes to remain united not only in paper but in substance and it will take more than a Hercules to address it.

As Samuel Johnson shrewdly observed in 'The Patriot' in 1774, 'Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel' thus opposing the 'self-professed Patriots' from the true patriots and patriotism. The classic thinker merely underlined that often the symbolic protection of patriae can be used as a disguise for one's serving a completely different agenda, in order to pursue individual interests or to induce hatred for imagined enemies, racism, and xenophobia. Similarly nationalism in its ugly form as ethnicism has often provided the ground for arguments of ethnic superiority, genocide and ethnic cleansing in a manner that has marked in the most negative way the European and the world political history.

What should be reminded though is that neither nationalism (in Greek, *έθνος* = nation, *εθνικισμός* = nationalism) nor patriotism (in latin, *patriota*, in Greek, *πατριώτης*) where initially deemed as negative notions. Jean Jacques Rousseau was a great supporter of patriotism, since the patriot was considered during the enlightenment as the loyal subject of *patriae* (in Greek, *πατρίς*), of the homeland and not of the church. Thus, this notion has signified during this period the need for a state-church separation. In a similar framework the notions of nation, nationalism where initially, in the 18th century, referring to a community sharing a series of common characteristics as language, customs, history, tradition, culture and religion and a common sentiment of co-belonging in a common polity. The notion of nation and nationalism served as the primary political medium of legitimacy for the newly built representative democracies which where aiming in embracing nation as their main political subject.

The ideas of nation and nationalism where gradually substituted by the notions of people, popular sovereignty and citizenship. The latter have promoted legal and political equality over the inherent ambiguity, the gender and otherwise discriminating character

of nationalism, but they were nevertheless construed more or less by the same basic materials as the former. The citizen, a completely legal notion, always continued up to a point to refer to the national subject, thus primarily addressing his/her principles, values and rights and thus endorsing more a national than an open to all and tolerant towards diversity, polity. Nevertheless, even though that citizenship did not necessarily lead to open to diversity political communities, it successfully combined nationalism with patriotism through its legal understanding. Thus, it transformed nationalism from a shared sentiment of cultural co-belonging, to the legally expressed loyalty for a set of constitutional principles regarding freedom, personal and political autonomy, solidarity, equality, dignity, social justice, democratic expression and participation. Consequently, the patriot of such a polity was the one who should cherish and safeguard those values and their realisation. This idea of citizenship was not necessarily perfect or completely adaptable to the new conditions that globalisation created but it served as a medium that enabled the civil societies to refocus from what *divides* to what *unites* a democratic polity.

At this critical point where the subject of globalisation, the citizen of the once upon sovereign nation state wishes more than ever to return 'home' to the safety, familiarity and intimacy of an ethnically homogeneous polity one should have in mind that no 'closed borders' nor 'nation fortresses' can protect us from the real risks and threats that in the face of the current economic, social and political crisis, globalisation sets upon the citizens not only of Europe but of the whole world. And the real risk is not the other, the different, the immigrant or the foreigner, they are not the enemy. The real enemy is us, the real risk lies in ourselves, in forgetting that as citizens, nationals and patriots we should not be guided by the fear or hatred for what is different, for what lies beyond our national borders but we should only be guided from our cherished, common European constitutional legacy. Our real homeland, our safe 'haven' in an era of crisis and globalisation is reflected in this heritage, a rare and priceless ark of constitutional values. 'It is only our determination to protect freedom, equality, solidarity, social justice, dignity, political autonomy and democracy for all that makes us true nationals, genuine patriots and good citizens'.