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Taking Patriotism Seriously in Liberal Democracies

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This article explores the evolving concept of patriotism in the context of contemporary liberal democracies. As politicians increasingly employ patriotism in response to globalization and neoliberalism, diverse conceptions such as civic, constitutional, ethical, and cosmopolitan patriotism have emerged. Three evaluative criteria are thus introduced: inclusiveness, identity, and critical loyalty. Civic patriotism emphasizes democratic governance but may lack national rootedness. Constitutional patriotism risks overlooking cultural particularities, while ethical patriotism seeks to reconcile diverse identities but risks universalizing differences. Cosmopolitan patriotism aims to bridge global and national loyalties but may overlook critical loyalty complexities. Therefore, patriotism can be compatible with liberal democracy and citizenship if it is adequately inclusive, respects personal identities, and is critically loyal to universal constitutional ideals and specific cultural contexts.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an influx of politicians invoking patriotism as part of their political strategies. Such a 'patriotic mobilization' can be viewed as a political response to 'diverse concerns provoked by globalization and neoliberalism' (Daucé *et al*. 2013: 14).[a] Political theory witnesses a similar kind of increased interest in numerous types of patriotism. Let us mention cosmopolitan patriotism, civic patriotism, ethical patriotism, constitutional patriotism, or even a 'virtuous form of patriotism', which appears to be compatible with equal citizenship, reasoned dissent,

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global justice, and devotion to the health of democratic institutions and the natural environment and its protection (Kobyliński 2017).

Although patriotism has different meanings for different people (Daucé *et al.* 2015) and is often conflated with nationalism and populism, and thus antithetical to a liberal democratic regime, we argue that patriotism, if properly conceived, can be compatible with liberal democracy and liberal citizenship.[b] This theoretical article is based on an extensive literature review and does not aspire to formulate specific policies or to be a guide for vote-seeking politicians. Rather, it seeks to contribute to a better orientation in the labyrinth of theoretical conceptions and to the debate about their contribution to contemporary liberal democratic regimes.

It proceeds in three steps. First, we define patriotism by highlighting some of its core tenets. Second, three criteria will be built for evaluating a variety of patriotism, namely *inclusiveness*, *identity*, and *critical loyalty*. These will be construed as strictly compatible with liberal-democratic citizenship. This shall be used to facilitate the elements, which are not only congruent with but also beneficial to the current liberal democratic regimes in general. The upshot of the article is that by examining ideal normative theories and applying the three criteria, we may contribute to the literature by showing how theories of patriotism can apply to real-world politics.

Core Tenets of Patriotism

When characterizing the core tenets of patriotism, our aim is not only to outline its essential elements but also to highlight the breadth of interpretations and, at times, conflicting perspectives in the literature. This approach is crucial because patriotism, as a deeply contested and multifaceted concept, cannot be fully understood through a single, unified definition. By exploring its diverse dimensions, we aim to provide readers with a richer understanding of how patriotism has been conceptualized across different contexts. Such an exploration also helps to underscore the complexity of the concept, preparing readers to engage critically with its various interpretations and applications in contemporary discourse.

Patriotism is generally defined 'as a subjective expression of an individual's belonging to the nation, which is based on feelings, emotions and moods' (Holubová 2009: 222). People's sense of it, as pointed out by Bellamy (2000: 219), is 'born out of a feeling of membership or identification with the state that grounds our wider notions of justice'. It is often viewed through the lens of its interconnection with 'the love for one's native land or country' and it is said that patriots 'love a homeland for its landscape, its townscapes, its weather, its culture, its cuisine, the dispositions of its inhabitants, and much more beside' (Archard 2019: 4203).[c] This love, as Martha C. Nussbaum (2013: 208; emphasis in original) reminds us, 'involves the feeling that the nation is *one's own*, and its rituals usually make reference to that idea'. Patriotism can be 'considered indispensable to the maintenance and flourishing of modern democracy' (Johnston 2002: 288). It can be seen as a type of 'constitutional loyalty', namely the 'loyalty to a particular constitutional form that we call liberal democracy

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or constitutional democracy' (Smith 2021: 158). It is believed that due to the emphasis on civic virtues, patriotism can and even should be cultivated through broadly defined moral and civic education (Archard 1999; Hand 2011; Papastephanou 2013; Costa 2021; Curren and Dorn 2018; MacMullen 2021).

Patriotism has become widely accepted, though by no means uncontroversial, within an intellectual discourse of communitarian (MacIntyre 1984; Taylor 1996), liberal (Dietz 1989; Turner 2004), and religious tradition (Zadykowicz 2017; Ficek 2021; Mahmudulhassan *et al.* 2024). For communitarians, it can be viewed as a virtue closely associated with the concepts of citizenship and civil society on the one hand (Wuwer 2019), and nation, homeland, family or home on the other hand (Etzioni 2011). This is probably why occasional calls for the extension of the patriotic movement to the global level appeared in recent years, maintaining that it could have a transformative positive impact on foreign policy, the world order, and the future of capitalism (Etzioni 2019).

The religious interpretation views patriotism as a 'moral righteousness' and even 'the love of God' (Bożyk 2018: 100). It is supposed to accord the 'rights to all other nations equal to those claimed for one's own. Patriotism, differently put, leads to a properly ordered social love' (John Paul II 2005: 67).

Within the liberal tradition, patriotism is crucial in (i) maintaining liberal political order, especially the regime's internal political stability; (ii) enabling democratic deliberation; and (iii) promoting social justice (Soutphommasane 2020: 112). John Rawls, in one of his lectures, equates patriotism with *love of country* (Rawls 2008: 429). In his famous *The Law of Peoples*, Rawls elaborates patriotism as 'an attachment to one's people and country, and a willingness to defend its legitimate claims while fully respecting the legitimate claims of other peoples' (Rawls 2000: 112). This type of patriotism allows (but does not require) people to have 'a certain proper pride and sense of honor' (Rawls 2000: 44 and 62).

Let us now focus on at least two challenges to properly theorizing about patriotism. One challenge is that patriotism is sometimes conflated with nationalism. The issues of nations and nationalism have long been among the crucial topics in political thought. Consider John Jay, who in *Federalist No. 2* defined 'one united people' (i.e., the American nation; added by the authors) as 'a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms, and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established general liberty and independence' (Jay 1787). At the same time, he praises patriotism and elevates it to the same level as virtue and wisdom.

Viewed from a different angle, in *Marxism and the National Question*, Joseph Stalin examined nationalism through a Marxist lens, emphasizing its socio-historical roots and class dynamics. He defines a nation as a stable community formed by common language, territory, economic life, and culture, shaped by historical processes. Stalin (1913) highlights the dual nature of nationalism: for oppressed nations, it can be a tool for liberation and self-determination, while for oppressor

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nations, it often serves to perpetuate domination. He stresses the importance of distinguishing these forms of nationalism to align struggles for national liberation with broader socialist objectives. Stalin critiques narrow nationalism that undermines proletarian solidarity, advocating instead for an internationalist approach where national struggles integrate with the global fight against capitalism. While acknowledging the significance of national identity, he views it as a transient phenomenon linked to the development of capitalism and the state.

The 'nationalization' of patriotism can be traced back to the early nineteenth century (Viroli 2003 [1995]) and currently can take the form of 'blind patriotism', which 'is aligned with a more cognitive (i.e., ideological) perspective on the relationship between the individual and the nation in which unconditional support for the nation, its institutions, and its chauvinistic policy preferences represents the norm' (Parker 2010: 97; see also Perry and Schleifer 2023). David Bell (2007: 507) reminds us that '[n]ational sentiment is distinct from patriotism, which can either be a simpler attachment to a place of birth, or, in the classical republican tradition, a preference for the well-being of the community over one's own individual interests.' More recently, when analysing a typical American patriotism, Samuel Goldman remarked that:

> distinction between patriotism and nationalism can be polemical. Patriotism is thought to stand for a virtuous disposition, while nationalism designates nasty chauvinism and bigotry. This contrast often has a self-congratulatory aspect. [...] If there is a difference, it lies in whether one treats 'we, the people' as generated and sustained by our interactions under specific institutions in a particular place, or bases the legitimacy of our institutions on an organic and previously existing community. (Goldman 2021: 13)[d]

There is the peculiar issue of nationalism, which can be viewed as 'primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent', as Ernst Gellner (1983: 1) famously put it. In recent years, nationalism – which used to be viewed as a threat to sovereign democratic states (Ondria 2010) – has garnered renewed interest and positive re-evaluation, particularly among self-declared Christian nationalists in the US (Wolfe 2022).

Nevertheless, expressions of patriotism can sometimes manifest negatively, targeting marginalized groups such as migrants, the LGBTIQ community, or religious minorities. Despite disguising themselves as patriotic, these sentiments often lead to hate speech and majoritarian biases, undermining liberal democratic principles. While citizens have the right to express themselves, it's essential for fellow citizens to criticize such sentiments and for the state to intervene when necessary. This is probably why Macedo (2011) noted that patriotism is a 'dangerous virtue' prone to abuse, necessitating practical institutional reforms. Even some recent empirical investigations pointed out that invocations of 'patriotism' construct an in-group of citizens who are positioned as the heirs of an authentic national tradition and an out-group of co-citizens attempting to hijack the national spirit.

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Furthermore, despite its global aspirations, patriotism hardens the racialised distinction between citizens and non-citizens (Tinsley 2022).

Another challenge to theorizing about patriotism is that of both neoliberalizing welfare policies and globalization. The former has been labelled as 'social patriotism' and is considered a 'part of welfare nationalism' (Ruiz Jiménez *et al*. 2021: 130). It has been proposed to aid the citizens in contemporary liberal democracies 'in imagining that they belong to a political community of equals (a nation) whose limits are coincident with the group of people living within the borders of the state' (Ruiz Jiménez *et al*. 2021: 130). It perceives the nation as a social justice community. However, it is questionable to what extent this type of patriotism can be viewed as a response to authoritarian populism since not every type of populism is necessarily associated with neoliberal policies, such as those during the first Donald Trump presidency (Cayla 2021; see also Sable and Torres 2019). It can also be social populism of the Viktor Orbán type; despite having strong authoritarian features and (mis)using patriotic sentiments, it can hardly be connected with the austerity policy typical of neoliberal governance (Kim 2022: Ch. 4).

The latter, the so-called 'cosmopolitan patriotism', tries to take (inter)cultural differences and globalization seriously. Although the term had been coined several years earlier, it draws from various philosophical traditions and thus can hardly be viewed as homogeneous. One of the traditions is based on Kwame Anthony Appiah's ontology of home (Vidmar Horvat 2020). Another one counts with the republican idea of non-domination from arbitrary powers. It views republican patriotism as both 'explicitly normative' (Erez and Laborde 2020: 197) and 'critical' (Erez and Laborde 2020: 196), as well as conceiving critically engaged citizenship as a crucial component of any kind of republican cosmopolitan patriotism (Erez and Laborde 2020: 193 and 201). Some believe that it is possible to achieve 'a type of patriotism that is, on the one hand, compatible with strong familial, friendly, and personal love, and, on the other hand, builds ties of recognition and concern with people outside our national border' (Nussbaum 2019: 13).

Key to addressing these challenges are robust legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms within liberal democracies. These include fostering a strong civic culture, maintaining a balance of powers, upholding constitutional conventions, empowering constitutional judiciaries, and ensuring a rigorous but adaptable constitutional amendment process. These factors collectively safeguard against the erosion of liberal democratic principles and maintain a healthy democratic discourse.

Inclusiveness, Identity, and Critical Loyalty as Key Criteria

The indicated ambiguity in the understanding of patriotism, along with the diversity of its types that have gradually emerged in political theory over time, obscures rather than clarifies the concept as such. Therefore, it may be appropriate to seek criteria that can be applied to identify a form of patriotism suitable for contemporary liberal democracies. Accordingly, this section proposes three criteria to evaluate the myriad

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conceptions of patriotism, i.e. inclusiveness, identity, and critical loyalty. These criteria should serve as general guidelines to help theorists test or evaluate patriotism as conducive to a *liberal* democratic society. These criteria have not been chosen arbitrarily but are rooted in the core principles of liberal democracy, which combines democratic rule and procedures (i.e., a democratic electoral system providing free and fair elections), the protection of civil liberties, and 'the limitation of government by stringent rule' (McGregor 1988: 335), or, put differently, the rule of law allowing 'democratic engagement without fear or coercion' (Ginzburg and Huq 2018: 36).[e]

The first criterion is *inclusiveness*, a key liberal democratic value as democracy implies including previously excluded people. Inclusiveness has four aspects:

(1) *Demos boundary*: Demarcation at the nation-state level or a federated system such as the EU (Miller 1995; Palumbo 2009).
(2) *Citizenship rights*: Universal enfranchisement for all, including women, racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTIQ community.
(3) *Voices and perspectives*: Inclusion of diverse voices, interests, and opinions.
(4) *Participation*: Inclusion in political, economic, and social spheres, addressing fears of economic uncertainty and social fabric disruption.

Inclusiveness ensures that citizens from different communities, such as Christians and the LGBTIQ community, are acknowledged, as highlighted by Mounk (2018) in his briefly sketched concept of *inclusive patriotism*. Without this, a liberal democratic state risks fragmentation into 'echo chambers' (Boulianne *et al*. 2020; Rhodes 2022). A non-inclusive state leads to internal contradictions, hindering mutual communication and trust. Citizens may lose faith in the state's ability to represent them in public discourse and policymaking.

Inclusiveness counters exclusionary patriotism, such as protective patriotism, which fears lowering boundaries between 'us' and 'them' (Palumbo 2009). Slogans such as 'Make America Great Again' foster an 'us' versus 'them' mentality, targeting foreigners and immigrants. Jingoistic patriotism asserts a group's superiority through domination struggles, exploiting feelings that the state belongs to elites, not 'the people'. This sentiment can destabilize democracy, as a stable liberal democracy requires a sense of collective inheritance (Canovan 2000). Hélène Landemore (2020: 214–215) updates this with 'dynamic inclusiveness', engaging all potentially involved people in deliberation beyond traditional citizenship boundaries.

The second criterion is *identity*. In a liberal democratic society, liberty includes the freedom to pursue patriotic sentiment and the corresponding political and legal rights. This creates a clear link between liberal democratic values, identity, and patriotism. Patriotism is an expression of loyalty to the constitutional form of liberal democracy (Smith 2021), often manifesting as national identity (Nedzinskaitė-Mitkė and Stasiulis 2022). Personal identity can be shaped by symbols, rhetoric, emotional memory, and national history (Nussbaum 2008). Identity formation may also draw from comprehensive doctrines such as religion or ethical traditions. For example, a Christian might see patriotism as part of her religious identity, viewing the world as

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flawed with unjust laws. Identity can also be influenced by class, race, or gender, reflecting one's place in a multicultural and globalized context.

Communitarians argue that collective identity forms within a cultural context. Charles Taylor (1989) posits that patriotism is identification with a historical community based on shared values. Habermas (1996) adds that citizens must identify patriotically with their way of life to achieve a democratic society rooted in group values and norms. Laborde (2002) supports the idea of political identity for furthering democracy. However, not all patriotic sentiments are positive; some foster solidarity, while others can be irrational, violent, or manipulative. Sentiments such as pride can be viewed as both virtues and vices, depending on context (Papastephanou 2017).

The third criterion is *critical loyalty*. Patriotism involves *loyalty* to a country and its ideals, rooted in a specific nation and constitution. Constitutional democratic ideals – such as freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion, checks and balances, and separation of powers – are universal, but their enactment and interpretation are influenced by a country's culture and tradition. Habermas's 'constitutional patriotism' situates universal democratic values within a post-national nation-state framework. He suggests that European constitutional patriotism must grow from various national interpretations of universal principles (Habermas 1996). Thus, collective identity forms through a constitutional framework where communicative power and action reside, embedded in a nation-state context. Validity claims of the constitution are universal but must be applied within specific times and places.

Critical loyalty is essential because patriotism is not always inherently positive. To effectively challenge harmful patriotic sentiments, there must be rigorous standards for legitimate and meaningful critique. True critical loyalty involves a thoughtful commitment to a nation's ideals and practices while remaining open to the values and experiences of other societies with distinct yet relatable cultures and histories. Moreover, critical loyalty fosters the exchange of stories, emotions, and sentiments – such as joy and compassion – cultivating a sense of belonging rooted in shared principles and values rather than narrow nationalist identities. It empowers individuals, social groups, and even nations to embrace civic ideals that transcend historical and geographical boundaries. This is the ability that Primorac (2004: 88) subsumes under the conception of *moderate patriotism* whose adherent 'shows special concern for her country and compatriots, but that does not prevent her from having a measure of concern for other countries and their inhabitants.'

Critical Scrutiny of the Conceptions of Patriotism

To reconcile any patriotic theory with liberal democracy, it seems to be necessary to pass the three criteria and apply them to a liberal democratic state in order to

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reconcile the patriotic ideals and sentiments of its citizens with its constitutional values, such as tolerance, pluralism, division of power, and respect for human rights.[f]

Let us begin with *civic patriotism* drawing its historical inspiration from the ideas of Tocqueville, Hegel, or Hobbes (Znoj 1993). Cecile Laborde (2002) argues that civic patriotism should reflect both majority and minority cultures, being sensitive to various customs and viewpoints. She emphasizes the need for democratic governance to preserve cooperative ventures and democratically scrutinize political cultures inclusively. This scrutiny involves a deliberative, discursive, and potentially radical form of political identity, acknowledging the porousness between ethnic, cultural, and political identities. Thus, civic patriotism is a dynamic, fluid form of political identity, subject to self-reflection and transformation through rational argumentation in a deliberative process, free from social and power hierarchies.

While civic patriotism can meet the criteria of identity and inclusiveness, it often fails to satisfy the criterion of critical loyalty. Patriotism is deeply rooted in a positive sentiment toward one's homeland, and not everyone identifies with the adjectives 'civic' or 'civil' as members of a community. Many perceive their national identity as more valuable or superior to others, making it difficult to appeal to a broadly defined 'citizenship'. The national context, in which many citizens are rooted, cannot easily be replaced by the civic one. When patriotic sentiment in a liberal democracy does not reflect this national and cultural context, populist forces exploiting these sentiments tend to be strengthened. This can only be avoided by including critical loyalty in the concept of patriotism, even in multicultural societies.

Constitutional patriotism assumes that free-thinking individuals, practising deliberation free from power and hierarchy, seek consensus with normative value (Markell 2000; Müller 2007; Breda 2020). While this may seem inclusive, it struggles to accommodate those with radically different lifestyles and perceptions of 'constitutional values'. For patriotism to function in a liberal-democratic society, it must be sufficiently inclusive. The concept of 'thick constitutional patriotism' addresses this by emphasizing attachment not only to universal moral principles but also to particular historical experiences, political practices, and future ambitions of the political community (Kumm 2005: 321).

Furthermore, constitutional patriotism (i) represents 'a post-national form of political identification and attachment for pluralistic societies' (Cronin 2003: 3–4), and (ii) 'rejects the assumption that political identification must be founded on a belief in a shared pre-political cultural identity' (Cronin 2003: 12). It then appears that constitutional patriotism can satisfy the criterion of identity. However, a 'deliberative and discursive' approach to political identity formation is hardly evident in constitutional patriotism, which appears to be 'insufficient to generate the sort of social trust that is required for *democratic decision-making*, for example, the sort of *trust that makes compromise possible* in the face of conflicting interests and scarce resources' (Lacroix 2002: 947, emphasis added; for a more extensive discussion on this point, see Bellamy and Castiglioen 2004). Even in liberal democracies, national and cultural elements are integral to a shared identity, making it questionable whether the criterion of identity is fully met. It is often an integral part

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of it, which is evident not only in 'old' Western liberal democracies, such as the American or French democracies but also in younger ones, especially in Central Europe. It is therefore questionable whether the criterion of identity can be considered fulfilled.[g]

Constitutional patriotism can be seen 'as loyalty to a particular constitutional tradition' (Ingram 1996: 15). However, in liberal democracies, many do not feel such loyalty. Populist rhetoric often overshadows loyalty to constitutional values and traditions, as illustrated by political discourse. The proposed universalism of constitutional patriotism, taking into account multiple constitutional traditions, is seen by J.-W. Müller as 'particularism in universalist disguise' (Müller 2006: 279). He argues that constitutional patriotism is a normatively dependent concept needing a background theory of political legitimacy (Müller 2008). Thus, constitutional patriotism does not satisfy the criterion of critical loyalty.[h]

What seems to be a bit closer to the three criteria is Palumbo's theory of *ethical patriotism*. This encompasses a universalist attempt to smooth over tension, divisions and ruptures in society by refusing the concept of an enemy (see Palumbo 2009: 329) as well as by shifting the focus 'back from "them" to "us"' (Palumbo 2009: 331), where 'us' is viewed 'as a complex and variegated entity, the outcome of political and historical accidents' (Palumbo 2009: 331). Ethical patriotism significantly overlaps with the criterion of identity, as it 'attributes an overriding value to the ability of social rites to *foster collective identities*' (Palumbo 2009: 331, emphasis added) and 'recognizes both the individual's need for group identification and the emotive basis of compliance'. Given the inevitability of the need for respect for diversity in liberal democratic societies, it is noteworthy that ethical patriotism 'views multiple affiliations as intimately connected to people's identity' (Palumbo 2009: 334). For it, '*individual identities* are the outcome of dialogical processes taking place at a local level and involving the groups the individual is embedded in' (Palumbo 2009: 332, emphasis added).

When it comes to the criteria of critical loyalty, the situation is more complex. As mentioned earlier, it presupposes a crucial role of (local/national) culture and traditions. Ethical patriotism aspires to be something between both liberal cosmopolitanism and communitarianism (Palumbo 2009: 332–333). At the same time, it emphasizes that it accepts an individualistic stance and the language of (human) rights, which are perceived 'as part of the values shared by the group' (Palumbo 2009: 332). Defining itself against the 'Hegemonic and Jingoistic' mode of patriotism, ethical patriotism does not sufficiently appreciate the necessity of being situated in a particular culture with its manifested traditions and habits, which may have significantly different features from any other one, although accepting liberal-democratic values. This seems to be the opposite of what was noted by J.-W. Müller about constitutional patriotism, namely that ethical patriotism creates the appearance of universalism while purposefully overlooking particularisms, which are at the very core of the criterion of critical loyalty.

The final theory that we will consider is *cosmopolitan patriotism*. 'Cosmopolitan patriotism' motivates patriotism – love of one's Patria – within the cosmopolitan

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framework (Erez and Laborde 2020). In doing so, it advocates republican cosmopolitanism. Classical republicanism is, in general, at the state level characterized primarily by the absence of domination or interference and a polity based on good political institutions (respecting the separation of powers and constitutionally entrenched basic rights) and the widespread and active political participation of citizens. As such, it aspires to justify some conceptions of patriotism (Tóth 2019). Whereas classical republicanism appears more like a statist theory, republican cosmopolitanism broadens the scope of freedom from non-domination from the state level to the global level. Such republicanism recognizes the interdependence and cooperation among states and actors. Motivational factors such as political identification, internalization of norms, and enlightened self-interest motivate adherence to the norms of republicanism.

Erez and Laborde propose the criteria of collective identification and critical engagement. Collective identification means when you are part of a country, you recognize its virtues and moral failings. You identify with the collective moral responsibility to rectify historical injustices, thus 'supporting the relationship between the actions of one's country and one's appropriate reactive attitudes' (Erez and Laborde 2020: 194). Collective identification as a criterion implies an individual's attitude towards their country's virtues and its moral failings or historical injustices. Distinguishing them requires critical engagement. Critical engagement entails not blindly accepting your country's actions and adherence to its ideals, but critically engaging and evaluating to rectify past historical injustices. Critical engagement provides a normative lens through which its citizens can evaluate actions and ideals.

Collective identification and critical engagement map onto the criteria of identity and critical loyalty. Let us consider two examples to articulate these two criteria. In the United States, people have to contend with the legacy of slavery and can have two reactive attitudes. One can either accept or deny collective responsibility. One can either identify with the collective responsibility or eschew collective responsibility. The first set of reactive attitudes is incompatible with collective identification (or what we call identity) because they do not identify with the collective identity of who we are as Americans, Tunisians or Slovaks. The second set of reactive attitudes is compatible because even if you did not participate in slavery or pro-Nazi activities, it is our 'collective responsibility' for the past injustices, and your patriotic sentiments should include that. However, collective identification (or identity) is not 'critical' enough because it is possible that you could have moral and epistemically false beliefs. Archard (2019) has suggested that 'Patria' or 'homeland' and partiality towards Patria is neither epistemically nor morally faulty, arguing that love of one's homeland does not mean that one has epistemically false beliefs about the homeland, and morally it can be justified to have partiality towards the homeland. Thus, the second criterion is needed, which is critical engagement (or what we call critical loyalty). Critical loyalty is about critiquing false beliefs about the legacies of the past and clarifying our collective responsibilities.

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Table 1. Types of patriotism and their compatibility with normative criteria

	Civic patriotism	Constitutional patriotism	Ethical patriotism	Cosmopolitan patriotism
Identity	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Inclusiveness	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Critical loyalty	No	No	No	Yes

Inclusiveness, however, seems not to be explicitly discussed. Inclusiveness has to do with the demarcation of state versus global, the inclusion of ideas, and the inclusion of different social and religious groups. What they explicitly discuss is the state of demarcation. Republican cosmopolitanism concerns global domination and how internal state domination is affected by global domination. That is, domination does not stop arbitrarily at the state or national boundaries. So, cosmopolitan republicanism can satisfy the criterion of inclusiveness, but more needs to be said. Inclusiveness is not merely about the demarcation of statehood, but also about social groups, identity statements, and viewpoints (see Table 1). Indeed, domination happens not only by another agent or the coercive actions of the state but also through oppressive attitudes towards people of different social groups and lifestyles. Moreover, domination occurs through a lack of political participation in economic spheres.

Concluding Remarks

Patriotism plays a crucial role in the stability and functioning of liberal democracy. It can also carry inherently problematic risks, such as blurring nationalism and creating exclusionary and divisive dynamics. Historical and empirical analyses highlight that invocations of patriotism often construct in-groups and out-groups, marginalizing certain populations, such as migrants, LGBTQ, and religious communities, while reinforcing majoritarian biases. When patriotism is expressed in an uncritical or 'blind' form, it risks promoting chauvinism, bigotry, and unconditional support for the state, even at the expense of liberal democratic principles. Additionally, as patriotism intersects with global challenges such as neoliberal economic policies or authoritarian populism, it can be co-opted to justify policies that undermine the egalitarian ideals of liberal democracy.

On the other hand, patriotism fosters a sense of belonging and unity among citizens. It serves as a foundation for democratic deliberation, promotes civic virtues, and nurtures a commitment to social justice. Patriotism, when framed as 'constitutional loyalty', aligns with liberal democratic ideals by emphasizing allegiance to constitutional principles rather than ethnic or cultural exclusivity. This form of attachment can strengthen the legitimacy of democratic institutions, encourage active civic participation, and ensure the collective well-being of the polity.

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In this article, we uphold this latter thesis. To argue for it, we first examined various conceptions of patriotism. To test the sometimes-dizzying array of patriotism, we proposed three criteria of evaluation: *inclusiveness*, *identity*, and *critical loyalty*. We have applied these three criteria to rigorously test variegated conceptions of patriotism: civic patriotism, constitutional patriotism, ethical patriotism, and cosmopolitan patriotism. They all try to answer the challenge of contemporary 'patriotic mobilization' mentioned in the introduction by calling for a 'new conception of citizenship' (ethical patriotism), reflecting on the 'democratic and discursive scrutiny' when reshaping existing political cultures (civic patriotism), overestimating one's loyalty to a particular constitutional tradition (constitutional patriotism), or collectively identifying and critically engaging with a country's virtues, vices and historical injustices, and balancing those concerns with cosmopolitan commitments of broadening the scope of freedom from non-domination from the state to the global level (cosmopolitan patriotism).

There are three implications of our article. First, any viable conception of patriotism in a liberal-democratic state must be inclusive of various social, ethnic, religious, or opinion groups, as long as their own set of ideas does not undermine the constitutional principles of liberal democracy. Second, a liberal-democratic state must apply that kind of patriotism that takes seriously the personal identities of its citizens without marginalizing them, deeming them inferior, or even deliberately suppressing them. Such an identity can be based on race, religion, social origin, or occupation. Third, any viable conception of patriotism in a liberal-democratic state must consider the universality of its constitutional ideals and the necessity of being sensitive to a particular culture or set of cultures, while remaining appropriately critical. Thus, while patriotism is indispensable to sustaining democratic institutions, it requires careful cultivation and institutional safeguards to prevent its misuse and ensure it aligns with democratic values of inclusivity and equality.

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Notes

a. Some authors do not view globalization as one of the causes of recent patriotic mobilization; instead, they see it as a factor that disrupts 'the modern sense of patriotism'. Surprisingly, they even regard 'a kind of fascination with the West – its culture, technology, and modernity' as another threat to a specific (Central European) version of patriotism (Kos *et al*. 2016: 119).

b. As Yascha Mounk remarked a few years ago, using the example of Ukraine attacked by Putin's Russia, 'patriotism can also be a real force of good. That it can inspire millions of people to risk their lives to defend their country against an unjust onslaught. And so, I now think of patriotism as a kind of half-domesticated animal, which is to say that, if it's left alone, if there weren't people to provoke it, it can run wild and become very destructive, but we cannot make it useful for us' (Pletka *et al*. 2022: 5).

c. According to Huet (2014: 73), there were also patriotisms without borders in the past, which contested the territorial principle in the name of another, class principle. An illustrious example was Soviet patriotism.

d. Based on her latest empirical investigation, Mußotter (2024) introduces a third category alongside nationalism and patriotism, termed *democratic patriotism,* which identifies democracy as its primary object of attachment. See also, Piwoni and Mußotter (2023), and Bitschnau and Mußotter (2024).

e. As indicated in the Introduction, we theorize patriotism in the context of a liberal democratic society. It is, then, outside the scope of this article to theorize it in a dictatorship or totalitarian state.

f. However, such a business is not (and should not be) about emulating the kind of 'nationalistic' rhetoric in a cosmopolitan-liberal manner. There is also no need to repeat here the criticism (or defence) that these theories have been subjected to in recent years. Moreover, it will not be a quantitative measurement of patriotism (and nationalism) as offered by Mußotter (2022).

g. This is the gap that is attempted to be bridged by the so-called *constructive patriotism*, which 'requires that national attachment is in balance with respect to the human rights of all individuals' (Finell and Zogmaister 2015: 189–190). It is associated with the hopes of fighting the social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, it is unclear what the truly fulfilled expectation would look like (Rupar *et al*. 2021). Nevertheless, this theory, unlike constitutional patriotism, has not yet been elaborated enough to be adequately assessed in terms of the three criteria. The same can be said about *open patriotism*, which stands in contrast to all exclusive and closed types of nationalism, with its two fundamental ethical criteria being openness toward the plurality within a society and openness toward humanity in its own plurality (Palaver 2021: 4).

h. It is beyond the scope of this article to look for such a 'background theory' that could help to strengthen weak points when testing the viability of constitutional patriotism.

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