

How Is Citizenship Determined Around the World?
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There are many ways of acquiring citizenship in the modern world. This concept, being a citizen of a country, is relatively new; in the past, in nation states with a king, one was a subject\227and that usually depended upon birth. Refugees could and did come to some: many Continental Europeans fled to England, escaping the persecution of revolutions. In those days (late 18th century), they were permitted to remain as subjects. Voting rights was a much later proposition.

Today, most citizenship is automatic upon birth, except in such countries as Germany, where citizenship requires ancestors who were born in Germany. Israel admits anyone with a Jewish mother (Jewish identity), but also has Arab citizens who predated Israel\222s existence. Saudi Arabia (and almost all Arab states today) only grant citizenship (or subject-hood) to Arab Muslims. All others have either been expelled or are in the process of being expelled.

Today, Europe is struggling with hordes of immigrants, a difficult issue which requires admission of refugees under the present rules of the European Human Rights Commission. EU members until now have voluntarily accepted these liberal rules, but the consequences of such acceptance are being revisited.

The United States began as a new country welcoming and needing immigrants from Europe. But once the country began to fill up with millions of newcomers, generally very poor and generally illiterate, immigration rules were born. At various times, we barred certain ethnicities, such as Chinese and Japanese, and, of course, Africans. We no longer do this, but since the 1920s, have designed a system for acquiring citizenship. The process includes testing to assure understanding of the rules and American electoral and legal systems. And along with the humanitarian notion of family reunification, certain relatives, as well as spouses, are permitted entry but are expected to go through the process of becoming a citizen. Spouses, however, are carefully screened to eliminate the process of fraud---marriages that are not really marriages.

Ruben Navarrette Jr., an excellent columnist specializing in Hispanic issues (San Francisco Chronicle) has criticized Israel\222s High Court decision to let stand a new ruling that residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Palestinians) should no longer have automatic citizenship when they marry Israeli citizens. Navarrette presents a picture of Romeo and Juliet prevented from being together, which was the original notion behind the law. The actuality of this practice has been, too many times, marriages between strangers, some of them in exchange for payment, and others to permit terrorists entry under the cover of citizenship (and Islamic doctrine of \223deception\224).

Navarrette considers this simply ethnic prejudice, which would be true had there not been continuing attacks on Israel by such \223citizens.\224 Even were the Israelis to screen the marriage partners as we do in the United States, they would run into the common Arab practice of arranged (and sometimes enforced) marriages. Israel\222s secular liberals would not approve of such screening, leaving no option but to bar such blanket granting of citizenships (and residence).

Europeans, who are relatively new to the granting of citizenship to people not born and bred there, are also revisiting their liberal policies of admitting anyone who claims refugee status. The British have had one of the worst problems; they admitted all Indians and Pakistanis who were formerly colonial subjects. However today, too many of these citizens are sending home for husbands for their often underage daughters, as well as the new process of accepting money for a fraudulent marriage. These violations of national security, in the face of increasing Islamist violence, is compelling them to revise their laws.

Other European countries (Denmark, Netherlands, and France) are no longer dismissing cultural practices as unimportant. Citizenship in some of these countries requires (as does ours) acceptance of their culture and knowledge of their mores and laws.

Civil libertarians may not like this, but the conditions of the world today require some self-protection lest out of benighted denial, all of our liberties be lost.

663 words

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