

Sovereignty of Humanity:
Conceptualizing Citizenship
to Include Cultural Differences.

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(Originally published in the 1999 edition of UBC Journal of Political Studies)

Citizenship, as a significant type of individual identity, has taken on increasingly greater importance in the political and social sphere. While it has been used as a means, as opposed to an end, in political discourse, the tides have gradually turned such that citizenship is at the heart of the matter. It is no longer good enough to speak of a citizen as a counter-weight to the power of the state; the citizen has come to incorporate elements that transcend the state. But in the process of this transition, residual elements of the past linger and have become incorporated into the more comprehensive notion of the citizen. In doing so, the citizen becomes an artifact of the past, a symbol of the present, and a model of the future. In this light, citizenship incorporates the civic, political, and social elements of human identification, and thus has a role to play at various levels, and with various rights and responsibilities. It is within this framework that culture becomes one identifier that can be incorporated into the notion of citizenship. Cultural differences must be taken into account when conceptualizing citizenship, because at the local, regional, and global level, they provide an inclusionary framework from which one exercises ones civic, political, and social rights and responsibilities.

The notion of citizenship has had a long pedigree. One can begin with establishing (or recalling) the distinction between subject and citizen. Aristotle made such a distinction when he defined a citizen as one "who shares in the administration of justice and in the holding of office" (1274 b 32 s.6, Barker, p.93). Thus, the citizen was a political entity. And to a degree this view is still prevalent (dominant) as citizenship is still used as a political marker. It differentiates one from the other, each holding rights and carrying responsibilities that are exclusive to each (even if those rights and responsibilities are the same). So, for example, a citizen of Canada has the right to vote in Canadian parliamentary, legislative, and municipal elections, and must pay taxes to the government of Canada. But, a Canadian cannot exercise those same rights within another state's political system; one cannot vote for a U.S. Senator, if one is solely a Canadian citizen.

In addition to citizenship being a political means, it eventually would also serve a social and civil one as well. Citizenship, while it was still an exclusive title (established just for qualified men), it served as a means of identification, "that he...is a member of some

determinate and determinable civil society" (Parry, 166). In this sense then, citizenship becomes equated with nationality. A political unit becomes associated with a cultural or ethnic association,

A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality, if they are united among themselves by common sympathies, which do not exist between themselves and any others, which make them cooperate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves, exclusively (Mill, 380).

Barbara Goodwin questions what establishes 'common sympathies,' but it can be argued that such 'sympathies' could be culturally based, in the sense that culture is broadly defined as a 'way of thinking.' People of like-minded thought will have a desire to work together as opposed to some other actor, and desire to be governed by those who are of like-mind. So, by incorporating these two views of citizenship, as a political unit, as well as a 'national' unit, the notion of the nation-state is born.

But, the nation-state as we have come to accept it, is not without its internal conflicts (in the theoretical sense, which manifests itself in the historical sense). The ideal of a nation-state hinges on the assumption that for every state there is one nation, that for every territorial political unit, there exists one cohesive people that have common cultural bonds. Yet, European history has shown that such an assumption is far from the case in reality. And, interestingly enough, it is a result of the arbitrary nature in defining a political unit and a national unit that creates the relative incompatibility of both. On the one hand, political power and influence has come to be established by territorial control, "[c]itizenship as membership of a state only assigns a particular person to a particular nation...this definition of membership serves, along with the territorial demarcation of the country's borders, the purpose of social delimitation of the state" (Habermas 25). On the other hand, nationality, based on cultural and ethnic cohesiveness, places little emphasis on territorial boundaries, "therefore, nations are communities of people of the same descent, who are integrated geographically in the form of settlements or neighborhoods, and culturally by their common language, customs and traditions" (Habermas, 22). And so, when statesmen (or conquerors) superimpose one over the other, he creates a distinctly arbitrary and artificial division, which left to its own devices, leads to social disorder, and political turmoil. It is this arbitrary division that has led to the most tragic and devastating events in human history, most notably the two World Wars of the 20th century.

In describing the origins of citizenship, and the historical development of the nation-state (albeit exceptionally briefly), one becomes aware of the historical baggage that exists in defining the modern citizen, and can realize the internal theoretical struggle that exists in defining modern citizenship. By linking citizenship and nationality, politics and identity, one is engaging in a discussion that lacks strong, cohesive substance. That is, the arbitrary distinction of nationality, based primarily on territorial boundaries, becomes the center of discussion, as 'the powers that be' attempt to create some hollow sense of

national identity based on territory, "[w]hat constitutes a 'national unit' is inevitably determined by 'arbitrary judgements' so Breuilly argues in *Nationalism and the State*" (Goodwin, 252). Such a debate is alive today in most multicultural, multi-ethnic countries, such as India, the United States, Canada, Russia, and arguably also in China, and many other modern nation-states. In doing so, one reinforces the arbitrary foundation of the global political structure, describing it in solely 'international' terms.

In making the claim that the 'international system' is somehow less than adequate to create a substantial theory of citizenship, a distinction is made between 'conventional citizenship' and 'theoretical citizenship.' The present 'symbol' of citizenship is based primarily on the past definitions of citizenship. That is to say, citizenship, until relatively recently in human history (roughly the past 50 years), has been based solely on the piecemeal construction of citizenship, and not on some comprehensive ideal. This can be seen in the present definitions of citizenship, which substantiates the label 'citizen' based on territorial and hereditary claims, via *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis*, respectively. This thus accentuates the exclusionary nature of past and present notions of citizenship, "National citizenship had an internal as well as external dimension. That is, it not only becomes constitutive of the nation-state but also of the international-system, which, in their totality, nation-states formed" (Koslowski, 370). It is from this basis that political and individual rights are based, and thus can be argued as exclusionary.

By creating a 'theoretical citizenship,' an attempt is made to transcend the historically territorial nature of citizenship. Another way of putting it is that the legality of state citizenship is complemented by a set of rights and responsibilities that are not isolated within the sole purview of states. Thus, in defining citizenship, there is a broader context and a larger, arguably more substantial, association of people, with the recognition of *human* rights and responsibilities.

It is perhaps no coincidence that a reason for adhering to the established global political structure (the international system) is the continued emphasis on establishing the rights and responsibilities of the citizen, particularly of liberal democratic states. Indeed, one of the more influential theorists of citizenship, T.H. Marshall, defines citizenship in terms of civil, political, and social rights,

[C]ivil citizenship...established the rights necessary for individual freedom: rights of property and personal liberty, and especially the right to justice....[P]olitical citizenship...encompassed the right to participate in the exercise of political power, whether by holding office or by voting....[S]ocial citizenship...entailed a more far-reaching right 'to a share in the full social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society' (Fraser and Gordon, 90).

In emphasizing on rights, however, adherence to the established international order can be seen as merely a transitional phase in the development of a more substantial citizenship that "identifies (a) a bundle of practices which are social, legal, political, and

cultural; (b) which constitute rather than merely define a citizen; (c) which over time become institutionalized as normative social arrangements; and (d) which determine membership of a community" (Turner, 159). It is thus an attempt to eliminate the arbitrary definitions of citizenship and re-emphasize the importance of identity by de-emphasizing the territorial and political aspect of citizenship.

Thus, in reorienting the significance of citizenship, more as a substantial, cohesive means of identification, as opposed to an arbitrary political marker based on territorial boundaries, one is elevating the discussion to a higher level, what is generally described as a 'supra-national' level. The scope of citizenship thus changes, from the local-regional level (international), to the regional-global level (supranational). And in making this conceptual shift, culture becomes increasingly important in a number of ways. While historically, citizenship as a political definition, was very much exclusionary—limited to people of a particular gender, locality, social status, race, and so on—this shift in thinking makes it become quite the opposite. In very much Marshallian fashion, although with a broader context than what Marshall had in mind, citizenship begins to incorporate more than just individual rights, transcends political rights, and becomes concentrated on social rights, creating "a shared identity that would integrate previously excluded groups...and provide a [greater] source of national unity" (Kymlicka, 369). Citizenship thus begins to take on more inclusionary elements.

Thus, citizenship takes on a different, more inclusionary meaning. 'Common citizenship' is replaced by, what Iris Marion Young describes as 'differentiated citizenship' where, "members of certain groups would be incorporated into the political community not only as individuals, but also through the group, and their rights would depend, in part on their group membership" (Kymlicka, 370). Thus, citizenship is not diminished to the lowest common denominator, that is territorial boundaries, but elevated to a level that unites cultural peoples, more so than otherwise would occur. The best example of this is perhaps the continued evolution of the European Union. While the EU has been primarily an economic union of European states, it nonetheless carries social and political unifying characteristics. Intra-EU economic liberalization involves not only goods and capital investment, but also labour. And arguably, it is this labour migration that promotes greater social and political union since "intra-EU migration has fostered legal integration" by unifying the civil and social rights of the various member states "which has helped build a legal framework that is essentially federal in nature" (Koslowski, 379 & 381).

However, a powerful counter-argument has been made with respect to the potential that is created in fostering a sense of community. Instead of creating a broader, larger political unit, that takes into account substantial nationality, the addition of cultural elements into the notion of citizenship creates the real potential for greater arbitrary fragmentation based on nationalistic desires, which structured the international system in the first place. By incorporating culture and rights, one allows for a framework that develops an exclusionary element in the notion of citizenship. In one sense, it can be said to be 'backward' in that it recycles a historical trend, but in adhering to a liberal view of rights, there is not much to be said, other than practical reasons, that self-determination cannot or should not be allowed, "the foreseeable practical consequences of universal

nationalism...are not theoretical but practical reasons against the nationalist principle. The theoretical reason is that that principle...can be shown to be conceptually incoherent and lacking in content" (Goodwin, 266).

Kymlicka contextualizes this fear of nationalistic disintegration by differentiating three different issues that formulate 'differentiated citizenship.' He first identifies 'special representation rights' which are "a response to conditions of oppression, [and] are most plausibly seen as a temporary measure on the way to a society where the need for special representation no longer exists. Society should seek to remove the oppression, thereby eliminating the need for these rights" (Kymlicka, 372). Second, he identifies 'multicultural rights' which "promote integration into the larger society" (Kymlicka, 373). Finally, Kymlicka identifies self-government rights, which is the result, not for "better representation in the central government, but, rather, the transfer of power and legislative jurisdictions from the central government to their own communities" (Kymlicka, 372).

His overall point in differentiating these three issues is to show that while there is reason to be concerned about disintegration, it is greatly offset by the essential purpose of 'differentiated citizenship.' That is, "the demand for both representation rights and multicultural rights is a demand for inclusion. Groups that feel excluded want to be included in the larger society, and the recognition and accommodation of their 'difference' is intended to facilitate this" (Kymlicka, 373). The only issue that continues to create a problem, or threat, is the desire for minority groups to demand self-government rights since "they divide the people into separate 'peoples', each with its own historic rights, territories, and powers of self-government, and each, therefore, with its own political community" (Kymlicka, 375). He emphasizes that a way to prevent nationalistic disintegration is through the creation of federal institutions, which divide powers between the local and central government, but does not discredit the real threat that "nationalistic leaders...will be satisfied with nothing short of their own undifferentiated nation-state" (Kymlicka, 375). Within the Canadian context, this is seen in the separatist movement in Quebec.

This potential of nationalistic disintegration emphasizes the reality that the traditional nation-state will not entirely disappear with the development and acceptance of a broader conceptualization of citizenship that spans beyond traditional state borders. The international system is too complex, and has developed too far to be transformed overnight or even within a few generations. Not to mention that the economic and political system that spans the globe has deep, inherent inequities, as identified by the 'North-South gap', and by the designation 'developing nations.' No matter how extensive our global outlook, no matter how strong our 'Allegiance to Humanity,' our past notions of citizenship will continue to play a large presence in defining our place in the world.

Having said this, however, one cannot ignore the significance of cultural differences in the cultivation of a meaningful type of citizenship. From the exclusive origins of citizenship, which were primarily political in nature, citizenship has become to include more comprehensive aspects that complements human identity, to become increasingly

inclusive in intent, and global in perspective. Incorporating cultural differences, and elevating them, provides a more substantial meaning of individuality, not absolutely as an automaton existing in a particular territory and consisting of an artificial geo-political identity, but as a member of a greater community having a relevant, culturally based national identity. In uniting peoples defined by cultural or ethnic characteristics, one facilitates a means from which peoples can transcend international conflicts, and becoming increasingly aware of a supra-national identity that emphasizes, not territory, but ultimately humanity.

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