

Citizenship: Concept and Consequences

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Citizenship as a Concept

The term "citizenship" is usually used either in academia or news as a synonym of nationality and national affiliation (from the Anglo-Saxon, West European perspective followed by the New World, in fact, as a synonym of state). However, "citizenship" as a concept is essentially a product of and used in political philosophy and jurisprudence. In practice, the majority of governments in the world concerned with giving or not giving citizenship to someone follow either the so-called:

1. The French model, based on the "right of soil" (*ius soli*) or
2. The German model, founded on the principle of "right of blood" (*ius sanguinis*).

Actually, "citizenship" is not part of the terminology established by sociology and anthropology as in these two academic fields of research the notion of citizenship has come up only recently, basically, with the research of Roger Brubaker, Louis Dumont, or Immanuel Todd. The notion of citizenship is particularly interesting for sociologists and anthropologists as a phenomenon that structures collective representations and social relations among individuals and groups (to have certain rights as well as certain duties).

The status of being a citizen is decided by the law. In the traditions linked to republican political features, qualifications to have or not citizenship have been linked to particular rights and duties of citizens as well as to a commitment to equality between citizens is compatible with considerable exclusivity in the qualifying conditions (Ancient Greece, Rome, and Italian republics excluded women followed by some certain classes of labor men from the concept of citizenship).

During the last decades, basically since the end of the Cold War 1.0 in 1989, there are three crucial reasons for the popularity of dealing with the issue of citizenship:

1. Re-establishment of national states in East-Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe;
2. Re-emerging the problem of the status of historical, ethnic, and territorial minorities;
3. The problem of immigrants' condition (for instance, in West Europe).

In principle, social science is concerned with the concept of citizenship mainly as an "imagined construction" that is applied in social life. According to a short definition and understanding of citizenship, it is juridical status, granting a sum of rights and duties to members of a specific political entity (state). Concerning the issue of legal rights and duties, one can possess 1) citizenship (participating in state elections for the president and parliament); 2) permanent residence permission (participation in only local elections for the assembly); and 3) temporal resident permission (no electoral rights).

Historically, during the time of feudalism, for instance, full citizenship possessed only aristocracy having political rights followed by certain duties to the state. In modern times, citizenship is understood as a pillar of a modern/contemporary state resembling, in fact, loyalty to the political unity that grants citizenship (it includes above all mandatory military service/conscription to defend the "motherland" – a country of citizenship). Nevertheless, in the past, there was a commonly accepted notion of citizenship that is very similar to the contemporary one (like the polis in ancient Greece, republican Rome, or in Italian medieval comuni/communities).

Today, there are notions of even supranational/transnational citizenship as it was, for instance, in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (double citizenship: of the republic and Yugoslav federation but a single passport) or the EU (double citizenship: of the national state and the EU with a single passport). Nevertheless, there were/are problems of supranational identity and transnational citizenship like in socialist Yugoslavia, USSR, or today in the EU where an overwhelming minority of inhabitants support supranational identity (of being Yugoslav, Soviet, or European) but have transnational citizenship (of Yugoslavia, USSR, or the EU).

What is very important to stress, the notion of (modern) citizenship is unlike the notion of (feudal) subjection. In other words, to possess citizenship means to be a member of a political entity having certain rights but to be a subject means being subjected to sovereignty (ruler) without rights having only heavy obligations. The notion of citizenship involves a relation of reciprocal loyalty between an impersonal institution (state) and its members (but not subjects). The notion of subjection, in fact, implies a personalized relation of obedience and submission of subjects to the sovereign. However, since the modern (anti-feudal) times, different types of rights (civil, social, political, minority...etc.) have differentiated citizenship from subjection which was historically founded on privileges (for aristocracy) and obligations (for taxpayers).

What Weberians (followers of Maximilian Karl Emil Weber, 1864–1920) would say is that citizenship is a typical phenomenon of legal-bureaucratic political systems. According to them, subjection belongs to traditional (feudal) and charismatic political systems and social relations. In addition, the concept of citizenship fits to "institutionalized state" while subjection fits to "personalized state".

Rights of Citizenship

The concept of citizenship understands four rights for the citizenship holders:

1. *Civil rights* concerning individual freedoms (personal freedom, freedom of thought, and freedom of religion) and the right to fair and equal justice for all. They stemmed from the ascent of the middle class in the 18th century;
2. In the 19th century, *political rights* concerning the exercise and control of political power, to vote, and to create political parties were established;
3. *Social rights* (rights ensuring a degree of welfare and safety through welfare and education services) were guaranteed in the 20th century;
4. *Cultural rights* (rights to maintain and hand down to one's descendant's cultural identity, ethnic affiliation, and religious background) are introduced in the 1970s.

Dealing with the concept of citizenship, the relations between citizenship, politics of recognition, and multiculturalism is essential. Citizenship is a social process that takes place under specific historical conditions. We have to keep in mind that the concept of citizenship involves both the rights and the duties.

Citizenship as a concept is in the Western world very much founded on the principle of *staatsnation* (ein sprache, ein nation, ein staat), a German term of French origin. This principle has characterized the old content's history from the 19th century on. According to the principle of *staatsnation* = each nation (ethnocultural-linguistic group) must have its state with its territory and each state must comprise one nation. According to common sense and most theoretical representations, a *staatsnation* is, in fact, *kulturnation* which is a community whose members share the same cultural traits.

The concept of *kulturnation* corresponds to both:

1. The Herderian idea of "volk"/people (whose main characteristic is a shared language for all its members); and to
2. The original French concept of nation, in which the linguistic criteria is also a major feature.

The original French concept of nation was defined in 1694 by the *Académie Française*. In essence, the German romanticist model is based on the formula of language-nation-state, while the modern French model after the 1789–1794 Revolution is founded on the opposite formula of state-nation-language (this formula, however, in the practice in many cases results in the assimilation and even ethnic cleansing of the minorities).

The *staatsnation* principle postulates the formation of politically sovereign monocultural and/or monoethnic territorial spaces. This principle is based on cultural and/or ethnic purity.

From the 19th century on, i.e. since the *staatsnation* principle was applied in Europe, there have been repeated efforts to make the single national territories both ethnically and culturally more homogeneous. The politics of ethnocultural re-composition in the name of *staatsnation* principle influenced both in some cases 1) ethnic cleansing, 2) boundary revisions, 3) forced assimilation, 4) banishments, 5) planned immigration, 6) deportations, etc.

Dealing with the question of citizenship, today has to deal with minority rights and minority protection (regarding in many cases with civic state and society). Globally, human rights were accepted after 1945 while minority rights after 1989. The fact is that the national state has far too often been understood exclusively as a geographic expression. In addition, the national state is a political association of citizens who belong to it even because of their cultural traits are often disregarded.

We and the Rest

Not everyone can indiscriminately belong to a specific national state. According to Max Weber, the national state is an association partially open to the outside. In many cases, historically, there were examples of limited opening towards the “others” or the foreigners (like Japan up to 1867). Such a view entails the creation of institutional mechanisms of social selection that regulate affiliation and exclusion. It has to be stressed that both citizenship and nationality represent the fundamental tools that define who has the complete right to belong to a national state and who is excluded from it.

A drastic example of the policy of ethnic-based citizenship can be mentioned in the case of Estonia and Latvia (to eliminate the influence on domestic politics of the local Russian minority) immediately after the dismemberment of the USSR but contrary to the case of Lithuania (in Lithuanian case just for the reason that Russian minority was not so numerous compared to Estonian and Latvian cases). In other words, in 1991 Estonia and Latvia introduced a model of citizenship following the *staatsnation* doctrine that tends to stamp out any form of cultural difference within its national territory. However, neighboring Lithuania after the Soviet time or Malaysia after the end of the British colonial domination in 1956, has given itself a model of *multicultural* citizenship, which is based upon differences amongst the country’s various ethnic components.

Specific institutions are established in order to support a strict logic of either inclusion or exclusion from the national state according to the principle of *staatsnation*. For instance, according to the post-Soviet constitution of Lithuania, in fact, only ethnic Lithuanians can be elected as the president of the country (The 78 paragraph: “Respublikos prezidentu gali būti renkamas lietuvis pilietis pagal kilmę...” [For the President of the Republic can be elected only Lithuanian citizen according to the origin...]).

Nevertheless, these restrictive institutions are:

1. Naturalization;
2. Assimilation;
3. Entitled nation;
4. Minorities.

Practically, a foreigner can obtain citizenship through naturalization and assimilation. We have, however, to keep in mind that in many countries around the world double citizenship is not allowed (like in Germany or Austria). The acculturation process results in a cultural affiliation change. This is a more or less voluntary process. Usually, the foreigner has to forsake his previous citizenship. However, today, dual citizenship is becoming juridically more widespread as a more democratic option. However, it is still in major cases regarded as dangerous for the preservation of national identities (for instance, controversial debate in Germany).

Practically, in the majority of states exists the problem of the citizenship of the minorities based on the difference between the entitled nation and the rest of the population (minorities) (cases of Slovenia and Croatia). Such attitude implies a structural asymmetry and it conceals a partial exclusion and a demarcation between first and second-class citizenships with their minority rights (example of the Socialist Yugoslavia). In many cases, the citizenship is ethnocentrically oriented which raises the question of citizenship and cultural plurality. Another connected question is the relationship between citizenship and the right to difference.

To focal questions concerning citizenship:

1. Does citizenship have a unifying and inclusive function?
2. Citizenship as the expression of a harmonious political community?

From the very sociological viewpoint, citizenship must be perceived as an agonistic process with competition, tensions, conflicts, permanent negotiations, and compromises between the groups involved in the struggle for the recognition of their rights.

Final Words

The concept of citizenship is in most cases understood as a research issue within the political science framework.

Therefore, the usual definition of citizenship is provided in political terms as referring to the terms of membership of the nation-state which secure certain rights and privileges to those who fulfill particular obligations.

Citizenship is a political concept but not developed and academically as such recognized theory.

It, nevertheless, is formalizing the conditions for full participation in a certain community (in fact, a nation-state). Originally, the political definition of citizenship stresses the inclusive nature of the term (concept) as it implies that anyone within the territory of a nation-state who meets certain obligations can be included as a citizen, with corresponding rights and privileges.

Qualifications for citizenship, in fact, reflect a conception of the purposes of the political community and a view about which persons are allowed to enjoy the benefits of rights (and duties) of the political unity (state). Shortly, the concept of citizenship applied certain moral and legal rights and obligations to those who possess it. We have all the time to keep in mind that citizenship on the one hand gives certain rights but on the other hand, requires as well as certain obligations.

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