

# A critical analysis of dual citizenship



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While examining the concept of citizenship, it has a close link with nationality; nationality is defined as belonging in a group of individuals sharing the same ethnicity, language, culture and identity. Citizenship is often granted through marriage, place of birth or is passed down from parents (Renhson, 2001). Governments provide its citizens with protection, rights, freedom, and many other benefits.

Most countries require their citizens to follow strict laws such as taxation and military services. With democracy as the ideal political structure, many governments are allowing dual/multiple citizenships (citizenship of more than one country) to its citizens. Dual/multiple citizenship may seem to be a big step towards a country's democracy and it may also seem beneficial to individuals, however, there are also underlying disadvantages regarding to dual citizenship.

This essay will address the concept of citizenship; what are the requirements of being a citizen, following with limitations and disadvantages of dual/multiple citizenship, and lastly some counterarguments and rebuttals to the ideology that individuals should only hold citizenship to more than one country at the same time. Concept of Citizenship The value of citizenship is very firm and concise. It defines individuals within their nationality, it give citizens political rights, and responsibilities.

Governments offer protection and liberty to its citizens; also citizens have a great emotional and psychological attachment to their country (Renhson, 2001). While citizenship and nationality intertwine, one's nationality may be defined by one's race, culture, language, belief, and religion. In order to be

part of a nation, one needs to acknowledge many of the political ideologies and being able to take part in a country's political belief. Citizenship offer similar system as nationality, the citizenship individual hold onto will allow others to acknowledge their membership of a particular nation (MacLean and Wood, 2010, p. 8).

Because the concept of citizenship is both very nation and political specific, to guarantee an emotional and psychological attachment, many countries do not allow its citizens to hold dual/multiple citizenship, thus, if an individual wants to gain citizenship of another nation, sacrifices such as giving up their current citizenship must be made in order to be recognized as citizen in the additional country. Limitations and disadvantages According to Renhson (2001) in most countries, there are a number of ways to gain citizenship.

A person can attain citizenship that's passed down from either one of the parents (*jus sanguinis*). A child born within a country is automatically granted citizenship (*jus soli*). A person immigrates to another country, become assimilated by that country then choose to apply for citizenship without having to give up their previous citizenship status (an example of dual citizenship). Another example would be similar to the one mentioned above however, individuals have to discard their former citizenship; it is often the case for countries disallowing dual citizenship.

With the increasing number of countries allowing for dual/multiple citizenship, there are number of conflicts that can arise with holding citizenship to more than one country, factors such as conflict of responsibilities, conflict of military services and conflict of law abiding will all

be problematic to individuals. As mentioned the definition of citizenship contains a big part of emotional and psychological attachment with a certain country, however, it is nearly impossible to have equal attachment for two countries, or sometimes more than two countries.

**Emotional and psychological attachment** In order to obtain dual/multiple citizenship, people often immigrate to another country, live there for a restrict period of time then apply for its citizenship. For example in Canada, in order to obtain Canadian citizenship, a person only needs to reside in Canada for three full years to apply for citizenship. All who applied for citizenship will have to take a citizenship examination; upon passing all the requirements and the exam the person will be granted citizenship to Canada.

The time one needs to reside in order to apply for citizenship depends on the immigration legislation of each country, for Canada a person needs to reside in Canada for at least three years; however, it may differ in other countries. This means in Canada for a person to fully adapt to Canadian culture and its political environment only takes about three years, and that it only takes three years for an individual to develop strong emotional and psychological attachment.

Renhson (2001) argues that all immigrants' cultural background is stabilized within, and that to fully integrate one into another culture is almost impossible. The individual will always have unbalanced emotional attachment for the two countries, and that equality is impossible to achieve. Also there are factors such as social exclusion, McCarthy and Walker (2006) believe that social exclusion in a community will greatly affect ones respect

within. In Canada, where many immigrants come to settle, they often settle within the poor communities as part of the lowest of the social class group.

Most times they are excluded from middle and high-class families, they live in zone in transitions where the rent is low and culture backgrounds are diverse, they are surrounded by violence and exclusion. This unachievable equality of culture and emotional attachment is often due to hardships immigrants receive. National Research Council (1998) observed that children from immigrant parents are more likely to suffer health and psychological issue than non-immigrant parents.

Considering the above problems immigrants face, the likelihood for one to develop emotional attachment for the country they immigrated to will be very low. Without emotional and psychological attachment for the new country, one may not carry out the required responsibilities of a citizen; thus, one cannot be considered a lawful citizen. A person holding dual/multiple citizenship is obligated to obey laws and policies for the countries they hold citizenships to; it also raises concerns such as policy and military problems.

Policy and military concerns

Policies such as taxation, and military services are part of a citizen's obligated responsibly to their country. (Legomsky, 2000) With dual/multiple citizenship, a person is required to fulfill responsibilities of all of the countries they hold citizenships to. For example a person with both Canadian and US citizenship residing in the United States is required to follow taxation requirements for both countries, meaning even if an individual is settled in

another country, he will still need to fill out taxation forms for Canadian government.

Taxation causes considerable difficulty and frustration to individuals because governments require its citizens to fill out taxation forms every year, also it cannot be avoided due to a person's status of being a citizen towards the country. This is one difficulty for individuals holding two or more than two citizenships. Legonmsky (2000) argues that military services also create problems to individuals holding more than one citizenship. " The potential for conflicting military obligations underlay much of the historical worry about dual nationality" (Legonmsky, 2000).

Debates about dual/multiple citizenship always surround issues of military service. All nations are allowed to recruit forces for national defense. A person holding dual citizenship may enlist in any country to serve in the military, there are no laws for individuals holding dual citizenship about military services, and any individuals with dual citizenship may enlist to join the force at any country (with citizenship to) they desire to serve. Many countries do not have laws guiding dual citizenship and military service.

Mexico is the only country forbidding military services to those that are born outside of Mexico (Legonmsky, 2000). This may be problematic concerning a person's loyalty to both countries, as previously mentioned, it is almost impossible to hold strong emotional and psychological ties to both countries, thus, when a less loyal person enlist in the army to serve the country, it may result in concerns, especially when the two perspective countries go to war with each other.

War and identity diffusion Nowadays, with democracy as the ideal political ideology, more countries are adapting to democracy and liberal thoughts. Thus, countries allowing for dual/multiple citizenships are increasing. With increasing public democratic thoughts, societies no longer consider world war as an issue nor do they believe there may be a chance of World War III arising. Because thoughts of World War III arising have left many citizens' minds, thus, people will see an increasing number of individuals with dual citizenship (Faist, 2001).

Dismissing concerns for such a thing to happen does not necessarily mean it will never happen. While loyalty is a problem when it comes to military services Hammar (1989) argues that when the two countries an individual hold citizenships to go to war with one another, identity diffusion and patriotism will also be an issue. Identity is “ a mixture of psychological, biological, social cultural, and environmental factors” (Mann, 2006).

With both biological, social cultural, and environmental as contributors to identity, a person holding dual citizenship may face identity dilemma. It is likely individual's “ biological” citizenship differs to from their second or third citizenship, this often causes diffusion to a person's identity. Often times when travelling outside the country while being asked about one's nationality, persons with identity diffusion may face difficulties answering questions related to nationality and identity (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009).

A person may be fully adapted to another culture but may not have a great emotional bond with the country; some may even feel there is a greater

emotional bond with their “biological” birth country. This type of dilemma may cause great distress if the two perspective countries go to war, a person may feel alienated because they may be unsure which country they truly belong to and which country they feel would offer protection to a person with citizenship of both countries.

Counter-arguments and rebuttal – Equal loyalty Individuals holding citizenship to more than one country may argue that it is possible to have equal emotional and psychological attachment for all of the countries they hold citizenship to, and that it is also possible to be lawful citizens to both countries. This argument may be highly subjective rather than objective. Let us look at emotional and psychological attachment in a more objective point of view. Dual citizenship can be seen as having two spouses; can a person be called loyal when they have two spouses?

The answer should be “no”. The definition of citizenship and the definition of marriage are very similar; both involve close commitment and personal responsibility, this close commitment is often only between two people, just as a person’s citizenship; a person can only have one close relationship with one country. In order for marriage to break apart is through divorce, similarly, in order for individuals to obtain citizenship of another country is to give up citizenship of their former country.

Thus, persons with dual citizenship may “believe” they are equally loyal to both countries, however this “belief” is too subjective to be considered a fact. Counter-arguments and rebuttal – Identity diffusion Others may also argue problems such as identity diffusion during war times should not be



something to worry about because individuals may argue they will always know what country to cheer for during Olympic seasons, and because of this, individuals relate themselves with a certain country and feel that concerns for identity diffusion is impractical.

That is true, a person may know exactly what country to cheer for when it comes to contests, however, contests and Olympics do not hold similar notion as civil war. For example watching Olympics and cheering for the team individuals' support for is fun and exciting however, placing oneself in a life-risking situation between two countries both with personal connections to may feel different.

Individuals may feel there is a greater urge to keep the two countries at peace rather than in war, also individuals may feel trapped because they have personal connections with both countries, the feeling of not knowing which one country they truly belong to may over hunt the individual than to benefit the person, as Spiro (1999) argues the crisis of not knowing one's nationality is greater in persons with dual/multiple citizenships. Therefore, holding dual/multiple citizenships may be more troubling than beneficial.

## Conclusion

With the increasing amount of individuals holding dual/multiple citizenships, more countries are allowing citizens to have citizenship to more than one country. Citizenship generally means membership of a country and is closely linked with identity and nationality. Nationality is linked with one's culture, language, ethnicity, and religion; however, most individuals holding

citizenship to more than one country at the same time do not necessarily have the knowledge to be a responsible citizen to the immigrated country.

The definition of citizenship is fairly strong, but with more people holding dual citizenships the definition of citizenship has been “ redefined”.

Citizenship requires a strong emotional and psychological bond, individuals holding citizenship to more than one country often will not have strong emotional bond with both countries, and they will almost always have personal bias towards their birth country or immigrated country.

Also dual/multiple citizenships raise serious concerns such as taxation and military policies, as a lawful citizen, individual will need to fulfill duties as a citizen for both countries thus creating unnecessary difficulties. Identity diffusion will also likely to occur for people with dual citizenship because they may experience feelings of uncertainty with great urge to find out which country they truly connect themselves with. With the above issues concerning dual/multiple citizenships, it is best if individuals have citizenship to only one country.

## Reference

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