The (Dwindling) Rights and Obligations of Citizenship

Peter J. Spiro
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Citizenship is central to modern narratives of individual well-being. As Chief Justice Earl Warren declared, “[c]itizenship is man’s basic right for it is nothing less than the right to have rights.”¹ The popular conception holds that significant rights and obligations attach peculiarly to the citizenry. In his 2012 convention acceptance speech, Barack Obama framed citizenship as “a word at the very heart of our founding,” as part of a recognition “that we have responsibilities as well as rights.”² At a more prosaic level, the website of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services asserts that “[c]itizenship offers many benefits and equally important responsibilities.”³

This Essay interrogates the conventional wisdom that citizenship is central to situating the legal place of individuals in society. It concludes that citizenship status has material consequence. However, citizenship is not incommensurable. Citizenship has value, but that value is bounded.

What the state extracts from you and what it owes you is contingent on citizenship status in some contexts. Within the national territory, civil rights are extended without regard to citizenship or immigration status. Permanent resident aliens are legally disadvantaged with respect to some economic incidents of the welfare state, political rights, and immigration benefits. However, formal differentials have been counterbalanced by workarounds and underenforcement. In other words, rights differentials are not as significant as they might appear. The differential is narrower in the context of obligations. With the exception of jury duty, citizenship imposes no additional societal burdens not also shouldered by noncitizen residents. Tax and military service obligations fall equally on citizens and noncitizens. All persons physically present are required to pay taxes. Mandatory military service is of historical significance only, and in any case applies equally to citizens and permanent residents alike. Americans are required to do nothing for their country that they would not be required to do as mere legal residents.

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² President Barack Obama, Acceptance Speech for Renomination at the Democratic National Convention (Sept. 6, 2012).
Outside the national territory, citizenship has greater salience on both sides of the balance sheet. Passport issuance is contingent on citizenship, as is diplomatic protection by U.S. authorities. The Supreme Court has found certain constitutional protections inapplicable to noncitizens outside of the United States, where (as a matter of doctrine) the Bill of Rights is fully portable for citizen carriers. External citizens also carry substantial tax obligations that are citizenship contingent. However, formal rights differentials have been counterbalanced by the rise of international human rights, which apply on a citizenship-blind basis.

The contemporary convergence of citizenship and noncitizenship status reflects an evolution from more significant historical differentials. Although noncitizens have always enjoyed certain equivalent constitutional protections, they were historically disadvantaged with respect to important legal capacities, including the right to own property and engage in some kinds of business. Compulsory military service was once required only of the citizen or the citizen-in-the-making. Citizenship status has grown less consequential in terms of situating an individual within society.

Part I of this Essay considers citizenship as an independent variable in the allocation of rights and obligations within the United States, with a focus on locational security, social benefits, and political rights. Part II situates the question in a global context, considering rights and obligations attaching to citizenship on an extraterritorial basis. In this context, the citizenship differential is also diminishing. The Essay concludes with brief observations on the implications of the convergence for the future of national community.

I. TERRITORIAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

A. Rights

Few important rights hinge on citizenship status. Civil rights are enjoyed by citizens and permanent residents on a basis of near equality. Citizenship status is salient to some rights in the context of economic status, but that salience has declined as economic disabilities of alienage have diminished. Citizens alone enjoy the right to vote in national elections, although noncitizens have alternative channels of participation. Only noncitizens are subject to immigration control; citizens enjoy absolute locational security. However, the leakiness of immigration enforcement mitigates the consequence of this important formal differential.

1. Civil Rights

Outside the context of immigration proceedings, territorially present noncitizens enjoy equivalent rights to citizens. Noncitizens, including noncitizens present in violation of immigration laws, are entitled to all constitutional due process protections afforded accused citizens in the context of criminal prosecutions.\(^4\) The Supreme Court

\(^4\) Wong Wing v. United States, 163 U.S. 228, 237 (1896).
has extended the coverage of the Equal Protection Clause to territorially present non-
citizens. In the modern era, the Court has deemed alienage a suspect classification, subject to heightened judicial scrutiny, in which respect aliens are extended a jurispru-
dential advantage. The courts have also found noncitizens to enjoy rights under the
First, Second, and Fourth Amendments.

2. Economic Status

Noncitizens were historically burdened with respect to economic pursuits. During
the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, noncitizens were subject to various dis-
criminatory regimes sanctioned by the courts, the common law, treaty regimes, and the
law of nations. Many states barred aliens from owning real property. Others that per-
mitted land ownership restricted its transfer by inheritance. The federal government
restricted homesteading to citizens or immigrants who had applied for naturalization.
In a largely agrarian economy, these disabilities were significant.

Other economic disabilities were pervasive. Many states made aliens ineligible for
the licenses required to operate a range of businesses, especially those involving natural
resources (hunting and fishing licenses, for both commercial and recreational purposes)
and such regulated establishments as pawnbrokers and liquor stores. Some states pro-
hibited noncitizen possession of firearms. Every state barred aliens from the practice
of law, and many jurisdictions excluded noncitizens from such other professions as
medicine, accountancy, and nursing. These measures had the cumulative effect of

5 See Yick Wo v. Hopkins, 118 U.S. 356, 368–69 (1886); see also LUCY SALYER, LAWS
HARSH AS TIGERS: CHINESE IMMIGRANTS AND THE SHAPING OF MODERN IMMIGRATION LAW
7 See generally Developments in the Law—Immigration Policy and the Rights of Aliens,
96 HARV. L. REV. 1286 (1983) (discussing noncitizens’ rights under the First and Fourth
Amendments); Pratheepan Gulasekaram, “The People” of the Second Amendment: Citizenship
rights under the Second Amendment).
Other States, 35 CALIF. L. REV. 7 (1947); Polly J. Price, Alien Land Restrictions in the
American Common Law: Exploring the Relative Autonomy Paradigm, 43 AM. J. LEGAL HIST.
152, 176 (1999).
9 See, e.g., McGovney, supra note 8, at 22, 43–44, 59–60 (including examples of
Wisconsin, Washington, and Missouri).
10 See Homestead Act of 1862, ch. 75, sec. 1, 12 Stat. 392 (repealed 1976); see also Price,
supra note 8, at 176.
11 See generally Comment, The Alien and the Constitution, 20 U. CHI. L. REV. 547, 566
(1953).
12 See Gulasekaram, supra note 7, at 1558–59 (describing California, New York, and
Pennsylvania laws that restricted firearm possession by noncitizens).
13 Between 1871 and 1976, for example, New York State enacted 38 laws requiring citizen-
ship for occupations ranging from architects, private investigators, physicians, dentists,
setting down a line between members and nonmembers for economic purposes. The courts upheld these and other discriminatory measures as rational measures advancing legitimate state objectives.

Economic disadvantages attaching to alienage have for the most part been eliminated, although some disadvantages persist. The courts have nullified state restrictions relating to land ownership, inheritance, professional licenses, and gun ownership, with alienage counting as a suspect classification. Only with respect to a limited number of positions involving a core “governmental functions,” including police officers and public school teachers, are states constitutionally permitted to deploy citizenship eligibility qualifications. Most states appear not to maximally avail themselves to the exception, and those restrictions that remain on the books may be underenforced. Blanket civil service ineligibilities have been struck down, with the notable exception of eligibility for the federal civil service. Employers are legally entitled to discriminate in favor of citizens in hiring decisions, but only where prospective workers are equally qualified. One recent study finds naturalized citizens to be economically better off than their permanent resident counterparts. Citizenship status appears still to count for something economically.

Nonimmigrants face greater barriers to economic advancement. They are typically employment restricted: some are ineligible to work in any or only narrow circumstances; others are limited to job positions for which they were admitted. In most cases, their admission to the United States is time-limited. Undocumented status is more clearly economically disabling. Undocumented immigrants are barred from pharmacists to embalmers, plumbing inspectors, and blind adult vendors of newspapers. See Luis F.B. Plascencia et al., The Decline of Barriers to Immigrant Economic and Political Rights in the American States: 1977–2001, 37 Int’l Migration Rev. 5, 9 (2003).

14 The measures also reinforced racial criteria for naturalization. See generally IAN F. HANEY-LÓPEZ, WHITE BY LAW (1996).


18 See Plascencia et al., supra note 13, at 15–17.


authorized employment, including public-sector positions. Some states have moved to more rigorously enforce employment bars against state contractors and to better police against fraudulent work authorization documents.

The lack of permanent residence status is consequential. It is not economically effacing, however. Under some business visas, nonimmigrants are able to remain in the United States for extended stays (up to six years on the popular H-1B visa), during which they are often able to convert to permanent residence status. Many are in well-paying professions in which the lack of access to public benefits programs is immaterial. Nonimmigrants who are not employment authorized (such as those on student visas) often work anyway, with little fear of effective enforcement against them.

Even undocumented status can be economically surmounted. The sizeable undocumented population demonstrates that the benefits of presence outweigh the disadvantages of undocumented status. Many undocumented aliens are able to secure work, albeit at the lower end of the labor scale. Banks and other businesses accept Mexican and other foreign country identity cards for dealings with individuals. It is possible, as some cases have shown, to achieve economic success as an undocumented immigrant.

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30 See Plascencia et al., supra note 13, at 15–17.
32 See id. (estimating household income of undocumented immigrants at $36,000, compared with $50,000 average for those born in the United States).
34 See, e.g., Jose Antonio Vargas, My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant, N.Y. TIMES MAG., June 26, 2011, at MM22 (detailing his life as an undocumented immigrant who shared in winning a Pulitzer Prize while working as a reporter at the Washington Post). There has been recent attention drawn to undocumented immigrants enrolled in law school, and the California Supreme Court is considering a challenge to eligibility criteria for bar admissions based on legal immigration status. See Opening Brief of Applicant, In re Sergio C. Garcia on Admission (Cal. June 18, 2012) (No. S202512); see also Raquel Aldana et al., Raising the Bar: Law Schools and Legal Institutions Leading to Educate Undocumented Students, 44 ARIZ. ST. L.J. 5 (2012).
35 According to the Migration Policy Institute, an estimated 11.5% of undocumented aliens hold jobs in professional or managerial occupations. See Jennifer van Hook et al., Unauthorized
3. Public Benefits

The salience of citizenship status to public benefits eligibility also presents a somewhat muddled narrative. During the modern period, state governments have been restrained from discriminating against aliens in most respects by Equal Protection Clause constraints except where authorized by the federal government. Federal benefit schemes such as Social Security Disability Insurance, Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare discriminated on the basis of citizenship status only at the margins. (Significant federal social benefits programs date only from the mid-twentieth century, so it is difficult to establish a historical trajectory.) Federal benefits programs had placed permanent resident aliens on a par with citizens until the enactment of the major 1996 welfare reform bill.

The 1996 act rendered permanent resident aliens ineligible for a variety of federal benefits. Immigrants were made ineligible for Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for five years after entry into the United States, thereafter at state option. Aliens were excluded in most cases from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and food stamp programs.

Some benefits were restored and others were covered by the states. In 1997, SSI was restored to immigrants who had entered the United States prior to the enactment of welfare reform. Congress followed in 1998 to restore food stamp eligibility to pre-enactment immigrants in many cases. In 2002, food stamp eligibility was extended to immigrant children regardless of their date of entry and to all immigrants after


36 Graham v. Richardson, 403 U.S. 365 (1971), which first applied strict scrutiny in the context of alienage, struck down a state measure discriminating against legal permanent residents in the context of welfare benefits.


five years of U.S. residence. All but five states opted to extend TANF eligibility to immigrants after the five-year bar. As of 2009, seventeen states (including immigrant-heavy California and New York) had opted to extend TANF to immigrants during the five-year period after entry. Similarly, states have been relatively generous with Medicaid eligibility. Only seven states have refused to extend Medicaid benefits to immigrants after the five-year bar. One study found that immigrant Medicaid participation relative to native-born participation actually increased post-welfare reform. SSI continues to represent the major unfilled gap in immigrant social benefit coverage, with only a few states “filling in” for federal ineligibility.

Legal permanent residents have been and continue to be eligible for Medicare. They are included participants in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act for purposes of benefits as well as the obligations/penalty of the so-called mandate on par with citizens, as are other noncitizens who are legally present. Legal residents are also eligible for Social Security and other assorted federal programs, including Section 8 housing programs and Legal Services Corporation assistance.

Nonimmigrants and undocumented immigrants are ineligible for most forms of public benefits, falling outside the social safety nets at both the state and federal levels.

44 States opting to bar immigrants after the five-year bar include Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, and Texas. See Bitler & Hoynes, supra note 40, at 49.
45 See id. at 50 (listing Alabama, Mississippi, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming as barring Medicaid to legal immigrants in most cases).
46 See id. at 27; see also WENDY ZIMMERMAN & KAREN C. TUMLIN, PATCHWORK POLICIES: STATE ASSISTANCE FOR IMMIGRANTS UNDER WELFARE REFORM 3 (1999), available at http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/occ24.pdf (stating that “[d]espite fears of a race to the bottom with states providing as few benefits as possible,” states have provided many benefits to immigrants at state cost).
47 See Bitler & Hoynes, supra note 40, at 52.
51 See 26 U.S.C. § 5000A(d)(3) (2006); 8 U.S.C. § 1641 (2006) (defining “qualified alien” to include only permanent residents and asylees); see also SISKIN, supra note 51, at 4 (restricting most federal public benefits to “qualified aliens”).
54 See 45 C.F.R. § 1626.5 (2012).
With the new exception of the Affordable Care Act, nonimmigrants are ineligible for most public benefits. Undocumented immigrants are ineligible for most public benefits.

However, a partial safety net protects even the undocumented. Immigration status does not bar membership in important organs of civil society, including churches and ethnic community associations, some of which may extend assistance to members without regard to immigration status. A growing number of assistance centers help undocumented aliens assert their substantially equivalent rights under labor, housing, consumer, and other legal regimes. Undocumented immigrants are entitled to public elementary and secondary education. They benefit from the public infrastructure, including police and fire protection services. They are generally eligible for social services in kind as well as to federal aid for emergency medical care, which creates strong incentives among medical professionals to diagnose emergencies more liberally. Some states have made undocumented residents eligible for in-state tuition rates in public institutions of higher education.

To be sure, nonimmigrants and undocumented immigrants face substantial legal disabilities. But that still draws the line somewhere other than at the boundary of citizenship. A green card is a valuable commodity, entitling its holders to nearly equivalent economic opportunity. The additional economic advantage of citizenship itself is incremental.

57 See SISKIN, supra note 51, at 4.
59 Id. They have also been found not to enjoy rights under the Second Amendment. See United States v. Portillo-Munoz, 643 F.3d 437 (5th Cir. 2011) (upholding a conviction under federal law criminalizing possession of firearm by undocumented aliens). The Netherlands recently moved to ban the sale of marijuana to foreign visitors, a novel example of discrimination against noncitizens. See Anthony Faiolo, Dutch Court Upholds Ban on Foreign Tourists Buying Pot, WASH. POST, Apr. 28, 2012, at A6.
65 See supra Part I.A.3.
66 See supra notes 49–55 and accompanying text.
4. Political Participation

It is sometimes assumed that if there is any realm in which citizenship makes a
difference, it is that of politics.\(^67\) Noncitizens are constitutionally ineligible for federal
elective office.\(^68\) With few exceptions, noncitizens are barred from voting.\(^69\) From that,
it is not hard to construct an account in which they lack a political voice. But this ac-
count may fetishize the ballot and fail to consider other entry points that are open to
noncitizens. As the importance of individual votes diminishes and the weight of special
interests—many of which noncitizens comprise a part—has increased,\(^70\) noncitizens
are able to exert political influence notwithstanding their lack of formal membership
in the polity.

A limited number of jurisdictions allow legal resident aliens to vote in local
elections.\(^71\) The proportion of aliens able to cast votes is small. This has effectively
always been the case in the United States. Contemporary advocates assert a historical
tradition of alien voting.\(^72\) From the mid-nineteenth century into the early twentieth,
many states allowed aliens to vote even in federal elections.\(^73\) There was a time when
a substantial number of aliens could vote for president.\(^74\) However, alien suffrage was
typically restricted to declarant aliens, that is, aliens who had formally declared their
intention to become citizens.\(^75\) Although an anachronism today, declarant status was
once an important step in the naturalization process. The taking out of “first papers”
(after only three years’ residence, before the five required for naturalization itself)
served as a notice of a purpose to transfer national allegiance.\(^76\) Thus, alien suffrage
involved extending the franchise to citizens-in-the-making. It was not intended to
politically empower noncitizens as such.

\(^{67}\) See, e.g., Kevin R. Johnson, Los Olvidados: Images of the Immigrant, Political Power
\(^{68}\) U.S. CONST. art. I, § 2, cl. 2; U.S. CONST. art. I, § 3, cl. 3; U.S. CONST. art. II, § 1, cl. 5.
\(^{69}\) See Ron Hayduk, Democracy for All (2006).
\(^{70}\) See, e.g., John M. de Figueiredo & Elizabeth Garrett, Paying for Politics, 78 S. CAL. L.
\(^{71}\) See generally Hayduk, supra note 69, at 4–5.
\(^{72}\) See Debate Club: Should Non-Citizens Be Permitted to Vote?, LEGAL AFF. (May 10,
2005), http://www.legalaffairs.org/webexclusive/debateclub_ncv0505.msp (advocating non-
citizen voting in part based on historical experience).
\(^{73}\) See Gerald M. Rosberg, Aliens and Equal Protection: Why Not the Right to Vote?, 75
\(^{74}\) See Jamin B. Raskin, Legal Aliens, Local Citizens: The Historical, Constitutional and
\(^{75}\) See Rosberg, supra note 73, at 1098 (describing Wisconsin law).
\(^{76}\) See Hiroshi Motomura, Americans in Waiting 115–20 (2006) (recounting the history
of alien voting by declarant aliens).
Powerful normative arguments can be deployed in favor of noncitizen voting, especially at the local level. However, political voice is not a binary contingent on voting eligibility. Noncitizens enjoy other channels of political influence.

Noncitizens can bring direct political influence to bear through the channel of campaign contributions. Under federal law, permanent resident aliens are permitted to make campaign contributions in federal elections. Legislative attempts to eliminate noncitizen participation in campaign finance have failed.

As in the economic sphere, noncitizens with permanent resident status are advantaged relative to other territorially present aliens. Legal nonimmigrants are prohibited from campaign donations. In *Bluman v. Federal Election Commission*, a three-judge district court rejected a First Amendment challenge to the bar in the wake of the *Citizens United* decision. Undocumented aliens may not make contributions to candidates in federal elections.

However, nonimmigrants can put their money to work in other forms of political expression, including contributing to campaigns relating to ballot initiatives.

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79 See 2 U.S.C. § 441 (2006) (prohibiting contributions by foreign nationals, but excluding permanent resident aliens from the bar). Permanent resident aliens are also able to make campaign donations under state law in, for example, California, New York, and Texas. See, e.g., Cal. Gov’t Code § 85320(d) (West 2000).


83 800 F. Supp. 2d at 288.


Noncitizens can also belong to and work for political parties. There is no apparent bar on temporary foreign visitors volunteering for campaigns. Noncitizens are free to exercise other forms of political speech. Undocumented aliens have engaged in high-visibility political activism in recent years on the issue of immigration reform, notwithstanding risk of exposure to deportation.

Indirect levers are also available to all noncitizens in advancing political interests. Undocumented aliens count for purposes of congressional apportionment. Noncitizens are eligible for membership in most civil society entities, an important channel of political influence. Unions have advocated noncitizen agendas in recent years, especially on immigration issues, as have religious organizations. Immigrants who belong to minority ethnic and racial communities are likely to have interests advanced by advocacy groups. They also might have relatives who are citizens and can vote.

1989-32 (press “search” button) (distinguishing “candidate-related elections” from “issue-related ballot initiatives”).


88 See generally RALLYING FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS (Kim Voss & Irene Bloemraad eds., 2011).


90 See, e.g., Randy Shaw, Building the Labor-Clergy-Immigrant Alliance, in RALLYING FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS, supra note 88, at 82.


93 For example, the League of United Latin American Citizens, which has been active on immigration issues. See, e.g., Press Release, League of Latin American Citizens, LULAC
Both legal and undocumented noncitizens benefit from these levers. The result is a kind of virtual representation.

Finally, noncitizens enjoy powerful advocates in the form of their homeland governments. Under traditional international law, foreign governments had the right to exercise diplomatic protection on behalf of their citizens against mistreatment at the hands of another state. This practice is broadening. Foreign governments are interceding in the United States to assist with representation in the criminal law context (especially where the death penalty is implicated). They are also working to advance social interests. Mexico has been aggressive in this respect. With more than fifty consulates in the United States, Mexican government officials are working to advance the interests of Mexican nationals on a range of issues, from school benefits to healthcare to labor rights at all levels of government. This advocacy will work to equalize the position of noncitizens relative to citizens.

5. Locational Security

With respect to immigration control, citizenship status is consequential. Citizenship affords security of location. The immigration regime also advantages citizens relative to permanent resident aliens with respect to the admission of family members. However, this citizenship differential is less meaningful than it appears. Most permanent resident aliens are locationally secure. Congress has never provided for the deportation of aliens on the basis of nationality or status alone. Even in wartime, although so-called enemy aliens have been in some cases subject to internment, there has never been a mass deportation of aliens for reasons unrelated to individual conduct.


97 The Alien Enemy Act of 1798, ch. 66, 1 Stat. 577 (current version at 50 U.S.C. § 21 (2006)) allows the President to order the internment of aliens whose association with an American enemy presents a danger to the national security. See generally J. Gregory Sidak, War, Liberty, and Enemy Aliens, 67 N.Y.U. L. REV. 1402 (1992). The President has only
So long as they are not implicated in criminal activity, permanent resident aliens are entitled to remain in the United States. 98

Beyond the deportation regime, the immigration-related disabilities of permanent residence status are minimal. There are technical restrictions on a resident alien’s right to exit and re-enter the United States. 99 Prolonged absence may result in abandonment of residency status. 100 In practice, however, the presence requirement is under-enforced so long as an alien maintains a U.S. address, is absent for no longer than two years at a stretch, and complies with federal tax requirements. Permanent residents use the same lines as citizens upon inspection at U.S. airports. 101

The Immigration and Nationality Act 102 privileges citizens with respect to securing the entry of some family members. Where citizens can petition for the admission of parents, siblings, and married adult children, permanent resident aliens cannot. 103 Spouses and children of noncitizen residents are subject to annual quotas that in recent years have resulted in lengthy delays. 104 Visas for equivalent relatives of citizens are not capped. 105

Noncitizens without permanent residence status are more significantly disadvantaged in the immigration context. Locational status is not legally secure for nonimmigrants. With few exceptions, nonimmigrant admissions are temporary. Barring adjustment of status, nonimmigrants will be required to depart the United States. 106 Noncitizens who are out of status are subject to removal. 107 As a legal matter, the drawbacks of conditional or illegal presence are clear. As a practical matter, they may be manageable. Many who enter the United States legally as nonimmigrants subsequently acquire equities rendering them eligible for permanent resident status. In the

98 See 8 U.S.C. § 1227 (2006) (setting forth grounds for deportation); see also Schuck, supra note 37, at 15 (“[A]ctual risk of removal for non-criminal LPRs living in the United States has been vanishingly small.”).


100 See 8 C.F.R. § 211.1(a)(2) (2012) (deeming permanent residence status unexpired upon return from temporary absence of less than one year); see also Lateef v. Holder, 683 F.3d 275, 280 (6th Cir. 2012) (setting out grounds for abandonment of permanent residence status).


106 See id. § 1101(a)(15) (listing the classes of nonimmigrant visas); id. § 1255 (codifying process of status adjustment from nonimmigrant to person admitted for permanent residence).

107 See id. § 1227(a)(1)(c).
meantime, their presence is secure so long as they comply with the terms of the non-
imigrant admission.

For noncitizens present in violation of the immigration law, the inefficiency of
immigration enforcement reduces the risk of apprehension. As of 2010, almost two-
 thirds of the undocumented population is estimated to have been present for ten years
or more.108 Nationally, there are fewer than 8,000 investigations officers tasked with
the identification and removal of deportable aliens,109 approximately one agent for
every 1,500 undocumented aliens present in the United States. Many of those agents
are focused on cases involving criminal aliens and with the logistics of removing aliens
subject to final removal orders.110 Less than seven percent of investigative work hours
are directed at the interior apprehension of aliens who entered without inspection or
who are otherwise out of status.111 The Obama Administration recently adopted a major
new policy under which it will, on a categorical basis, not pursue the deportation of un-
documented aliens who arrived in the United States before the age of 16.112 The loca-
tional security of unauthorized immigrants is compromised; at best, it results in a kind
of locational limbo. But given the inefficiency and contestedness of immigration law
enforcement it is less compromised than formal analytics would suggest.

Even with respect to immigration rights and locational security, the differentials
among citizens, permanent resident aliens, and other aliens are better situated along a
scale than in a binary system. Were one to draw a line, it would not fall along the citizen/
noncitizen divide but would rather distinguish citizens and legal aliens, on the one
hand, and those out of status or with no basis for securing it, on the other. Citizenship
absolutely immunizes its holders from removal.113 But relative to permanent resident
status, it is more a kind of insurance policy, paying off for only a small number who as
permanent residents might be exposed to deportation for engaging in criminal activity.

108 See Paul Taylor et al., Unauthorized Immigrants: Length of Residency, Patterns of
109 See Department of Homeland Security Appropriations for 2012: Hearing Before the
Subcomm. on Homeland Security of the H. Comm. on Appropriations, 112th Cong. 16 (2011)
(statement of John Morton, Ass’t Sec’y of Immigration & Customs Enforcement), available
110 See ALISON SISKIN, CONGR. RESEARCH SERV., RL 33351, IMMIGRATION ENFORCE
111 See id. at 59.
112 See Memorandum from Janet Napolitano, Sec’y of Homeland Sec., to David V. Aguilar,
Acting Comm’r, U.S. Customs & Border Prot., Alejandro Mayorkas, Dir., U.S. Citizenship
& Immigration Services & John Morton, Dir., U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement,
Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion with Respect to Individuals Who Came to the United
-prosecutorial-discretion-individuals-who-came-to-us-as-children.pdf; see also Julia Preston
& John H. Cushman Jr., Obama to Permit Young Migrants to Remain in U.S., N.Y. TIMES,
Citizenship status continues to accrue substantial benefits for some holders. For others, there will be little advantage. The franchise is the only right accruing to all who acquire citizenship status. The legal capacity to vote has dignitary value, but in the range of other channels of political influence (all of which are available to legal permanent residents) it ranks low. Although noncitizens have long enjoyed equal civil rights, the lack of citizenship historically represented a significant obstacle to economic advancement.\textsuperscript{114} That is less true today.

\textbf{B. Obligations}

If the citizenship differential is limited in the context of rights, it is negligible in the context of obligations. Most obligations to the state, including taxes and military service, are based on residence rather than citizenship status. Jury duty is the only obligation extracted from citizens only. As with rights, the trajectory points to the declining salience of citizenship status.

Citizenship status previously played a key formal role in defining the class of men subject to mandatory military service.\textsuperscript{115} Since the founding, noncitizens have been eligible to serve in the U.S. armed forces.\textsuperscript{116} Declarant aliens were subject to conscription during the Civil War and World War I.\textsuperscript{117} However, other noncitizens were eligible for exemption from conscription.\textsuperscript{118}

Congress repealed the exemption possibility for aliens in 1951.\textsuperscript{119} Except as provided by treaty, permanent resident aliens and citizens have since been treated as equivalent for military service requirements. During the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, resident aliens were subject to the draft.\textsuperscript{120} Today, they are subject to selective service registration requirements.\textsuperscript{121} Only nonimmigrant aliens are exempted from compulsory military service.\textsuperscript{122} In any case, military conscription appears increasingly improbable. In the wake of the September 11th attacks, efforts to revive the draft have failed.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{114} See supra Part I.A.2.
\textsuperscript{116} See ANITA U. HATTIANGADI ET. AL., NON-CITIZENS IN TODAY’S MILITARY: FINAL REPORT 19, CNA (2005), available at http://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/D0011092.A2.pdf (“Non-citizens have served in the U.S. military for much of our country’s history, including the War of 1812, the Civil War, and both World Wars.”).
\textsuperscript{117} Id.
\textsuperscript{118} Exemption from conscription resulted in permanent disbarment from naturalization, pursuant to provisions that continue (superfluously) in force as part of the Immigration and Nationality Act. See 8 U.S.C. §§ 1425, 1426(a) (2006).
\textsuperscript{120} Roh & Upham, supra note 115, at 504.
\textsuperscript{122} Id. § 454(a).
\textsuperscript{123} See PEW RESEARCH CTR., WAR AND SACRIFICE IN THE POST–9/11 ERA (2011),
The formal abandonment of a citizenship criterion for conscription decouples a major traditional burden of citizenship from the status.\textsuperscript{124}

Tax obligations also attach on the basis of territorial presence. Territorially resident noncitizens, regardless of status, have always been obligated to pay income taxes.\textsuperscript{125} Noncitizens who are present in the United States for more than 183 days during a calendar year must file tax returns.\textsuperscript{126} Except in the case of diplomats and employees of international organizations, territorially present noncitizens are also subject to social security taxes, state and local taxes, and sales taxes.\textsuperscript{127} Noncitizens are entitled to foreign tax credits for tax payments made to nations with whom the United States has bilateral tax treaties, but so are citizens.\textsuperscript{128} The sole major citizenship differential in the tax context relates to the estate tax. Noncitizens are ineligible for the spousal exemption upon the death of a spouse, which in the case of high-net-worth individuals could result in increased and accelerated estate tax liabilities.\textsuperscript{129} In this respect, tax obligations fall more heavily on noncitizens than citizens (in other words, citizenship reduces the level of obligation).

Jury duty is the only differential obligation working from a citizenship criterion. Federal and state courts exclude noncitizens from jury pools.\textsuperscript{130} With some state-level exceptions for declarant aliens, that has historically been the case.\textsuperscript{131} The exclusion may be indefensible, especially insofar as the right to trial by peers is implicated. But

\textsuperscript{124} One could abandon one’s residency status with the aim of avoiding conscription. This option would increasingly be available to the many citizens who hold alternate nationality, who could renounce U.S. citizenship if faced with the draft. See Note, Aliens—Renunciation of Nationality Leaves Individual Stateless and Excludable as Any Alien, 46 TUL. L. REV. 984 (1972) (describing case of Thomas Glenn Jolley, who renounced his American citizenship to avoid the draft).


\textsuperscript{126} 26 U.S.C. § 871(a)(12) (2006). If an alien cannot show a “tax home” in a foreign country, she may be liable to file on the basis of presence of more than 183 days spread over a three-year period. Id.

\textsuperscript{127} See, e.g., 26 U.S.C. § 3121(b)(11), (15) (2006) (defining “employee” without regard to citizenship status); id. § 3101 (outlining federal insurance contributions for “employees”); see also, e.g., N.M. CODE R. § 3.3.7.2 (LexisNexis 2013); 34 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 3.225(a) (2013).


\textsuperscript{131} See generally id.
in any case, it does not create a significant gap between citizens and noncitizens for purposes of obligations to the state.

The thinness of citizenship-dependent obligations lowers the cost of naturalization for permanent resident aliens. On the benefits side, citizenship has in recent years retained some appeal as a defensive investment against the possibility of deportation and the deprivation of federal public benefits. That may have contributed to the spike in naturalization applications through the mid-1990s. But as anti-immigrant sentiments subside, the long-term value added in citizenship may not balance out $700 in naturalization costs.

II. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS BEYOND BORDERS

The discussion thus far has focused on rights and obligations as they apply within the territorial United States. Some rights and obligations have been determined on the basis of citizenship status regardless of location. Citizenship appears more consequential in an extraterritorial frame. However, when contextualized by other sources of rights and obligations, the differential is mitigated.

A. Rights

At one time, the most important benefit of U.S. citizenship took the form of diplomatic protection, under which citizens were entitled to use the U.S. government as a shield against mistreatment by foreign governments. Outside the territorial United States, this right presented a valuable commodity. The institution of diplomatic protection, as delimited by international law, predicated the dictum that all rights are national rights. Sovereigns were unconstrained in the treatment of their own nationals and stateless individuals but were circumscribed in their treatment of the nationals of other states. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a U.S. passport permitted an individual to invoke the government’s protection in the international context. With a short-lived, limited exception for a small number of declarant resident aliens, these rights were available to citizens alone.

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133 See U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Servs., Dep’t of Homeland Sec., Current Naturalization Fees, Form M-479 (Nov. 23, 2010) (listing naturalization fees of $680 per applicant).
134 See Edwin Borchard’s magisterial treatise, which uses diplomatic protection as a vehicle for addressing international law generally. See Edwin M. Borchard, The Diplomatic Protection of Citizens Abroad (1915).
135 Id. at 25–26.
137 See generally Craig Robertson, The Passport in America (2010).
138 See 3 John B. Moore, A Digest of International Law § 502 (1906) (describing practice under which declarant resident aliens were eligible for passports).
The citizenship criterion remains in place today for passport eligibility.\(^{139}\) The U.S. government will intercede more vigorously for its own citizens than for others. But the value of diplomatic protection has declined in the face of international human rights. Previously, diplomatic protection was an individual’s only recourse for constraining other sovereigns.\(^{140}\) Today, personhood, rather than citizenship status, presents a substantial restraint against mistreatment by governmental authorities. Moreover, U.S. authorities are increasingly willing to intercede on behalf of permanent resident aliens in some cases.\(^{141}\)

Relatedly, consular assistance abroad remains available exclusively to citizens.\(^{142}\) Citizens are enabled, for example, to turn to U.S. consular representatives abroad when detained by foreign authorities.\(^{143}\) However, budgetary pressures have diminished such consular efforts on behalf of U.S. citizens.\(^{144}\) U.S. citizens abroad have also turned to U.S. authorities for evacuation from dangerous conflict situations.\(^{145}\) But these evacuation operations have also been pared down.\(^{146}\) Many U.S. citizens in these situations have been better served by crisis insurance policies subscribed to by employers or universities.\(^{147}\) In other words, the U.S. government is the protector of last, rather than first, resort.\(^{148}\) A U.S. passport still provides value to its holder abroad. As a correlate

\(^{139}\) See 22 C.F.R. § 51.2(a) (2012) (“A passport may be issued only to a U.S. national.”).

\(^{140}\) See Borchard, supra note 134.


\(^{143}\) See 22 C.F.R. § 71.1 (2012).

\(^{144}\) See, e.g., Mary Jordan, Unknown and Alone in Mexico, WASH. POST, Aug. 9, 2003, at A1 (reporting consular inattention to Americans in Mexican prisons).

\(^{145}\) See Exec. Order No. 12656, sec. 1301(f), 3 C.F.R. 585 (1988) (giving lead responsibility to Department of State for protection and evacuation of U.S. citizens and nationals abroad and safeguarding their property abroad).


\(^{147}\) Id. (comparing evacuations from the conflict situation in Lebanon in 2006 undertaken by private firms against those undertaken by U.S. government).

\(^{148}\) It seems increasingly plausible to situate assistance to citizens in the context of an emerging “responsibility to protect” regardless of citizenship status. See U.N. Secretary-General, Implementing the Responsibility to Protect, U.N. Doc. A/63/677 (Jan. 12, 2009). Under this doctrine (which does not yet represent hard international law), governments have an obligation to protect persons in other countries against humanitarian disasters where they have the
to locational security, U.S. citizens outside the United States have an absolute right of reentry. But in other respects the value has degraded.

Citizens abroad have also enjoyed formal protection against mistreatment by the U.S. government, rights not always extended to noncitizens. Citizens are entitled to constitutional protections against U.S. government action regardless of their location where nonresident noncitizens are entitled to few. In *Reid v. Covert*, the Supreme Court in effect established the portability of the Bill of Rights for citizens. In *United States v. Verdugo-Urquidez*, by contrast, the Court held that nonresident noncitizens do not enjoy a Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable searches and seizures undertaken abroad by American law enforcement authorities. The doctrine pointed to a putative binary in which citizens are extended all rights, noncitizens none.

However, the formal differential may be mitigated through the application of other sources of protection. *Verdugo-Urquidez* bracketed the applicability of constitutional rights to permanent resident aliens temporarily outside the United States. Even with respect to others (noncitizen, nonpermanent residents), U.S. law enforcement will exploit the nonapplicability of rights only where it can be confident that they are in fact dealing with nonresident noncitizens. Many other countries constrain law enforcement along the lines of the Fourth Amendment. In most cases, U.S. authorities will have to play by these rules when participating in enforcement operations in those countries. Protection against arbitrary investigative activity is an emerging entitlement under capacity to do so. *Id.* For present purposes, that would mean that a noncitizen nonresident would enjoy a right to assistance from the U.S. government notwithstanding the absence of any preexisting connection.

Nguyen v. INS, 533 U.S. 53, 67 (2001) (acknowledging that citizens have an absolute right to reenter the United States). This right has been compromised in practice where U.S. citizens seeking to return from abroad have found themselves on “no fly” lists barring air travel. See, e.g., Scott Shane, *An American Abroad May Remain So Until He’s Off the No-Fly List*, N.Y. TIMES, June 16, 2010, at A6 (reporting on a 26-year-old Muslim-American man, who is on the “no-fly list,” preventing him from returning from Yemen to Virginia).

*Id.* (holding that a Sixth Amendment right to trial by jury applies in U.S. prosecution of a servicemember’s spouse abroad); see also 2 RESTATEMENT (THIRD) OF FOREIGN RELATIONS LAW OF THE UNITED STATES § 721 cmt. b. (1987).


See *Verdugo-Urquidez*, 494 U.S. at 261.

*See generally HUMAN RIGHTS IN CRIMINAL PROCEDURE* (John A. Andrews ed., 1982).

international law. Nonresident noncitizens who do not enjoy Fourth Amendment coverage may get the same protection from other bodies of law, ones that constrain U.S. enforcement activities on foreign soil. Meanwhile, the courts have found other constitutional rights, including the Fifth Amendment, to extend to noncitizens outside of the United States.

Similarly, citizenship represents added value, of an incremental nature, in the context of post-9/11 extraterritorial enforcement against terrorism. The United States has undertaken the targeted killing of U.S. citizens located abroad who are suspected of al-Qaeda membership and not subject to apprehension. Citizenship has afforded no judicial process to those individuals, although it does appear to trigger higher levels of intra-executive branch scrutiny. Justice Kennedy’s opinion in *Boumediene v. Bush* included citizenship status as a factor in considering extraterritorial application of habeas corpus, but the noncitizen detainee petitioner in that case was extended the writ nonetheless. Citizens are insulated from detention at Guantánamo and from prosecution before military commissions. In that respect, citizenship affords protection to its holders relative to noncitizens. However, both Guantánamo and the military commissions may represent legacy practices to be wound down rather than ramped up. They are being put to work only with respect to individuals already in the system. If so, this differential may lose salience. Yaser Hamdi may be the only individual clearly to benefit from his citizenship in this context.

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163 *Id.* at 2253.


166 Hamdi was detained at Guantánamo prior to the discovery of his citizenship status, at which point he was relocated to a military brig in the United States. See *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld*, 542 U.S. 507, 510 (2004). The U.S. government nonetheless sought to detain him there without
Public benefits, meanwhile, remain keyed to territorial presence in a way that does not favor nonresident citizens over nonresident noncitizens. As a general matter, U.S. citizens resident outside the United States are ineligible for such benefits as Medicare, SSI, food stamps, and TANF. On the other hand, benefits on an individualized pay-in basis, such as Social Security, are not always contingent on continued residence and are not citizenship contingent.

Finally, even political rights can be plotted in scalar terms. Citizens resident abroad, including those holding multiple nationalities, are guaranteed the right to vote in federal elections. External citizen voting was centered by the 2000 presidential election. As described above, permanent resident aliens do not enjoy the franchise but are permitted to give money. Although they must maintain legal residence in the United States by way of retaining permanent residence status, the status is consistent with maintaining significant links to other states, including citizenship and property ownership. Nonresident noncitizens can neither vote nor give money. But that...
does not translate into a lack of political influence. Foreign citizens can retain lobbying firms to make their case to legislative and other officials.178 Through organizational membership, both corporate and NGO, they can indirectly affect U.S. decisionmaking.

B. Obligations

With respect to extraterritorial obligations, there are two respects in which citizenship makes a difference. First, some laws apply extraterritorially to citizens, the so-called nationality basis for jurisdiction under international law.179 For example, citizens are subject to criminal prosecution for certain activities relating to sex tourism outside the United States.180 However, the number of these statutes is small, and most cover extreme conduct.181 Although the citizen located outside the United States has the formal obligation to comply with these statutes, the burden is insignificant.182

Much more significant are tax obligations that follow U.S. citizens to residence beyond the territorial United States. U.S. citizens abroad must file federal income tax returns.183 In past years, this requirement has been nontrivial but not onerous. In most cases, U.S. citizens have been able to credit tax payments made in their country of residence against U.S. federal income tax obligations, with the result that tax due is reduced or eliminated.184 For high-net-worth individuals, the estate tax presented a major potential liability contingent on citizenship status.185 In most cases, however, tax filing requirements appear not to have provoked major resistance among U.S. citizens outside the United States.


181 See Meyer, supra note 179, at 182–83 (listing laws applying extraterritorially to U.S. persons only, involving, for instance, the use of chemical or biological weapons).

182 See id.


The adoption of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) has increased the burden substantially. The law does not change the effective tax rate paid by U.S. citizens abroad. However, it imposes additional filing requirements for foreign account holders. It also imposes additional requirements for financial institutions hosting accounts owned by U.S. citizens. The measures were aimed at offshore accounts held by persons resident in the United States, but by their terms also apply to U.S. citizens residing abroad. The IRS appears poised to pursue underreported income by nonresident citizens. FATCA has provoked a backlash among U.S. citizens abroad. The new approach to extraterritorial tax collection represents a significant obligation not imposed on noncitizen, nonpermanent residents outside the United States, which is a high citizenship differential.

It is not clear that the FATCA regime is sustainable. The United States is the only country in the world (other than Eritrea) that imposes taxes on external citizens. The regime is opposed not just by individual taxpayers but also by powerful financial institutions. Other governments are negotiating FATCA enforcement regimes with U.S. authorities, but some have balked, and the bilateral infrastructure remains fragile. Many U.S. citizens outside of the United States will evade enforcement.

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187 See Morse, supra note 186, at 700–01.
188 See U.S. DEP’T OF TREASURY, supra note 125.
189 Id.
190 See Morse, supra note 186, at 700–01.
197 See, e.g., David Jolly & David Knowlton, Law to Find Tax Evaders Denounced, N.Y. TIMES, Dec. 27, 2011, at B1 (stating that the law may be financially burdensome on foreign countries).
198 The complicated law may also result in accidental non-compliance. See id.
The United States has no inventory of citizens located outside of the United States; in many cases, the IRS will have difficulty identifying covered individuals.

Even if FATCA survives, it may supply evidence that U.S. citizenship cannot bear the weight of differential obligations. Pre-FATCA, the cost of retaining U.S. citizenship was low. Now that FATCA has raised the price, an increasing number of individuals located outside the United States are renouncing their U.S. citizenship. This is the mirror image of the cost-benefit rationale noted above with respect to naturalization. The calculation highlights the minimal advantages of external citizenship. If the maintenance of citizenship outside the United States implicated high differential benefits, high differential obligations could be imposed without provoking individual exit.

**CONCLUSION: REVERSING CONVERGENCE?**

This Essay has described the converging position of citizens and noncitizens with respect to rights and obligations. A trope of public discourse, “the rights and obligations of citizenship” has become a largely empty proposition. The diminishing differential between citizens and noncitizens suggests that citizenship is a less robust form of association. If citizenship does not meaningfully coincide with actual community, it is unlikely to be determinative of rights and duties.

Nor are strategies for revaluing citizenship likely to work. Linda Bosniak powerfully proposes the normative concept of “the citizenship of aliens,” in which citizenship’s equality norm is reborn through territorial rather than status definition. The boundaries of citizenship are in effect redrawn to include not just formal citizens but others also territorially present. The redrawing is accomplished not through the extension of citizenship status itself (as other liberal theorists have proposed), but through the extension of rights and elimination of obligations attaching to the status. This framing would sanctify the legal grouping of resident aliens with citizens, as so much of the law already does.

The “citizenship of aliens” is unlikely to reinscribe citizenship solidarities. The paradox of the juxtaposition cancels out any expressive value in the status; citizenship status loses its place as a focal point. This difficulty is compounded insofar as the concept encompasses undocumented immigrants. Territorial delimitation of community, moreover, no longer works especially well in an era of circular and return migration.


202 See RUTH RUBIO-MARÍN, IMMIGRATION AS A DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE (2000) (proposing that citizenship automatically be extended to immigrants upon ten years of residence).

203 This challenges Ayelet Shachar’s similar conception of *jus nexi* basis for citizenship, in which territorial presence and the social connection putatively associated with it becomes
Presence does not correlate with community (nor does absence preclude it). Hence the sort of bleeding over boundaries as well as citizenship status described above.

More directly, the differential in rights and obligations could be restored with the object of restoring citizenship itself. Making citizenship legally more consequential, it might be supposed, would intensify citizenship solidarities. The more citizenship gets you and the more it asks of you, the more meaningful it will be. This is the premise of political invocations of the status; citizenship is important precisely because it requires mutual sacrifice at the same time that it extends special benefits to its holders.

But this strategy reverses the causation. Citizenship is able to sustain a meaningful differential (among citizens relative to the rest of the world) in line with social solidarities on the ground. The consequentiality of citizenship status more reflects those solidarities than manufactures them. At the margins, the rights/obligations differential might enhance the sense of community felt among members on a club model. But community is unlikely to be shored up through citizenship law.