

# Identity Through the Passport: Negotiating Simultaneous Belonging to the Nation-State and Cosmopolitan World Society

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In 1920 and 1926 the League of Nation's "passport regime" met to discuss the existence of the modern passport. Before these dates the passport did not have a unified function as a document; it had a different process and appearance depending on the nation-state of issuance. With the end of WWI, a period in which nations were connected on a grand scale through conflict, there was a push to standardize travel. Countries saw a need to increase the safety measures that existed in a realm beyond the jurisdiction of the nation-state (Robertson, 2010). From this beginning moment of standardization, the passport has evolved to be an accepted normal part of trans-national movement. It is recognizably the same document regardless of the issuing nation-state, yet the different issuing countries are still easily distinguishable as one waits in airport customs lines. This reality is an illustration of the complex tension contained within the passport. The document itself represents the push and pull between the two competing forces that negotiate power and control in the current globalized world, the nation-state and the cosmopolitan global existence. The passport allows for a more global citizen through its facilitation of movement and international governance while simultaneously reinforcing nation-state boundaries both ideologically and physically. This illustrates the tension between nation-state identity and global belonging within the context of contemporary accelerated globalization.

## International Regulation: The Cosmopolitan Reality of the Passport

The international regulation of the passport represents the cosmopolitan ideal of the global citizen by surpassing nation-state powers in creating a "free traveler." Before contemporary accelerated globalization, there was an assumption that "individuals are born into one specific nation-state,

that they will remain in their nation-state of birth, and that that one nation-state will persist as a primary course of their identity over a lifetime" (Croucher, 2009). In contrast, the cosmopolitan idea of a citizen is one where people exist as citizens of the world. Their identity is not defined by one single nation-state or their belonging to that particular entity because "compression of space and time" allowed by globalization (Croucher, 2009). This sense of belonging to the global community is partially shaped by the physical movement across these nation-state border. This passage is not possible without the passport. The document itself facilitates the physical movement across border lines, reflecting the idea of the world citizen in its basic purpose. There is no longer such a stringent tie to the nation state because the traveler can be influenced by his/her identity as a global citizen that he/she encapsulates through using the passport.

This global citizen ideal can also be seen in the international regulation of the document. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a UN specialized agency, regulates the world-wide use of the passport. The ICAO set the format standards that every country must adhere to for the machine readable passports. The ICAO published the first version of Doc 9303 in 1980 which laid out the initial standard format of the machine readable passport system. The document is updated frequently and is currently in its 7<sup>th</sup> edition as new technological advances call for new regulation of the format (International Civil Aviation Organization, 2015). Currently, the aesthetics of the outside of the passport are specified by the ICAO in order to standardize the appearance of the document to make it internationally recognizable. The document must be uniform in size so that it is sure to match the machines used to read the passport around the world (Lloyd, 2003). All passport covers must be green, blue, red or black (though the shade of the color may vary depending on country choice) and must display the country name on the front. The standard for passports is to also include the seal of the country on the cover page (Arton Capital, 2016). **(Figure 1)**

In addition to the cover of the passport the ICAO dictates the content of one of the interior pages of the document. The identification page of every passport must adhere to ICAO standards if it is expected to be used to cross borders. The ICAO

dictates both the information contained and its placement on the page as depicted in *Figure 2*. (**Figure 2**) This standard format allows for technology to facilitate the reading of the passport because pages can be scanned by a machine. It also is helpful when for manual readings by insuring a decrease in human error because the information is all contained in the same place regardless of the country of the document holder (Lloyd, 2003). Along with the ease of logistic created by this standardization, this process also speaks to the ideal of surpassing nation-state lines that the passport represents. The standards of the passport are dictated by the international body, a body that decides the format regardless of the particular nation-state. The nation-state autonomy is diminished in this document format and the decision of the ICAO dictates how the nation-state will act.

The ICAO further dictates their role in relation to the nation-state with the passport in Doc 9030:

“These specifications are not intended to be a standard for national identity documents. However, a State whose identity documents are recognized by other States as valid travel documents shall design its identity documents such that they conform to the specification of Doc 9303-3 and Doc 9303-4, Doc 9303-5 or Doc 9303-6” (International Civil Aviation Organization, 2015).

This excerpt shows the ICAO acknowledging that the nation-state retains their own power to choose how national identity documents are arranged. However, the ICAO asserts their dominance when it comes to crossing borders. When national documents are used in this manner, they must be to the standard of the ICAO in order for other countries to see the document as relevant. The ICAO control is a global homogenization of the document. There is a push to create a more efficient and overall standardized system to facilitate travel in a more streamlined manner. The homogenization surpasses the realm of the nation-state, calling for an overarching international body to be the head of power. It is this international standardization, along with the facilitation of movement, that exemplifies the global citizen idea within the document.

## **Nation-State Regulation: Reinforcing Borders in the Passport**

Though the idea of the cosmopolitan world citizen is facilitated through the passport, there is a simultaneous assertion of nation-state identity in the document. There is a symbolic assertion of cultural distinction through imagery employed as the background of the Visa pages of each country's document. The Visa pages of the passport are not regulated by the ICAO, leaving the nation-state as the authority to choose the design that appears on the bulk of the inside of the document. Some of the imagery is employed for safety features such as holographic images while some solely serves an aesthetic purpose (Flemming, 2014). Both the images employed for safety purposes and those just for decoration illustrate national ideals that both the traveler and the country the traveler is entering are affected by while using the document. This assertion of ideological philosophies of the nation-state is working to reshape the sense of belonging and loyalty to the state entity. The analysis of multiple countries' passports illustrates this push back displayed on the cosmopolitan document. It is through this analysis that one can understand the nation-state side of the dual powers portrayed in the passport.

The American passport visa pages consist of placed based imagery that reflects basic ideological roots of the nation. Most of the imagery has a focus on the American west, while attempting to still define “everyone's America” by not specifying one race, ethnicity, or state. Each of the spreads are paired with a quote that gives context to how the image should be interpreted within a national identity context (Flemming, 2014). One of the spreads contains an image of the Statue of Liberty. It is paired with a quote by Anna Julia Cooper: “The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or sect, a party or class- it is the cause of humankind, the very birthright of humanity” (*United States Passport*, 2005). This particular page situates America as a nation-state whose ideological core value is liberty. This asserts the United States' ownership of the values of freedom and liberty on an international scale because of the international use of the document. Each page of the American document is much like the page with the Statue of Liberty, asserting American cultural ideals like cowboys out

west and the transnational railroad within an international context (*United States Passport*, 2005). William Flemming asserts that the imagery on the American passport is “the development of state agency and the way in which governmental actors, through the construction of the significant documents of state such as the passport, control borders and distinguish citizens from extra-nationals” (2014) This rebuilding of borders works with the imagery to reinforce the ideological boundaries of the nation, expressing its exceptionalism while asserting that cultural differentialism still exists in this globalized world of border crossing.

The Irish passport, Filipino passport, and Chinese passport all employ similar place based imagery on their visa pages to assert their national identity in the crossing of borders. Both the Irish passport and the Filipino passport include quotations; the Irish passport has a Gaelic song weaved throughout the pages (IrishCentral Staff Writers, 2013) and the Filipino passport has part of the national anthem on each page. The use of text in both of these passports helps to direct the reading of the images to coincide with the ideological basis of the nation. For the Philippines, the tourist destinations depicted in the imagery are directly linked to the ideological roots of the country through the national anthem (Cheng, 2015). For the Irish passport, the natural landscapes that are unique to the nation are tied to the Gaelic roots of the country through the song lyrics, harkening to the essence of the nation-state identity. The Chinese passport does not include words, however each page has a map that shows the province from which the background imagery is taken (*People’s Republic of China Passport*, 2012). These maps can be read in the same way that the quotations are used in the other passports; they inform the viewers’ interpretation so that the ideological representation of the state is based on the representation of the different provinces. Much like the U.S. passport, these countries react to the global citizen idea represented by the passport by creating place based national identity through the national scenes depicted on the visa pages.

Other countries utilize imagery that is not so heavily based in geography but still represents ideological bases of the nation-state identities. Britain’s pages are decorated with British

inventions ranging from art to infrastructure, highlighting William Shakespeare’s work and the creation of the London tube (United Kingdom Government, 2015). The nation defines itself not as much on the landscape and place of its identity but rather on its contribution to the advancement of world society. The Finish passport contains the symbol of a moose on every page. The document can be used as a flip book to make the moose appear to be walking in the bottom corner of the document (Zoomin.TV World News, 2013). The nation defines itself by an animal closely associated with the nation while taking on a playful tone with the flip book. The Netherlands passport focuses on a landscape, but there is only one included instead of an array of landscapes like the aforementioned collections. The landscape is a contemporary rendition a mountainous horizon, depicting a place based identity but in an abstracted artistic form (Norwegian Landscapes, n.d.). These passports are not navigating national identity based on place, but rather navigate the ideological definition of their nation based on other symbols of national identity. Regardless of the theme utilized to represent the nation-state, the country is enacting its own agency in defining its distinct cultural identity.

Not all countries use such extensive imagery as the ones listed above. However, the importance of these select passports is that the desire to differentiate the cultural identity for the nation-state is not isolated to only one nation. The selective use of this imagery is the country’s action in defining the most important parts of their national identity; the country is given the agency in the imagery portion of the passport. There is imagery on the passport to remind the traveler that they are in fact not “denationalized” as an individual traveling across borders (Salter, 2006). They have a nation that they belong to and that is defined through national imagery on the passport. As the nation-state’s identity is challenged with a globalized society, they reassert their ideological base values on the very document that allows for the identity to become muddled. Within the context of shrinking space in contemporary accelerated globalization, the nation-state symbolically reinforces its national identity through these images, dictating how the holder’s sense of identity is still within the realm of the nation-state and not outside as a global citizen.

## **Beyond the Symbolic Cultural Differentialism of the Passport**

The power and persistence of nation-state identity is not only defined symbolically through the images on the passport, it is also expressed through the actual use of the document. Not all passports are created equal and the nation-state identity is a large factor in dictating these unequal relationships. Visa rankings are the most quantitative measure of this inequality based on nation-state identities. There are three different categories for visa entrance into other countries: visa free, purchasing a visa upon arrival, or purchasing a visa prior to traveling. The visa free scores given to passports are numerical scores based on how many countries a traveler may enter without having to buy a visa. Travelers can cross borders into other states without additional documentation other than their passport itself. The Visa free score depends on the nation issuing the passport and if that nation is freely accepted to cross borders or not (Arton Capital, 2016). The identity of the nation-state is what dictates these inter-country relationships and regulates the degree to which the individual can move.

Germany has the highest ranked passport with 158 countries that can be entered without a Visa with a German passport. The top 15 rankings consist mostly of Western countries, including European, North American countries, and Australia and New Zealand. Scattered within these rankings are some Asian countries like Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore. The U.S. is ranked #4 at a visa free score of 155 along with Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan, Singapore, Denmark, and Italy. Once the rankings get to #16 and have a visa free score of 140, South American countries, Caribbean and some Middle Eastern countries are thrown into the mix. Many African countries fall in the lower half of Visa free rankings and the bottom of the list is made up of mostly Middle Eastern and African Countries. China also falls in this lower bracket with a ranking of 69 with only 56 Visa free entrances, coinciding with its communist isolationist policy. Syria and Somalia are ranked 90 with only 31 countries to be entered Visa free. Iraq is ranked 91 with 29 Visa free country entrances. Pakistan is at 92 with only 27 visa free entries. Afghanistan rounds out the list at a rank of 93 and

only 24 countries that can be entered Visa free (Arton Capital, 2016). (**Figure 3**)

The existence of this global citizen idea that allows one to freely travel across borders is counteracted with these Visa Free rankings that are based upon nation-state identities. The Visa free rankings reflect the international order of the world; the countries that dominate foreign policy and worldly hegemony are the top-ranking countries. The passport itself is moderated by entity under the UN, an organization that is heavily skewed toward Western ideals and favors those countries that have the high visa free rankings. The ability for a citizen to freely travel from one place to the other depends on the nation-state identity and how much power that nation-state possesses on a global scale. These power rankings are the counterparts to the symbolic building of the nation-state through the imagery on the passport. Here, the nation-state identity goes beyond the symbolic realm by dictating the ability of people to participate in movement across borders. As borders are crossed with the passport, they are simultaneously reinforced because the border lines demonstrate this inequality that is seen in the passport rankings. The nation-state enforces its identity and power by making the borders relevant even in their crossing. There is a distinct cultural identity to each nation-state that dictates these power interactions within the Visa scores.

### **What Does This Say?**

Contemporary accelerated globalization has led to a rapid rate of connection that creates a tension between the identity of the nation-state and the greater world community that is unique from before this shift (Roshwald, 2015). Is one a member of his/her nation-state community or does he/she surpass this identity to belong to a global community? Beck and Levy assert that cosmopolitanism and the nation-state are not the antithesis of each other, but rather “Cosmopolitanism does not negate nationalism; national attachments are potential mediators between the individual and cosmopolitan horizons along which new identifications unfold” (2013). Though the international realm and the nation-state compete for power in the global structure, one cannot exist without the other. The homogenized international component does not erase the particular that is found in the nation-state but the



two exist simultaneously. The passport is an illustration of the horizon along which new identifications unfold by demonstrating cultural distinction as it relates to globality with the constant push and pull between the two entities.

In this illustration there is a compromise instead of a rigid competition between the two structures. The international society facilitated through crossing borders with the passport depends on the nation-state issuing the document. The nation-state issues the document knowing that this allows for the citizen to travel, in turn possibly constructing his/her own identity from influences outside of the nation-state. There is a simultaneous existence of both the homogenized global world without borders and the very particular nation-state where borders stay in place. The passport does not show them mixing, but rather shows the ability for each of them to coexist while staying distinct within the same document. This tension appears throughout, as each entity asserts control in the different portions of the document. This reflects the negotiation of power between the nation-state and the international realm as the two overarching organizations compete for influence in the current moment.

This simultaneous existence that dictates the negotiation of power also affects how the individual constructs identity. The nation-state is still a strong entity that defines the individual's sense of belonging. However, through travel the individual also can identify as a global citizen and possibly have a cosmopolitan conception of society. Both forces are in play as the individual forms his/her identity; the amount that these forces impact the traveler differs based on the amount of privilege and influence of the nation-state to which he/she belongs. The passport allows people to make borders irrelevant in some cases but also is the regulatory agent that stops people from being able to cross when they do not possess as much privilege. This phenomenon illustrates the complexity of understanding of the self and overall global order that arises from the confluence of these power structures. The individual cannot belong fully to just the global society or the nation-state, rather the individual learns to exist in the space where these distinct identities interact. The same negotiation of distinct structures in world powers is

reflected within the individual and his/her sense of belonging in the globalized moment.

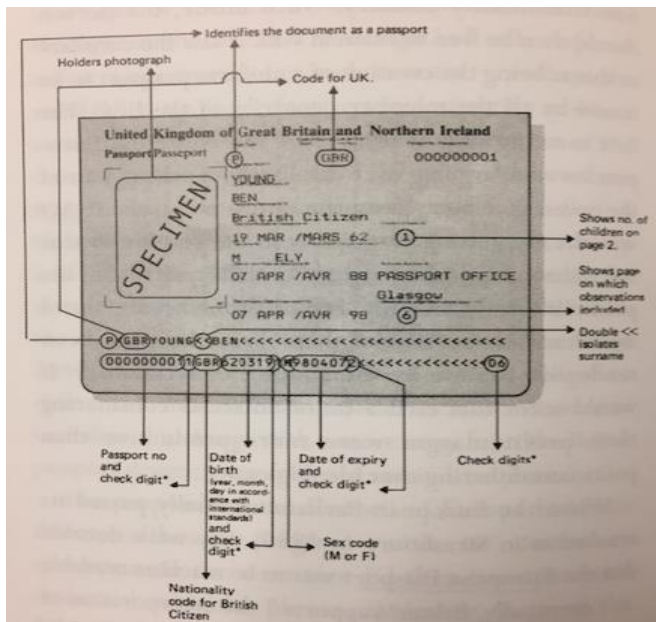
These complex interactions of the nation-state, the global society, and the individual converge in the passport. The document allows for the individual to simultaneously cross borders while reinforcing the importance of those borders. Therefore, the passport is not only a political document used to facilitate movement, it is also a document that can be read to understand cultural particularism in this international context. This confluence of powers in this cultural document can then be used to interpret the broader construction of globalized society where interrelated powers push and pull against each other. Globalization has led to this shrinking of time and space, forcing the global and national to convene in spaces like the passport. It is the interpretation of these power structures that makes the passport such a useful document to articulate how globalization is pushing cultural change. Globalization has created a space where the nation-state and global society exist simultaneous and distinctly to impact both the global order of power and ability for the individual to define his/her identity. Through this analysis, one can better understand the place he/she holds in relation to the competing power structures of the continuously globalized modern society.

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*Figure 1:* This shows the homogenized standard of the passport, displaying passports from all different countries. The colors are different but the document holds a standard format regardless of the country (Arton Capital, 2016).



*Figure 2: This is the standard format of the identification page of the passport. The page includes the identification of the holder: name, citizenship, birthdate. It also includes the logistics of the individual's passport: when the document was issued, when it expires, the number of the particular document. A photo of the holder is contained in order to insure the identity of the traveler matches the citizen the passport is issued to (Lloyd, 2003).*



*Figure 3: This map illustrates the range of power that countries hold based on the visa free scores. (Arton Capital, 2016)*

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