



Book review of Harpaz,
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BOOK REVIEW

MARIANNA BETTI 

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of Yossi Harpaz's recently published book on comparative research in four different countries about dynamics of acquisition of dual citizenship.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Marianna Betti

Assistant Professor,
Department of Social
Anthropology, University of
Bergen, Norway

Marianna.betti@uib.no

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Yossi Harpaz's newest book *Citizenship 2.0: Dual Nationality as a Global Asset* takes the reader to a new level of analysis of latest dynamics of acquisition of dual citizenship. Through an attentive comparative analysis of statistical data collected from relatively recent demographic datasets, and through interviews with selected dual citizenship holders, Harpaz depicts a convincing argument for the reasons behind requesting (and obtaining) another 'compensatory citizenship' (p. 18). He has researched three specific groups: middle-class Mexicans mostly residing near the US-Mexico border, ethnic Hungarians residing in Bosnia and Israelis with ancestry connection to western European countries. The choice of these groups is explained in terms of picking non-immigrants outside the West, meaning citizens of 'second' tier countries 'strategically' applying to citizenship to 'first' tier countries, and the comparison works in fact very well.

The main argument of the book focuses on what drives these individuals to seek a first-tier country citizenship as a 'strategy' for global upward mobility. The reasons, methods and the outcomes of seeking and obtaining dual citizenship may differ, but the intrinsic unequal value of citizenship around the world shape the attitudes of Mexicans, Serbians and Israelis alike. Harpaz, through figures and sources collected from global demographic statistics, illustrates in Chapter 2 the global hierarchy of citizenship that allows travelling, studying, working abroad and broadening one's own and one's family horizons and possibilities, taken as 'the point of departure and use [...] to explain variation in the way dual citizenship is understood and used' (p. 15). In a way, in order to sustain his argument of 'strategic' application to dual citizenship, the author seeks to move beyond, for instance, the 'sentimental approach' (pp. 17–19), which has been used by prominent scholars such as Benedict Anderson (1998), and rather take a functional approach instead. Having established that a 'stratified global order' does exist, this functional approach makes sense, and the selected cases in the book seem to strongly support it. Chapter 2 also serves to lay the political, historical and legislative contexts to better explain recent dual citizenship trends. Each following chapter again provides an introduction, which is valuable for greater understanding of the different cases and analyses.

The first case, in Chapter 3, is from the Serbian region of Vojvodina where since 2011 there has been a rising demand for acquisition of Hungarian citizenship and consequential emigration to the EU. Coupled with an often left unchecked proof of Hungarian ancestry, the granting of Hungarian citizenship requires only a basic knowledge of the Hungarian language. In fact, Harpaz describes that the Hungarian State is eager to recruit new citizens (p. 43) especially among the Hungarian minorities residing in areas ceded after World War II. Given the practice of granting of citizenship on the basis of ethnicity is often criticized in Europe with respect to recent political conflicts, Hungary makes sure not to evidently differentiate because of ethnicity, therefore, the language requirement indirectly fulfills this ethnolinguistic distinction. This makes it easier for other groups, not only the ethnic Hungarian minorities but also ethnic Serbs, for example, may be able to 'fabricate' a connection to Hungary by learning the language, and thereafter obtain Hungarian citizenship. Through Hungarian citizenship, Serbs rejoin 'the ranks of "normal" Europeans' (p. 66) where jobs are better paid, higher education standards higher and life in general is perceived as better and there is a greater sense of 'belonging' instead of humiliation by being left out during the post-communist transition (pp. 56–59).

The second case, in Chapter 4, relates to middle-class Mexicans residing near the US-Mexican border, who facilitate acquisition of US citizenship through cross-border births to guarantee citizenship to their children on the basis of *jus soli*. Differently

from the Hungarian citizenship for Serbians, the US citizenship for these Mexicans is perceived more as a gift from parents to children than as an asset. This is an expensive strategy that only Mexican elites can afford, but it is seen as a future investment not only for their children who will be able to get the opportunity to study and work in the US, but also for the parents themselves who could relocate there in case the security situation in Mexico deteriorated in the future (p. 88). This provides a very interesting new perspective, Harpaz details how these individuals identify themselves: consumers and not migrants. 'Giving birth in the US is yet another form of cross-border consumption' (p. 82). In fact, they do contribute to the American and Mexican economies: by being frequent tourists in the US and by enriching the 'cultural capital' of the future of Mexican elite working class.

The last case is that of Israel described in Chapter 5. Here, Harpaz shows that no nostalgia nor real necessity is motivating thousands of *Ashkenazim* – Israelis of European origins – apply citizenship in Germany, Poland, Hungary and Romania every year. Even though historically, the statistical trends might show a response to security events in Israel and to the expansion of the EU, these individuals seem to have little or no intention to move into these countries, some of which still feel inimical and foreign. Citizenship is obtained on the basis of ancestry; however, there is no material, cultural, emotional or linguistic connection to these countries. This second citizenship is often referred to as 'citizenship of Europe', and it is viewed as an 'item of prestige' and as an 'insurance policy' would have future value should the security situation in Israel deteriorate (p. 98).

Through the comparison of these three different cases, Harpaz is right in claiming that studies of second citizenship have overlooked different dynamics that preclude the decision and strategy to obtain second citizenship, and that each case necessitates specific attention. One of the greatest values of this work is the detailed analysis of alternate statistical datasets, which the author has skillfully collected and evaluated against sociocultural backgrounds filling existing and unexplained *lacunae* (p. 27). In this laborious enterprise, Harpaz shows how important statistics are and that it can be a source of inspiration into new research inquiries. In fact, his cases are fascinating, and I am sure there are numerous other cases of individuals and groups applying for second citizenship that would warrant further investigation. I also suspect that such cases could inspire a series of interdisciplinary work into the complex dynamics of globalisation. It is interesting how, in this very moment, I am applying for a second citizenship in Norway, as an addition to my Italian one. Dual citizenship is becoming a norm, not an exception, and this phenomenon should not be left unguarded.

Even though it has been enriching and informative, the book is not flawless. As an anthropologist, I have found the work of Harpaz lacking a more in-depth analysis of the cultural capital and social context that defines the strategies of his respondents. Methodologically, the short interviews represented in the selected vignettes for each case are 'thin' cases and do not address cultural and symbolic values that having or acquiring dual citizenship can entail for these individuals, in addition to the strong most defining functional reason. Of course, the practicalities of having a global asset represented by the second first-tier country passport cannot be denied, but I could not stop asking myself: Is it only this? The book is an easy read as Harpaz writes with a fluent and pedagogical style, and his theoretical background is simple and fits well the argument. I can warmly recommend this book to anyone interested in questions related to dual citizenship and the underlying motivations for individuals seeking additional or alternate nationality and the associated rights and opportunity this facilitates.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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AUTHOR AFFILIATION

Marianna Betti  orcid.org/0000-0002-9072-2220

Assistant Professor, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, Norway

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