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ALLEGIANCES STRAIGHTFORWARD & COMPLEX *Social and Historical Context*

Complex Allegiances explores the various forms that allegiance to country can take, particularly for immigrants, whether naturalized or not, and also for the native born. For many people there is no complexity here. Allegiance is a very straightforward notion—Fourth of July, love of country, patriotism, the American Flag, willingness to serve, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the Pledge of Allegiance itself.

War and Patriotism: This traditional understanding was vividly illustrated for me on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2011 when I attended the meeting of an American Legion Post in a Southern California community with my parents. My father served in the Navy during most of World War II. Many of those on the stage also protected their country during the same war. Many in the audience too had served their country and fellow citizens in the U.S. armed forces during a variety of conflicts.

In prior years my father had stood at the podium as the Post Commander. This year's leader gave an eloquent reading of the national American Legion statement for the occasion. "Regardless of which view of alternative history you take," he read, "we do know that without our veterans America would not be America." The statement quoted historian Stephen Ambrose, who once wrote, "America's wars have been like rungs on a ladder by which it rose to greatness. No other country has triumphed so long, so consistently or on such a vast scale through force of arms."⁽¹⁾

Indeed, war often seems enmeshed with the concepts of nation, of patriotism, of citizenship for many of us. After all, "the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air" is a central image in our national anthem. The possibility of war is at the heart of the oath taken by new citizens. Not only are they told to "renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty" but they must also pledge "that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law."

World War II had a long-lasting impact for many people on notions of patriotism and service. It was the true Great War, the one where the line between good and evil was clear, where the threat to the nation itself was a constant scary presence. People responded unequivocally. Completing high school for my father seemed irrelevant with the survival of the United States seemingly on the line. He tried to enlist a few months after Pearl Harbor but was told to wait until he had graduated from high school if he wished to train for aviation. He signed up the day after graduation but was assigned instead to a cruiser where he was trained as a radio operator because he was one of the few in his group who could type. The newly commissioned *U.S.S. Cleveland* sailed off to join the invasion of North Africa in the fall of 1942, 89% of its sailors never having been to sea. Then it was on to the South Pacific for the rest of the war, participating in many of the defining battles for that front.

My experience was very different. I was not going to leave college to fight in Vietnam, a war many of us regarded as the opposite of WWII's Good Cause but instead one that we saw as immoral, illegitimate, and counter-productive. When the draft notice came, I still did not respond to duty's call, becoming instead a war resister. This troubled my father though he tried only once to convince me that it was my obligation to respond to the duty call for my generation. My maternal grandfather, a veteran of both WWI and WWII, a man who never shied from voicing his strong convictions, felt obliged to call me outside from a family gathering and explicitly disown me (although in later years we both ignored this).

Allegiance Gets Complex: "My country, right or wrong." "America—Love It or Leave It." The question of allegiance has long fascinated me. What precisely are we pledging? Are there limits? Where? Probably for no generation have these questions been less problematic than for the WWII generation. It is not just for subsequent generations that the meaning of allegiance gets more complex. We forget that for the WWI generation the connection between war and allegiance was not so straightforward either. The issue of U.S. involvement in a European war was very controversial at the time. The war's relationship to the security of the United States was unclear to many, especially to many families who had hoped that they had left Europe's long history of senseless destructive wars behind when they left the old country and immigrated to the U.S. Once reliable public opinion surveys developed, they found in the late 1930s strong majorities that believed it had been "a mistake for the United States to enter" the war.(2)

When patriotism and allegiance are less about war and the willingness to fight, allegiance is free to become more complex. When possibilities of serious conflict and possibly even war threaten between nations then dual citizenship seems to many an untenable division of loyalties. Which side are you going to support? Even if the conflict is not with the country of your second allegiance, can we in the United States count on you giving as much support as the rest of your fellow citizens or might you slide your primary allegiance toward your second country? As one critic declares, "The chief concern about dual citizenship is that it encourages or results in shallower attachments to the American national community than would be the case if there were not stiff competition for immigrant loyalties."(3)

Several of the authors in this anthology disagree, finding no diminution of their U.S. allegiance because of their citizenship in a second country (or in at least two cases, the possibility of a third citizenship). The world does continue to shrink. Through economic relationships, travel, television, and the Internet we are more closely tied together across national boundaries. More of us now spend more time outside of the country of our citizenship, perhaps for years. War is inconceivable now between the United States and Germany or Italy and our core national interests only continue to converge. What then is the danger of dual citizenship involving such countries? Would not proliferating dual/multiple citizenships further bind countries together with common interests and fates, reducing the possibilities of serious conflicts?

Some thinkers see these trends accelerating with national identities and allegiances fading away in relevance, not just for a few people but for many. Perhaps some day . . . but I do not see this as more than a possibility for a distant future. For the present and foreseeable time to come issues concerning national allegiance will remain salient. One significant reason for this is the continuing importance of immigration to many countries, particularly the United States, bringing us to the focus of this anthology: the relationships between national allegiance and immigration.

Why Do We Come?

Immigrants come with their own stories and for their individual reasons. Often they leave behind loved ones and locations, carrying ambivalence and even grief with them to their new home. Their futures are uncertain. Underneath their individual stories, there is the shared assumption that through immigration their life will be improved—or at least that of their children. That improvement for many people throughout our national history