
Introduction

This chapter discusses the legal framework designed around citizenship deprivation in France, its practical relevance and its connection with immigration and terrorism policies. The topics of citizenship, integration and immigration have been high on the agenda of French politicians and public, leading to several public debates on the meaning of citizenship and the values it stands for. The law has been amended several times in the recent past, reflecting these debates and more essentially, the questioning of the French integration model. The overall effect of these legislative changes is on one hand a stricter naturalisation policy combined with a stricter immigration policy and, on the other hand, less strict deprivation of citizenship rules. Nationality legislation has been changed to ensure the assimilation of the individual concerned, while naturalisation is presented as the final step of a successful process of integration by non-nationals into the privileged status of French citizenship. Becoming a French citizen has been made more difficult by the introduction of various tests and requirements based on the ideology of assimilationism that requires the citizen-to-be to socialise himself towards the defining republican values of the French state and to at least, formally, become like the prototype French citizen. The provisions on loss of French nationality have also undergone changes.


They relate to the strengthening of the legal tools used by state authorities in the fight against terrorism, but as the chapter will discuss, despite a growing politicisation of immigration and nationality, the French right has failed to rally enough political support to amend the rules on deprivation of citizenship and increase governmental power in this field even further.

2 French Nationality and Citizenship

2.1 Citizenship – The Legacy of the Revolution
The processes of state and nation building have played an important part in the development of French nationality legislation. In order to understand the implications of the changes brought to the regime of nationality attribution, one has to bear in mind the context in which this legislation has developed as well as its specificities and complexities. The French Revolution is generally presented as the breaking point with feudal conceptions of belonging based upon allegiance as well as credited with inventing the notion of ‘French citizenship’ based upon equality before the law. Brubaker stresses the role played by the Republican idea of citizenship in conceptualizing the nation as ‘une et indivisible’ and therefore, in inventing national citizenship and nationalism. This new model of belonging required a nation composed of legally equal individuals standing in a direct relationship to the state as opposed to the patchwork of overlapping corporate-jurisdictions and the pervasive corporate

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4 During the Middle Ages, the notions of Frenchmen and foreigner did exist but lacked clear legal implications. Brubaker argues that the question of who should be considered French started to become important in connection with the rules on inheritance, and thus generated more inclusive criteria of citizenship determination, as to include persons born abroad but residing in France. Before the Revolution, the main differences between individuals were spelled out in terms of belonging or not to a privileged order and from this perspective, the Revolution brought important changes as the basis for participation was no longer connected to social status. See, R. Brubaker (1992) Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 30–40; P. Weil (2008) How to be French, Nationality in the Making Since 1789, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p. 20; J.-F. Berdah (2006) Citizenship and National Identity in France from the French Revolution to the Present, in Frontiers and Identities, Pisa University Press, pp. 142–143.

5 Brubaker (1992), pp. 35–36.