

## **Green Rush: Citizenship Light and FDI in Immigrant Investor Programs<sup>1</sup>**

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Conventional wisdom about foreign direct investment (FDI) suggests that FDI inflows are strongly correlated with the presence of institutional factors like democracy and the rule of law in the recipient state. Two implications of this wisdom are that states must perform the complex and challenging task of providing certain macro institutional conditions in order to induce foreign investment, and that foreign investors are motivated by the availability of these conditions when deciding to invest abroad.

By contrast, a small but growing platform for FDI, so-called “immigrant investor programs” appear to neither require states’ creation of investment-friendly macro conditions, nor allure foreign investors simply on the basis of institutional features. The first state to launch an immigrant investor program, Canada, implemented a policy in 1986 that allowed foreign investors to receive permanent residency in exchange for investing in provincial government bonds. Since then, and particularly in the years after the 2008 global financial crisis, many states have established similar policies that offer the equivalent of green cards or sometimes even citizenship to foreign investors in return for their capital. As of July 2014, the number of states with immigrant investor programs stood above 30, indicating that such programs are now internationally widespread, especially in Western states.

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At the same time as immigrant investor programs have come to serve as a relatively simple mechanism for states to attract FDI, they also arguably demonstrate the idea of “citizenship light” about the meaning of contemporary citizenship. Citizenship light holds that citizenship is now less correctly described as a dualism defined by internal inclusiveness and external exclusivity, and more accurately depicted as a boundary that is easy to cross and confers rights that are not substantially distinct between citizens and resident aliens (Joppke 2010: 147). The rise in immigrant investor programs in Western states across North America, Western Europe and the former British colonies in Oceania, as well as in other states, suggests that because individuals can obtain formal state membership and rights by making a certain level of investment through state-approved means, such membership may be increasingly instrumental and devoid of unique “ideas and ideals” that were once thought to define membership in the nation-state.

This essay aims to shed light on the phenomenon of immigrant investor programs by illuminating how they work as a scheme for states to introduce FDI, and illustrating how they inform theoretical understanding about the current meaning of citizenship. In attempting this goal, the essay focuses in particular on the case of the EB-5 immigrant investor program in the United States, where patriotism is higher than in other Western countries and potential opposition to an immigrant investor program on the grounds of the traditional view of citizenship might conceivably be strongest. The essay proceeds to show that in contrast to this possibility, the EB-5 program has grown in popularity in the US as a means of attracting foreign capital to finance local business ventures, and has developed largely unopposed by domestic constituencies. These trends, extrapolated from the case of the EB-5 program, imply that immigrant investor programs are practicable policies for states to attract FDI (albeit on a modest

scale), and also support citizenship light as a theoretical perspective for understanding contemporary citizenship.

The essay unfolds in the following way. First, it conducts a historical review of citizenship theory, to explain how traditional notions of citizenship have given way to the theoretical viewpoint of citizenship light. Second, it covers the rise of immigrant investor programs to demonstrate their chronological and geographical spread and their range of conditions for participation. Third, the essay analyzes the case of the EB-5 immigrant investor program using a mixed methods approach that examines how the program is experienced by investors as well as a diverse group of local actors in the US who implement and observe the program, and shows how the EB-5 program exemplifies the tenets of citizenship light. A final section offers concluding remarks.

## **I. The Rise of Citizenship Light**

Generally speaking, the concept of citizenship evokes “a certain sort of membership in a political community” (Smith 2001: 1857). But its meaning has changed across time. For the ancient Greeks in Athens, citizenship was confined to male heads of household and embodied certain virtues of political participation and civic-mindedness. For the Romans, it denoted less a particular conduct and comportment, and was more a formalized legal status that conveyed particular rights to its possessors. Additionally, citizenship in Roman times was relatively more open, insofar as it was extended to conquered outsiders in exchange for their allegiance (Pocock 1995: 30-36).

In more modern times, citizenship moved beyond membership in city-states to signify membership in territorial states. Citizenship continued to imply equality before the law, as it did

in Roman times, but the law of modern absolute states eliminated privileges once held by feudal nobility, while simultaneously establishing state membership on the basis of birth—either through the nationality of one’s parents (*jus sanguinis*) or the location of one’s birthplace (*jus soli*) (Brubaker 1992). After the French Revolution, citizenship took on an added significance that implied not just equal subjectship under law, but also democratic equality and nationalism (Joppke 2010: 8-9).

Modern citizenship thus evolved into a dualism by the nineteenth century that was both “internally inclusive” in presenting a single, formally-equal membership status in the state, and “externally exclusive” in denying this status to anyone outside the state (Brubaker 1992). But this dualism does not capture all that citizenship has become since then, because it omits how the phenomenon of international migration has interacted with citizenship, especially in the period after World War II. While Nazi Germany may be viewed as the apogee of a modern state that attempted to exclude and even eliminate people who did not fit its membership criteria, the postwar period has seen the rise in legitimacy of human rights, which has led states to proscribe racist, sexist, and group-level exclusions, and offer civil and social rights to both citizens and previously-excluded migrants according to human rights’ universalistic principles (Joppke 2010: 26-27).

As states have conferred rights of membership more liberally, the relationship between human rights and citizen rights has become mingled, with political rights being perhaps the only form of rights that remain as uniquely citizen rights, while civil and social rights are now carried by both citizens and resident aliens alike. Furthermore, as rights inclusiveness has increased and multiculturalism has gained normative supremacy, the notion of national identity as a corollary of citizenship has become muddled. States’ expansion of membership to migrant residents, albeit

through certain rights and not others, means that citizenship itself no longer fully represents the identity of all individuals who lawfully reside in the state, since domestic populations with migrant communities are increasingly diverse in terms of culture and ethnicity and no longer embody unified civilizations. Instead, citizen identities have come under pressure to become universal, rather than national, in the sense that states now actively promote inclusivity and attempt integrate resident aliens into the beliefs and behaviors of liberal democracy.

It is in this context that citizenship has come to be conceived as “citizenship light.” As Christian Joppke, who coined this term, summarizes, “As citizenship has become more accessible, it inevitably must mean less in terms of rights and identity” (Joppke 2010: 33). While the declining value of citizenship has resulted in countermoves by some states in the form of new rules about naturalization, the fundamental tendency of citizenship in the postwar period has been the lessening of its exclusive rights entitlements and the fracturing of its unique claim to national identity representativeness. Related illustrations of this trend have been the spread of *jus soli* citizenship for migrants’ children and states’ growing tolerance of dual citizenship. This essay contends that immigrant investor programs are a further example of citizenship light’s ascendancy.

## **II. Immigrant Investor Programs as an Example of Citizenship Light**

As the meaning of citizenship has weakened in Western states in the postwar period and states have shifted toward more inclusivity in their migration policies, migrants have become openly valued not only because of human rights and the norm of multiculturalism, but also because of their economic importance to the state. At first, the economic benefit of migrants was recognized primarily in the cheaper labor that they could supply relative to that of local citizens,

particularly in low-skilled jobs. With economic restructuring and the expansion of the tertiary sector, however, the need for employees who could perform high-skills tasks in new industries such as telecommunications, information technology, healthcare and financial services drove states to desire workers who could aid economic productivity in these areas. Additionally, as Western states experienced lower growth as their economies matured, migrants were viewed not only as potential employees, but as potential business owners, and states created policies that offered residency to entrepreneurial foreigners who could establish companies that contributed to the local business environment and generated tax revenue.

The earliest state to create such a business migration policy was Australia. In 1976, it started the Entrepreneurial Migration visa category that allowed residency for foreign investors who, depending on age, brought a certain amount of capital into Australia to begin a proposed business (Wong 2003: 309). Canada unveiled a similar policy, called the Business Immigration Program (BIP), in 1978. While the BIP initially focused on enticing experienced business managers from abroad to actively operate new business ventures in Canada, in 1986 it expanded and became the first migration policy to include a category specifically for foreign investors, who were offered the chance to passively invest in Canadian government bonds in return for permanent residency. Canada's decision to expand BIP to investors was reportedly made with an eye toward boosting trade and investment opportunities in the Asia-Pacific, and awareness of the insecurity that Hong Kong residents felt after the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 announcing that Hong Kong would return to communist China in 1997 (Ley 2010: 57).

The investor visa category of Canada's BIP, together with its entrepreneur category, saw the inflow of some 330,000 business migrants into Canada in the first two decades of the program, making the BIP by far the world's largest policy for business migration. The popularity

of the program was likely influenced by its low entry threshold, which allowed potential business migrants to pass the Canadian government's selection process with neither post-secondary education nor official language (English or French) speaking ability, two criteria that were virtually mandatory for migrants trying to enter as skilled workers (Ley 2010: 57). Moreover, for potential investors, the required investment amount of CAD \$400,000 (later increased to CAD \$800,000 in 2010) was considerably lower than the amounts needed under similar immigrant investor programs elsewhere, and was guaranteed recoverable by the Canadian government, albeit with zero interest.

Geopolitical events also factored into the popularity of Canada's BIP, which soon led other states to implement immigrant investor programs to compete with the BIP in drawing capital from wealthy foreigners. The Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 added to the uncertainty felt by Hong Kong's middle class, of whom more than 50,000 subsequently applied through the BIP for Canadian permanent residency in both 1990 and 1991, an all-time high (Ley 2010: 74). This considerable growth in Canada's immigrant investor program prompted the United States to establish a category of investor visas in its 1990 Immigration Act, which also contained four other so-called "EB" (employment-based) visa categories for business immigrants (Giella 1992: 226). Many other states launched similar business immigration programs around this time as well, including Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, Fiji, Gambia, Jamaica, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Peru, Spain, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Tonga, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Wong 2003: 315).

As business immigration programs diffused internationally in the early 1990s, the nationalities of their migrant users began to shift. Whereas Hong Kong and Taiwan served as the leading origins of business migrants in the 1990s, their numbers of migrants declined after 1997,

the year that the administration of Hong Kong was transferred to China. From that time onward, more entrepreneurs from places like mainland China and South Korea started to participate in business migration programs, having been empowered by rapid development and rising wealth at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Business immigration programs maintained their popularity among states as a form of economy-enhancing policy during the 2000s. Their significance heightened in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, particularly in the investor categories that offered states both alternative lines of capital at a time when traditional sources of financing became limited, and welfare support through program provisions that fostered local employment. Moreover, the global recession that dampened the economies of many states, particularly in the developed world, coincided with the ongoing growth of China, where steady development as well as soaring real estate prices increased the number of potential foreign investors. Many states responded to this trend by unfurling new immigrant investor programs, or revamping existing programs to specifically court Chinese investors (see Figure 1: Immigrant Investor Programs). One such state, Australia, even renamed its program in November 2012 as sub-class “888,” using particular numerology suggestive of fortune in the Chinese language (Curran 2013; Shadbolt 2014).

**Figure 1. Immigrant Investor Programs**

<b>State</b>	<b>Investment Requirements</b>	<b>Status</b>
Antigua and Barbuda	USD \$250,000 donation to National Development fund; USD \$400,000 investment in real estate; or USD \$1.5 million business investment	Citizenship
Australia	AUS \$A5 million (\$US 4.37 million) investment in government bonds, managed funds or Australian proprietary companies for four years	Permanent residency
Austria	EUR €2 million minimum donation to charity in Austria; or USD \$10 million recoverable minimum investment in Austria	Citizenship
Bahamas	USD \$500,000 minimum investment to purchase a residence (home or condominium) in Bahamas	Permanent residency
Bulgaria	BGN 1,000,000 (€ 511,292) investment in fully-guaranteed, interest-free governmental bond portfolio for five years	Permanent residency
Canada	CAD \$800,000 recoverable, interest-free investment in Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) used to facilitate economic growth in Canadian provinces	Permanent residency
Canada Quebec	CAD \$800,000 recoverable, interest-free investment in Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) used to facilitate economic growth in Quebec	Permanent residency
Cyprus	EUR €3 million in real estate or bank deposits, with real estate may be freely salable after three years	Citizenship
Dominica	USD \$100,000 non-refundable cash investment for single applicant; USD \$175,000, U\$200,000, or \$350,000 investment for family applicants depending on the number of children	Citizenship
France	EUR €10 million long-term and non-speculative investment in industrial or commercial assets in France (Investment can be personal or through a company in which investor owns at least 30 percent of the capital)	Residency permit (ten years)
Germany	EUR €1 million investment in German project that creates 10 new German job opportunities	Permanent residency
Grenada	USD \$200,000 investment in Grenada's economy and infrastructure	Citizenship
Hong Kong	HK \$10 million (USD \$1.2 million) investment in financial assets approved by the HK Immigration Department, including certificates of deposit, equities, securities and collective investment schemes	Residency permit (two years)
Hungary	EUR €250,000 recoverable investment in government bonds for five years, plus €40,000 government processing fee	Permanent residency
Ireland	EUR €1 million investment in interest-free bond; €500,000 investment in Irish business for three years; €2	Residency permit (five years)

	million minimum investment in any Irish real estate investment trust (REIT) listed on the Irish stock exchange, spreadable across multiple REIT; €950,000 mixed investment of which €450,000 is investment in residential property and €500,000 is investment in immigrant investor bond; or €500,000 philanthropic donation	
Japan	JPN ¥5 million investment in new or existing business in Japan with more than two full-time employees who are Japanese or legal residents	Residency permit (one or three years)
Latvia	EUR €300,000 bank deposit (LVL 20,000) for five years (refundable and with interest); €150,000 investment in real estate in major Latvian cities; or €70,000 investment for business formation upon invitation	Residency permit (five years)
Malta	EUR €650,000 donation to Malta National Development Fund	Citizenship
Mauritius	USD \$40,000 minimum annual transfer to bank account in Mauritius for permanent residency; USD \$500,000 minimum investment in Mauritius and continuous residency in Mauritius for at least 2 years for citizenship	Permanent residency or citizenship
Monaco	EUR €1 million minimum investment, of which €500,000 must be deposited in a Monaco bank, and €500,000 must be used to purchase property worth €500,000	Permanent residency
Montenegro	EUR €500,000 minimum investment, of which €300,000 must be invested in government-approved real estate projects, and €200,000 must be deposited as a non-refundable investment in the treasury of Montenegro	Citizenship
New Zealand	NZ \$1.5 million (USD \$1.1 million) investment to the New Zealand government for five years; or NZ \$10 million (USD \$8 million) investment for three years, with no age or business experience or English language proficiency required	Permanent residency
Panama	USD \$60,000 minimum investment in government-approved agriculture or reforestation projects (USD \$80,000 investment earns permanent residency); or USD \$300,000 minimum investment in real estate or fixed-term three-year bank deposits; or USD \$200,000 purchase of “non-citizenship immediate passport” with five-year validity	Residency permit (six years) or permanent residency
Portugal	EUR €500,000 property investment; €1 million fund transfer; or investment that creates a minimum of 10 jobs	Permanent residency
Saint Kitts and Nevis	USD \$250,000 minimum non-refundable charity donation to the Sugar Industry Diversification Foundation, or \$400,000 investment in a designated recoverable real estate project	Citizenship

Seychelles	Real estate investment for personal residential use	Residency permit (five years)
Singapore	SGD \$2.5 million (US\$ 2 million) investment in government-approved venture capital fund, new business or existing business in Singapore; or SGD \$5 million (USD \$4 million) investment in a financial institution authorized by the Monetary Authority of Singapore	Permanent residency
Spain	EUR €500,000 minimum investment in residential real estate	Permanent residency
Switzerland	Between CHF F150,000 (USD \$170,000) and CHF F1 million annual lump sum taxation fee, depending on the chosen Swiss canton of residence	Residency permit
United Arab Emirates	AED 1 million (USD \$275,000) investment in real estate property	Residency permit (three years)
United Kingdom	UK £1 million, of which £750,000 must be invested at least five years in government bonds, loan or share capital	Permanent residency
United States	USD \$1 million investment that creates or sustains at least ten local jobs for five years; or USD \$500,000 investment through regional center program in target employment areas that creates or sustains at least ten local jobs for five years	Permanent residency

The recent surge in immigrant investor programs, especially since the global financial crisis, illustrates the shift toward citizenship light that is currently taking place in Western states. Since civil and social rights are now bestowed on permanent residents as well as on citizens, immigrant investor programs that give legal residency—in the form of residency permits, permanent residency, or in some states even citizenship—to migrants in exchange for investment, signify that many if not all of citizenship’s entitlements may be non-exclusive and even purchasable. Citizenship may thus be considered a residual status, since foreign aliens are now able to buy much of what it signifies. Furthermore, in many cases immigrant investors do not seek naturalization once they have obtained a green card, suggesting that, “the real prize is legal residency, not citizenship” (Spiro 2008: 159). The lack of effective political opposition to

immigrant investor programs and the failure of arguments to restrict their benefits to citizens—and, conversely, general support by both government and local constituencies for immigrant investor programs’ economic and welfare potential—indicate that the declining value of contemporary citizenship has been widely tolerated within Western states. A case study of the US EB-5 immigrant investor program illuminates this point.

### **III. The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program**

The EB-5 immigrant investor program serves as a revealing case of an immigrant investor program for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, the perspective of citizenship light holds that citizenship has become less meaningful in terms of its exclusive rights entitlements and its representativeness for national identity. Therefore, to be supportive of the theory, a case of an immigrant investor program should demonstrate that the program extends the benefits previously limited to citizens onto migrants who receive permanent residency through the program. Additionally, the case should manifest that any attempt to overturn the program on the basis of alleged offence to a unified national identity embodied in citizenship, be unsuccessful. The EB-5 program passes both of these tests.

Practically, the EB-5 program’s usage has expanded considerably in recent years, particularly in the wake of an adjustment that eased how local employment creation is measured under the program. Moreover, because of the recent cancellation of Canada’s immigrant investor program in February 2014, which terminated a backlog of more than 65,000 program applicants, the EB-5 program appears set to attract even more interest and investment, not least because its investment threshold of USD \$500,000 sits far below the amounts required by other programs in states like Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, and because the program still has

unused capacity under its annual visa quota. In short, the EB-5 program is primed as a major immigrant investor programs, and thus its experience is important for understanding other such programs around the world.

In order to analyze the EB-5 program, I adopt a mixed-methods approach that employs quantitative and qualitative data and relies substantially on in-depth interviews with a variety of participants and observers close to the program, including potential EB-5 investors, immigration agencies, regional centers, attorneys, local business promotion organizations, and academics. Quantitative data is helpful in establishing the broad, overall development of the program in terms of the annual numbers of EB-5 visa applicants and recipients, the distribution of migrant nationalities in the program, and other aggregate trends. However, only limited quantitative data exists for the EB-5 program (ex. Singer and Galdes 2014), while databases such as the US Bureau of Economic Analysis database, the Rhodium Group's China Investment Monitor, and the Heritage Foundation's China Global Investment Tracker that report activity in the US by Chinese investors, who constitute the vast majority of EB-5 program participants, do not cover investments made through the program (Moran and Oldenski 2013).

Because the limited quantitative data available on the EB-5 program does not speak to the meaning of US permanent residency versus citizenship to the program's migrant investors, or to how local actors may perceive the program as widening the inclusiveness of membership in American society and thus problematic for national identity, qualitative data is crucial for evaluating the validity of citizenship light in the case of the EB-5 program. Therefore, in addition to performing in-depth interviews, I examine data through textual analysis of think tank policy reports, industry trade magazines such as *Eb5 Investors Magazine*, news media, and other information sources that are concerned with the program.

Initial findings suggest that permanent residency offered through the EB-5 program is indeed the primary goal of migrants' participation. In one interview, a regional center executive affirmed that many of his immigrant investor clients do not carry through with naturalization after receiving green cards. Supporting this claim, one migrant investor interviewed said that his two most important objectives were: first, obtaining green cards for himself and his family; and second, trying to recover his investment. This investor added that he would not apply for citizenship since he hoped to continue to do business in his home country after getting US permanent residency, and he worried that citizenship might compromise his travelling mobility, despite his assertion that culture and civilization were more advanced in the US than in his home country. Another migrant investor also prioritized the receipt of green cards for her three-person family, and emphasized that as long as they were received, she would not be concerned about recuperating her USD \$500,000 investment, and would even accept losing the money in its entirety.

About the meaning of US permanent residency, all six investor migrants interviewed reported that their children's education was a chief reason why they were involved in the EB-5 program, and provided one or two justifications why they felt the program would be positive in this regard: their wish that their children could avoid the competitive climate of their home country's secondary education system, and their high assessment of the US higher education system. One investor further mentioned that she wanted her son to grow up in a place where he could freely jog outside, alluding to poor air quality in the city of her current residence, while a different investor said that he also aspired to have a second child, which would have been difficult under his home country's restrictive rules. Interviews with immigration agencies confirmed that education is a leading motivation for would-be investor immigrants to inquire

with the agencies about the EB-5 program. Interviews with multiple regional centers and local business promotion organizations in the US further supported the importance of education as well as family concerns in general as key rationales for investors' program participation.

The importance of education and familial wellbeing as decisive factors for immigrant investors' participation in the EB-5 program is corroborated more widely by suggestive statistics from the US Citizen and Immigration Service, the government agency that manages the program. These statistics indicate that, on average, each EB-5 investor is accompanied by two family members who receive conditional visas, and that over the course of the program's twenty-year history, 8,580 EB-5 visas have been granted to investors, while 16,582 EB-5 visas have been given to investors' family members. This high share of visas that go to family members in the EB-5 program is unequaled in other employment-based visas, showing that the program functions more like a family visa program than a strictly employment-based visa program (Singer and Galdes 2014: 8).

In sum, evidence suggests that migrant investors in the EB-5 program are more concerned about getting green cards than citizenship, and that the value that they place on such membership in American society derives from its conferment of social and civil rights, especially access to education for their children, rather than its potential to eventually grant US citizenship. These findings support the theoretical perspective of citizenship light.

Given high level of patriotism in the US, the nature of the EB-5 program as a policy by which wealthy foreigners can obtain permanent residency in the US might make the program seem ripe for local controversy. In fact, the EB-5 program was initiated in President George H.W. Bush's Republican administration and affirmed by President Barack Obama's Democratic administration, and was consistently backed by political leaders on both sides of the ideological

aisle in the years between. While the program underwent certain criticism in its early years due to its low utilization in comparison with similar programs in other states and several instances of fraud, it has remained generally popular due to its bipartisan appeal, which, as one regional center executive described, exists because, “Republicans see it as pro-business and Democrats see it as pro-employment.”

Americans who work in regional centers and other businesses related to the program advocate for the merits of the EB-5 program with the same logic. Authors of one study about the program’s economic impact wrote in an industry trade magazine that if 6,000 EB-5 visas were issued in 2013, it could create 34,593 new jobs, add \$2.86 billion to US GDP, and generate \$399.02 million in federal tax revenue and \$278.36 million in state and local tax revenue in that year alone (Barnhart and Barnhart 2013), thus stressing the program’s benefits for both the general economy and local jobs. One regional center executive interviewed was quick to contend that because of these wider domestic benefits for the US, the EB-5 program was not simply about foreigners “buying visas,” and he dismissed this labeling of the program that he saw often in the media, which he said only discussed the program in a bad way.

Yet while the media has occasionally reported negatively on the EB-5 program, its criticisms have mostly concerned individual investment projects that failed or are sensationalistic (ex. Lee and Shyong 2013; Raval 2013), and do not question the significance of the program as a whole. Think tank reports that argue against the program also focus on individual cases of scandals or program economic performance (North 2012), rather than critiquing the program on the grounds of its impact on American identity.

In short, in spite of the high level of nationalism in the US, the EB-5 program has received widespread backing both politically and in the private sector, and there has been no

serious opposition to its continuation. Those involved in the program locally in the US are aware that it has been referred to as allowing foreigners to “buy visas,” which suggests a concern that the program might be interpreted negatively by some observers, but they reject this assessment by emphasizing the program’s stimulative benefits for the domestic economy and employment. Similarly, media reporting about the EB-5 program occasionally covers investment projects that fail, but never appears to criticize the program for shifting American identity by offering permanent residency to foreign migrants, and think tank reports focus more on the program’s economic limitations rather than on any challenges it poses for the meaning of membership in US society. Together, these responses indicate general tolerance for the EB-5 program, and the absence of objections to the program’s implications for citizenship as citizenship light.

## **Conclusion**

Citizenship’s meaning in Western states has evolved from ancient times until the present, when it has arguably arrived at the significance of citizenship light due to states’ greater inclusiveness in providing rights to resident aliens as well as citizens, and to the weakening of citizenship as a membership category that is strictly representative of states’ national identities. Immigrant investor programs which emerged in the 1980s and have since become widespread, particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, are a telling example of this trend. The substantial number of states that seek investment from wealthy foreigners in exchange for giving them the same civil and social rights as citizens, suggests that citizenship may no longer be the exclusive club for state-sponsored entitlements that was in the past. Examination of the case of the EB-5 immigrant investor program in the US supports this assessment, as investors in the program apparently care more about the benefits of permanent residency than those of

citizenship, while local actors broadly back the program for its influence on businesses and job creation. These findings seem surprising in view of the considerable amount of patriotism in the US, and show that citizenship can be understood as citizenship light even in Western states where it would seem least likely. They also hint that states may continue to utilize and perhaps even expand immigrant investor programs for their ability to attract FDI.

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