

Inquiring Minds topic – 18 January 2019

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Politics, Nationalism, Nations and the right thing to do

In 1947 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Among the thirty articles is Article 15 which states: "1. Everyone has the right to a nationality. 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality."

What does a nationality mean? Is it an identity based on ethnic, religious, tribal, geographic, historic or other reasons, or preference? When does one group acquire a right to exclude others from its nation? When does a nation acquire the right to include others who may be unhappy about inclusion?

The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization has members including Kurds, Tibetans, Greeks in Albania and many, many others. They want a voice and no violence.

Does geography define a nation? How do we view the nations defined in 1918 in the middle east? What about nations formed after the Second World War? How do we view the mutual expulsion of Greeks from Turkey and Turks from Greece? What about claims of China on regions near it such as Taiwan? Should we look to history to define the proper limits of a nation? As Adrian Kerr is wont to point out Gengis Khan was Kurdish.

What if a nation has a diverse population? When the President asserts he is a Nationalist, what can that mean? Who should be included or excluded? What about their cousins and their uncles and their aunts?

How does migration fit into all of this?

Does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights create problems? Is it an example of no good deed going unpunished?