



Committee:	GA2 (Human Rights Committee)
Issue:	Questioning disenfranchisement against minorities
Student Officer:	Güherbar Görgülü (Deputy President)

Introduction to the Issue

Disenfranchisement is preventing a person or a group of people, mostly minorities, from exercising their right to vote through legislations, intimidation, putting in place excessive and unnecessary requirements or limiting their access. It has been a great obstacle on the way of minority suffrage in the past, but nowadays, it has once again become a substantial issue around the world, most notably in United States of America, and the rate of minorities partaking in elections plummeted. Moreover, the need to extend the voting rights of immigrants are being debated upon as well.

Involved Countries & Organizations

United States of America

The history of minority voting rights in USA has been quite complicated. Originally, the 15th Amendment that was passed in 1869 allowed African Americans to participate in elections, but there were other obstacles put on their way. For instance, voters were required to pay “poll tax”, a fee required in order to vote. This regulation that doesn’t seem to have discriminatory intentions on the surface, actually meant to prevent African American suffrage, as the majority of the minority groups were poor and could not afford to pay the taxes. Blacks were often forced to take literacy tests, which they sometimes failed as their population didn’t have a very high literacy rate at the time. Sometimes, they would even be given impossible tasks such as reciting the entire Constitution.

As a result, “The Voting Rights Act” was passed on August 6, 1965 in United States of America and aimed to enable more African American citizens to vote, which was their right granted by the law, by revoking voting regulations that made it nearly impossible for them to participate in elections. After the regulations were revoked, the rate of participation in elections increased from 6% to 59% in just five years.

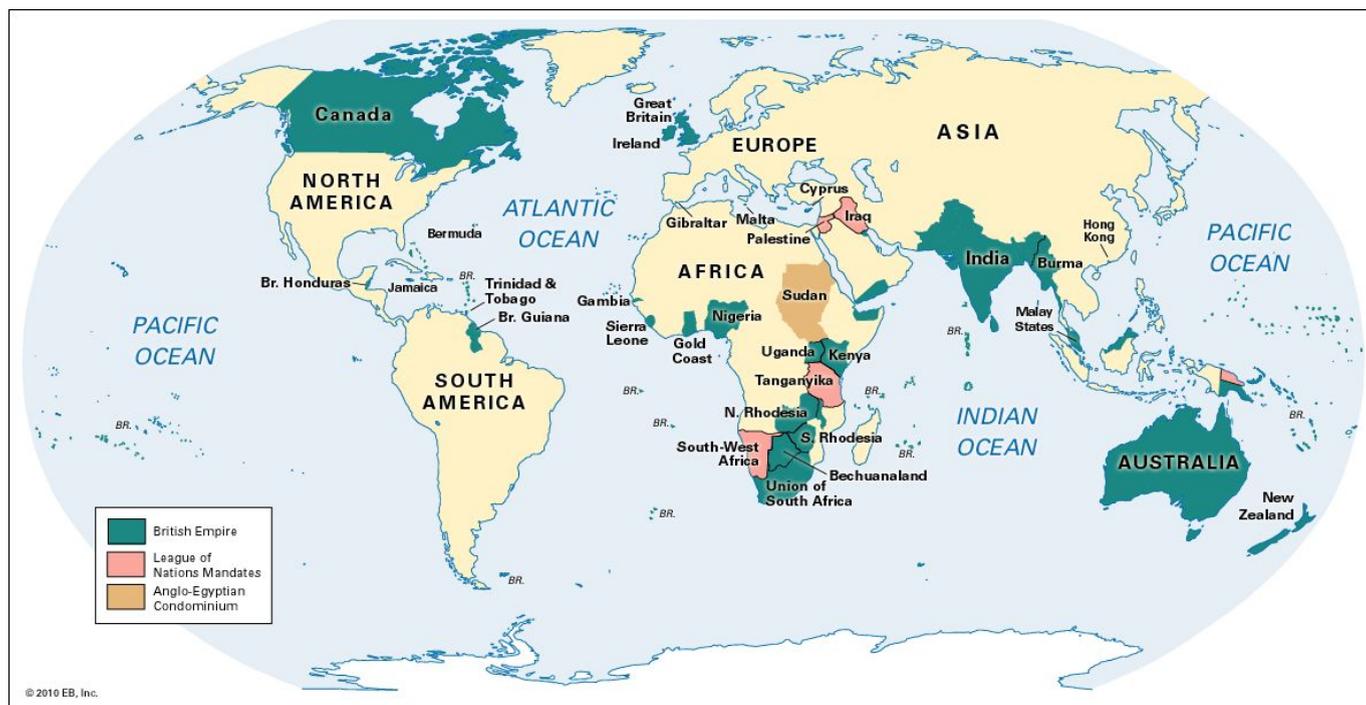


European Union

Immigrants make up 14% of the adult population in European Union, with over 51 million immigrants over 15 years old. A majority of them are not citizens of their country of residence and consequently, the non-EU citizen immigrants don't have the right to participate in elections. These countries include Germany, France, Italy, Austria and so on.

United Kingdom

Non-citizen immigrants make up 9% of the population of United Kingdom. Despite this, only the citizens of Ireland and Commonwealth countries are eligible to vote in elections and referendums and the legislations cause the disenfranchisement of over 3 million adults. This shows a clear discrimination and inequality among immigrant groups.



Map of Commonwealth Countries



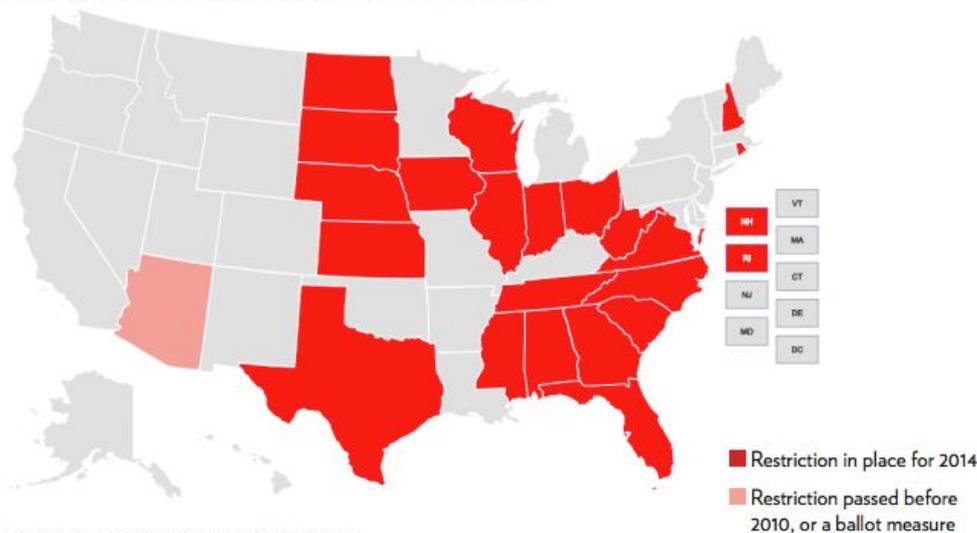
Detailed Analysis of the Issue

The problem with not allowing non-citizen residents in a country is that they have to be subject to laws and regulations that they have no say in. Many laws affect the lives of immigrants directly and deeply, such as the UK's decision of exiting the EU, in which immigrants who were EU citizens could not vote in the referendum.

Immigrants also contribute greatly to the economy and workforce of the country that they are residing in, as well as pay taxes to the state, but they lack voting rights despite this. This situation contradicts the famous quote by American Colonists, "No taxation without representation."

Another recent development concerning minority disenfranchisement has been the new voting laws that were introduced in some states of USA since 2011. According to the new legislations, voters would have to have a photo ID, which requires a fee to be payed, in order to be able to vote. Furthermore, alternative forms of identification, such as signing an affidavit that was a previously allowed practice, are not allowed. The regulation was said to aim stopping voting fraud, however it is an extremely rare case in reality. Instead, it mostly affects African American, Native American and Latin citizens and revokes the voting rights of thousands of eligible citizens. In South Carolina, this law would keep 180,000 black citizens from voting. However, the ID law was blocked by the Justice Court.

States With New Voting Restrictions Since 2010 Election



Source: brennancenter.org/new-voting-restrictions-2010-election



There are also logistical hardships that make it even more difficult for minorities to vote as over 868 polling sites across the country have been closed in three years. For instance, the voting site in Pascua-Yaqui Native American reservation outside Arizona has been abolished and a similar situation is present in the predominantly black neighborhood of Manatee County, Florida. Early voting times on weekends and evenings have also been cut back, which put many members of minority groups to a disadvantaged position.

List of Important Events

Date	Event
1869	15th Amendment passes, which grants African American men the right to vote.
1896	Louisiana passed “ Grandfather clauses ” to prevent black people who are descendants from slaves to vote. Other states followed.
1940	Jim Crow laws : literacy tests and poll taxes made it even harder for African Americans to vote
1964	Poll taxes were revoked.
1965	Over 500 peaceful civil rights marchers in Selma to Montgomery March were brutally attacked by the police forces when they were fighting for African American voting rights.



Selma to Montgomery March, 1965

1965	Voting Rights Act is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Poll taxes, literacy tests and other obstacles that lowered the rate of minorities' participation in elections.
2011	Voting regulations that could potentially make it more difficult for minorities to participate in elections were put in place in various states such as South Carolina, Texas and Florida.
2013	Shelby v. Holder

Past Resolutions and Important Documents

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

Articles 25 and 26 guarantee every citizen to “have the right and the opportunity without unreasonable restrictions to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely elected representatives”



https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?chapter=4&clang=_en&mtmsg_no=IV-4&src=IND)

Maastricht Treaty (1992):

Establishes that every citizen of a country that is part of the European Union has the right to participate in the elections of the EU country that they reside in.

https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/treaty_on_european_union_en.pdf)

Past Attempts to Solve the Issue

As it can be seen in the documents above, it has been internationally established that every eligible citizen has the right to participate in elections without any unreasonable restrictions concerning race, color, ethnicity and so on.

However, there are still different opinions about immigrant voting rights among countries and political parties, and each state has a different legislation as a result.

Possible Solutions

For the countries that require photo IDs to be able to vote, such as United States of America, IDs and documents needed to be able to vote should be made more affordable and accessible to all, in order to make sure these laws don't lower the suffrage of minorities. There should also be awareness raising campaigns about what documents are needed to be eligible to vote and how to obtain them. In addition, all countries should raise awareness and educate its citizens from a young age on the importance of voting.



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