

The logo features a central white circle containing a faint world map. Overlaid on this circle are several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors: blue, green, brown, purple, and orange. The text is centered within the white circle.

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The Quality of Nationalities of Countries That Don't Exist:
Measuring the Value of Unrecognized Nationalities
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The Quality of Nationalities of Countries That Don't Exist: Measuring the Value of Unrecognized Nationalities



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The QNI does not include the nationalities of unrecognized states or states that have very limited recognition.² Examples of such statuses are the nationalities of Abkhazia, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and Somaliland. These nationalities are not included in the QNI for two reasons.

Firstly, precise data is often lacking, in particular with regard to the internal sub-elements of the QNI. Unrecognized states are generally not included in the Human Development Index or the Global Peace Index, and their levels of Human Development, Economic Strength, and Peace and Stability are not always easily estimated.

Secondly, these nationalities often grant only marginal or even non-existent external opportunities. Like their corresponding countries, the passports of many of these nationalities are not recognized by the great majority of other states. Visa-free or visa-on-arrival travel is often extremely limited. More dramatically, these nationalities do not allow their holders to travel to a significant number of destinations at all, with or without visas. For citizens of India, Azerbaijan, or Iraq, traveling to London or Los Angeles might be difficult practically, but with a passport of Abkhazia or Transnistria it is downright impossible. The impossibility of applying for a visa to many countries makes these largely unrecognized nationalities worth substantially less than other nationalities. Since the QNI does not take into account recognition by other states as such, applying the methodology to nationalities that are (partly) unrecognized would lead to an inflated value vis-à-vis nationalities that do have (near-)universal recognition.

Adding to the complexity, some passports can be used to travel to countries even though these

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2 See also *Henley & Partners – Kochenov Quality of Nationality Index*, 2nd edition (Zürich: Ideos, 2017), pp. 9–10. In this contribution, I use the terms 'unrecognized state' and 'unrecognized nationality' when referring also to states and nationalities with only very limited recognition by other states.

countries do not formally recognize the conferring state. One of the most notable examples is the recognition of the passport of Chinese Taipei (Taiwan). Taiwan is only recognized as an independent state by 19 UN member states. By contrast, the Taiwanese passport is widely recognized worldwide and can even be used to travel to 132 destinations visa-free or with a visa-on-arrival, which surpasses the 60 visa-free or visa-on-arrival destinations of the Chinese nationality. Likewise, while the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is only recognized as a state by Turkey, its passport can be used to travel to the US and the UK, among other destinations, albeit with prior visa application.

In other words, from the perspective of external opportunities, the value of the nationalities of unrecognized states is often very limited, and a lack of international recognition further decreases the value of a nationality through the impossibility of traveling to certain destinations at all. At the same time, however, the effects of formal non-recognition can be paradoxical insofar as the passports of unrecognized states can nonetheless be used as travel documents in practice. Consequently, the status and value of the nationalities of unrecognized states remain highly obscure and difficult to quantify, partly because the QNI methodology is not equipped to deal with the significant and sometimes paradoxical effects of non-recognition.



Of course, similar problems occur with some nationalities that are included in the QNI. Think for example of Israel, which is not recognized by 32 of the 193 UN member states, some of which categorically ban the entry of Israeli passport holders into their territory (Saudi Arabia, for example). Other notable examples are the Palestinian Territory (recognized by 136 UN member states) and Kosovo (recognized by 113 UN member states). In measuring the value of the Israeli, Palestinian, and Kosovar nationalities, the QNI abstracts from their partial non-recognition.



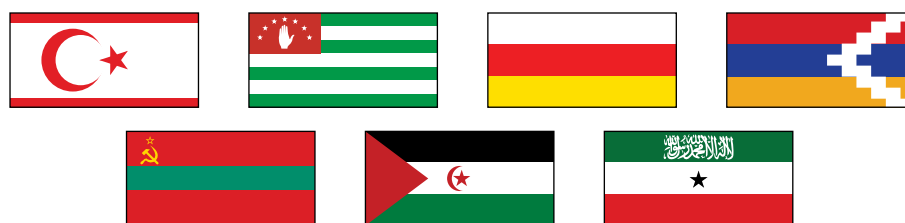
Accordingly, we can still try to measure the value of the nationalities of overwhelmingly unrecognized status by abstracting from their non-recognition, as has been done for the Israeli, Palestinian, and Kosovar nationalities. For this purpose, it is necessary to work with estimations and proxies. While these are always sub-optimal, and likely create some degree of value inflation, the result is still elucidating, particularly because it shows the enormous quality difference between the nationalities of unrecognized states and those of their close neighbors.



Accordingly, we applied the QNI methodology to the nationalities of the following seven largely

unrecognized states:

- Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
- Abkhazia
- South Ossetia
- Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh)
- Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria)
- Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)
- Somaliland



For this measurement, the internal sub-elements have been calculated using reasonable estimations from publicly available data (Economic Strength) and the values of neighboring countries (Human Development; Peace and Stability). For example, in calculating the value of the nationalities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we used the Human Development score of the Georgian nationality, and for the nationality of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus we used the Human Development score of the Turkish nationality. Similar proxies were applied for Peace and Stability, taking into account regional conflicts and tensions.³ Estimations of Economic Strength are publicly available and have been corrected to estimate GDP with purchasing power parity. The external sub-elements have been calculated on the basis of publicly available data, such as visa-waiver and other agreements between Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria.

Results

Six out of the seven nationalities are in the Low Quality tier of the QNI, with the nationality of the Artsakh Republic ranking in the Medium Quality tier. The relatively high score of Artsakh's nationality is due to the fact that its citizens are granted not only an Artsakh ID card for internal purposes but also a passport issued by the Republic of Armenia.⁴ They can use this passport as a travel document, which allows them to enjoy the same external rights as Armenian nationals. The other six nationalities are all among the 20 lowest-scoring nationalities in the QNI, as shown in Figure 1. The nationality of Northern Cyprus stands out marginally, as a result of its relatively high levels of Human Development and Peace and Stability, as well as its easy access to Turkey. This cannot compensate, however, for a profound lack of Travel Freedom and Settlement Freedom, which characterizes most other unrecognized nationalities as well.

³ For example, for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, an average of the Peace and Stability scores of Georgia (2.084) and Russia (3.047) was used, rather than the score of Georgia alone. This proxy is based on the assumption that both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are subject to higher regional tensions than Georgia as a whole, which should be reflected in a lower level of Peace and Stability.

⁴ This is made possible by the law on the main principles of citizenship of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which allows dual citizenship for nationals of the Artsakh Republic.

Figure 1: Hypothetical Ranking Including Nationalities with Very Limited Recognition

Ranking	Nationality	Value
127	Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh)	25.5
156	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	19.2
157	Chad	18.9
158	Sudan (Republic of the)	18.2
159	Ethiopia	18.0
160	South Ossetia	17.9
160	Pakistan	17.9
161	Burundi	17.5
161	Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	17.5
162	Abkhazia	17.2
163	Eritrea	17.1
163	Yemen	17.1
164	Transnistria (Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic)	17.0
165	Syrian Arab Republic	16.8
166	Central African Republic	16.6
167	South Sudan	16.1
168	Iraq	15.1
169	Afghanistan	14.5
170	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	14.3
171	Somalia	13.4
172	Somaliland	9.6

The extremely low ranking of these nationalities is in spite of the fact that their *internal* sub-elements are generally higher than the other nationalities at the bottom of the ranking (with the exception of the nationality of Somaliland). However, the external sub-elements of the QNI count for 60% of total value, which has clear and far-going repercussions for the overall quality of these nationalities.

The importance of the external sub-elements, and visa-free or visa-on-arrival travel in particular, is further illustrated when we compare the unrecognized nationalities with their neighboring nationalities. This comparison further illustrates their relative score because the levels of Human Development and Peace and Stability of these nationalities are often comparable to those of their neighbors. Moreover, most other states regard the states conferring these nationalities as part of the territory of one of their neighboring states.

As Figures 2–7 demonstrate, the values of these unrecognized nationalities are all considerably, and in some cases even dramatically, lower than those of their neighboring nationalities.

Figure 2: Nationalities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Neighbors

Ranking	Nationality	Value
63	Russian Federation	40.5
84	Georgia	35.2
160	South Ossetia	17.9
162	Abkhazia	17.2

The nationalities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are considered part of Georgia by most UN member states, are worth only half (49% and 51% respectively) the value of the Georgian nationality. While both are in the Low Quality tier, the nationality of Georgia itself has moved up to the High Quality tier this year as a result of the Schengen visa-waiver in 2017. The value of South Ossetia is slightly higher than that of Abkhazia, because South Ossetian nationals have the automatic right to live and work in the Russian Federation, unlike Abkhazians.⁵



Figure 3: Nationalities of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and Neighbors

Ranking	Nationality	Value
103	Armenia	29.9
110	Azerbaijan	28.3
127	Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh)	25.5

As mentioned above, nationals of the Artsakh Republic, more commonly known as Nagorno-Karabakh, can acquire an Armenian passport in addition to their internal Artsakh ID, which grants them settlement rights in both Armenia and in five other countries where Armenians can live and work as well.⁶ Since this passport is internationally recognized as an Armenian one, its associated Travel Freedom is also far greater than that of the other unrecognized nationalities.



5 South Ossetians have settlement rights in Russia as a result of the 2015 agreement between Russia and South Ossetia, entitled 'On Alliance and Integration' (Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Южная Осетия о союзнничестве и интеграции). Abkhazia signed a visa-waiver agreement with Russia that allows Abkhazians to stay for up to 90 days in Russia visa-free, but they do not automatically have the right to work there (Соглашение между Правительством Российской Федерации и Правительством Республики Абхазия о взаимных безвизовых поездках граждан Российской Федерации и Республики Абхазия). Many thanks to Greg Nizhnikau for providing the original versions of these agreements.

6 These are Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.

Figure 4: Nationalities of Transnistria and Neighbors

Ranking	Nationality	Value
63	Russian Federation	40.5
73	Moldova (Republic of)	37.2
80	Ukraine	36.1
164	Transnistria (Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic)	17.0

The Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, more commonly known as Transnistria, is located between Moldova and Ukraine and considered to be part of Moldova by the UN. The quality of its nationality is only 46% of that of the Moldovan nationality, however – a gap that increased recently, mainly as a result of the Schengen visa-waiver for Moldovan citizens in 2014.



Figure 5: Nationalities of Northern Cyprus and Neighbors

Ranking	Nationality	Value
24	Cyprus	73.3
83	Turkey	35.4
156	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus	19.2

Also, the nationality of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus suffers from a manifest lack of international recognition and a corresponding lack of (visa-free) Travel Freedom. However, what makes the nationality of Northern Cyprus stand out even more is its neighboring nationality's membership within the EU. The nationality of Cyprus benefits greatly from Settlement Freedom throughout the EU in addition to a high degree of Travel Freedom. This makes the contrast with the nationality of Northern Cyprus even starker: a Northern Cypriot passport has 74% less value than a Cypriot passport.



Figure 6: Nationalities of the SADR and Neighbors

Ranking	Nationality	Value
123	Morocco	26.1
129	Algeria	25.2
144	Mauritania	22.5
170	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)	14.3

The SADR is a self-proclaimed state in the territory of the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara. The Western Sahara territory is claimed by Morocco and has a highly disputed status in international politics. While the SADR's neighbors are also relatively low-scoring nationalities, the nationality of the SADR has a uniquely low value, 67 places lower than Morocco's nationality on the QNI General Ranking, and only just above the nationalities of Somalia and Somaliland.



Figure 7: Nationalities of Somaliland and Neighbors

Ranking	Nationality	Value
155	Djibouti	20.1
159	Ethiopia	18.0
171	Somalia	13.4
172	Somaliland	9.6

Somaliland has declared itself independent from Somalia, but it is regarded as part of Somalia by the overwhelming majority of states. The Somalian nationality is the lowest-scoring nationality officially included in the QNI, but the nationality of Somaliland has a value that is even 28% lower than that of Somalia itself.



Correcting the Value of Nationalities for Non-recognition

The nationalities of the unrecognized states included in this contribution are of very low quality, even if their non-recognition is not directly taken into account. The case of these nationalities raises the question of whether we can incorporate their states' very limited recognition into the value of nationalities more directly. This would allow us to correct the conceived inflation of the value of nationalities that do not allow their holders to travel to numerous countries at all.

One way to correct the value of a nationality for non-recognition is to multiply both its weighed Diversity of Travel Freedom and its weighed Weight of Travel Freedom by the percentage of states that recognize the state conferring the nationality in question. By using the degree of recognition of the state conferring the nationality in question, we correct the nationality's value in light of two clear disadvantages of the nationalities of unrecognized states: firstly, their impaired Travel Freedom as a result of the partial non-recognition of the passports in question (which might correspond to a smaller or larger degree to the non-recognition of the states themselves⁷), and

7 This correction is problematic in the case of the Taiwanese nationality. If the approach were applied to the Taiwanese nationality, this would unjustifiably decimate its Travel Freedom values because Taiwan is hardly recognized as an independent state, notwithstanding its high number of visa-free and visa-on-arrival travel destinations. For most other nationalities of the unrecognized states included in this contribution, the divergence between the non-recognition of the state and the non-recognition of the passport is substantially smaller, making this correction approach more suitable.

secondly, the fact that holders of these nationalities in general do not benefit from consular and diplomatic protection abroad.⁸

Of course, this approach involves a fictional correction. As mentioned above, the non-recognition of a state does not necessarily mean that the corresponding passport is also not recognized as a travel document. Secondly, and more fundamentally, there is no direct relationship between the non-recognition of either a passport or the corresponding state and the Diversity and Weight of Travel Freedom of the corresponding nationality. After all, the latter measure the number and value of visa-free and visa-on-arrival travel destinations, all of which by definition recognize at least the passport of the nationality in question. (Other destinations might also recognize the passport but might require prior visa application, in addition to those destinations that might not recognize the passport at all.) However, this correction – albeit a rather crude one – is still useful as a reasonable value deflation of the Travel Freedom sub-elements *within* the existing QNI methodology.

In order to show how this approach to non-recognition works in practice, we can use the example of the Israeli nationality. The state of Israel, as mentioned, is recognized by 161 of the 193 UN member states. Israeli nationals have visa-free or visa-on-arrival travel access to 149 destinations, which amounts to a 12.70% score for Diversity of Travel Freedom and a 12.63% score for Weight of Travel Freedom (both on a 0–15% scale). In order to correct its value for the partial non-recognition of Israel, we multiply both scores by its 'recognition percentage' of 83.4% ($161 / 193 * 100$). This results in corrected sub-elements of 10.59% for Diversity of Travel Freedom and 10.53% for Weight of Travel Freedom. The overall value of the Israeli nationality subsequently decreases from 45.1% to 40.9%. Its ranking drops from 48th place to a hypothetical 60th place, although for an accurate re-ranking the partial non-recognition of all other nationalities and passports should also be considered.

Figure 8: Nationalities of Israel, Kosovo, and the Palestinian Territory with Non-recognition Correction

Nationality	Value	Value after Correcting for Non-recognition
Israel	45.1	40.9
Kosovo	23.8	21.1
Palestinian Territory	21.3	19.6

Figure 8 shows the values of the nationalities of Israel, Kosovo, and the Palestinian Territory before and after this correction for non-recognition. Rankings have not been included, for the reason mentioned in the previous paragraph. The correction leads to a noticeable value reduction of roughly 8–12%.

The same correction methodology can be applied to the nationalities with very limited recognition. Only the Travel Freedom score of the Artsakh Republic has not been devalued, for the simple reason that all of its nationals can use the supplementary Armenian passport for the purpose of

⁸ There are exceptions here too. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, for example, has only one embassy (in Turkey) but nonetheless also has representative offices in several other countries.

international travel. This firmly distinguishes its nationality from the other unrecognized nationalities in terms of external disadvantages. The results of the correction are shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Nationalities with Very Limited Recognition with Non-recognition Correction

Nationality	Value	Value after Correcting for Non-recognition
Artsakh Republic (Nagorno-Karabakh)	25.5	25.5
Northern Cyprus	19.2	18.6
South Ossetia	17.9	17.2
Transnistria (Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic)	17.0	16.8
Abkhazia	17.2	16.5
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)	14.3	14.3
Somaliland	9.6	9.6

In comparison with the nationalities of Israel, Kosovo, and the Palestinian Territory, the same correction has a smaller deflationary effect on these nationalities, even though they are recognized by far fewer states. In fact, most of these nationalities are only recognized by each other and a handful of other states, resulting in a recognition percentage of roughly 2–4%.

The comparatively small effect of the correction is explained by the simple fact that these unrecognized nationalities already possessed a very limited degree of Travel Freedom compared to all other nationalities. Consequently, their value is more dependent on the internal sub-elements of the QNI, and very little of their value can be attributed to either Diversity of Travel Freedom or Weight of Travel Freedom. Even a 96–98% devaluation of both these sub-elements entails only a minor decrease of overall value. If anything, this further illustrates the lack of quality of these nationalities, which fail to compete with almost any other nationality in the QNI.

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