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Op-Ed

The Waiting Alien

Waiting in an immigration line is never pleasant. Aliens face long waits, while returning nationals pass quickly by. Waiting in line offers time to reflect; some lines are more enduring and unpleasant than others.

Where I live, in Stockholm, Sweden, the wait at immigration is never more than a minute or two; I look at the quickly-moving line for EU nationals and imagine the day not far off that I can join that line, as a dual national of the USA and Sweden. The line at Seoul's modern Incheon International Airport is much longer, and more bitter. The boundary to Korean nationality, perhaps insurmountable in my lifetime, clearly separates those coming home from us who are visitors. The boundaries of East Asian nations are often a focus of national pride, while the boundaries of the EU (and of ASEAN, and even South America), grow more flexible. With many worldwide opportunities for the highly-skilled, I patiently wait to enter Korea; perhaps I'm a fool.

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