



**CANADA-EUROPE TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE:
SEEKING TRANSNATIONAL SOLUTIONS TO 21ST CENTURY PROBLEMS**
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Europeanizing Canada's Citizenship Regime?

Inder Marwah and Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos*

On April 17, 2009, Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney announced a new law amending Canada's *Citizenship Act*.¹ Prominent among the reforms initiated by the new law is the limitation of "citizenship by descent to one generation born outside Canada."² The new law recognizes children born outside of Canada as Canadian only if one parent was born in Canada, or immigrated to Canada and acquired Canadian citizenship through naturalization. The new law is, in the words of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, intended to "protect the value of Canadian citizenship for the future."³

This followed several speeches that Minister Kenney delivered in months preceding the new law's inception, in which he argued in favour of a fundamental reorientation of Canada's approach to immigrant integration. The Minister's concern regarding new immigrants' incorporation was framed as symptomatic of a larger problem of social cohesion in Canada. In a speech entitled "Good Citizenship: The Duty to Integrate," Kenney noted that Canada's longstanding embrace of diversity must be accompanied by a more deliberate "focus...on the political values that are grounded in our history, the values of liberal democracy rooted in British Parliamentary democracy that precisely have given us the space to accommodate such diversity."⁴

Similar concerns have been voiced by Canadian public intellectuals, garnering extensive media coverage.⁵ Critics, including the Dominion Institute's Rudyard Griffiths, have questioned the tenability of an immigration system whose language requirements are seen as inadequate and a citizenship regime whose easy toleration of dual citizenship affords "citizens of convenience"

* Inder Marwah is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto. Phil Triadafilopoulos is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto Scarborough and the School of Public Policy and Governance. The authors thank Irene Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg and Joseph Carens for their helpful comments and suggestions. The views expressed in this brief are attributable to the authors and not to any institution with which they are affiliated. Any errors are theirs alone.

myriad rights and privileges while asking too little in return.⁶ Griffiths has argued in favour of resurrecting Canada's more restrictive, pre-1977 approach to dual citizenship. He and others have also suggested toughening the naturalization test and increasing the residency requirement for citizenship to further the aim of integration.

This interest in reasserting common values to bond an increasingly diverse body politic is reminiscent of recent debates on immigrant integration in Europe. These often heated discussions emerged out of a confluence of events, including the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid, the Paris riots of 2006 and the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh.⁷ In many cases, policymakers responded by instituting mandatory integration courses, limiting access to dual citizenship and toughening naturalization tests.⁸ Kenney has implied that developments in Europe offer both a warning to Canada and potential examples of how citizenship policy may be revised to serve a prophylactic function, shoring up social cohesion in the face of looming challenges.⁹

Is Canada's current citizenship policy contributing to a breakdown of social cohesion? If allegiance may be inferred in part by individuals' willingness to play a role in the political life of their adopted country, Canada is doing well by any reasonable measure: naturalized Canadian citizens vote at the same rate as Canadian born voters and make a point of following media coverage of elections with greater interest than their "home-grown" compatriots.¹⁰ Naturalized Canadians are also contributing to Canada's public life by running for office and serving as elected representatives.¹¹ Critics of Canada's citizenship policy neglect to note that Canada's toleration of dual citizenship and modest residency requirement have likely played a role in encouraging immigrants' decision to naturalize quickly and thus become politically active more rapidly than might otherwise be the case.¹²

Fears of social fragmentation have been fuelled by the perception of significant value differences between immigrants and native-born Canadians, a gulf that might be bridged by requiring immigrants to demonstrate greater knowledge of Canadian values prior to being granted citizenship. And yet data from the 2000 World Values Survey demonstrates that the gap between immigrants' and native-born Canadians' values are substantially *less* pronounced than those among many other groups *within* Canadian society. While immigrants from non-traditional source countries and native-born Canadians had a 63 per cent overlap of shared values (immigrants from traditional source countries were even higher, sharing 89 per cent of the native-born population's values), differences in values were substantially more pronounced between Anglophones and Francophones (21 per cent shared values), residents of Ontario and the Atlantic provinces (53 per cent), and Quebec and Ontario (26 per cent). These splits were not only regional; Catholics and Protestants had 42 per cent shared values, manual and non-manual labourers shared 37 per cent of their values, and Canadians with a post-secondary

education shared only 26 per cent of the values held by those without. Generational and gender differences both produced greater divergences over shared values than did differences between foreign and native-born Canadians.¹³

This suggests two things. First, considering the substantial overlap between immigrants' value orientations and those of the native-born population, new policy instruments modelled after European examples (mandatory integration courses, more stringent naturalization tests, the elimination of dual citizenship, etc.) are probably unnecessary. Indeed, introducing new demands for integration may create a double standard, whereby immigrants are expected to demonstrate a mastery of Canadian history and culture that native born Canadians lack. Second, Canadians appear remarkably capable of withstanding the purportedly centrifugal force of diverging values. One might reasonably conclude that sharing values is not nearly as necessary for social cohesion as recent commentary would suggest.¹⁴

This is not to say that all is well as regards immigrant integration in Canada. As is widely recognized, structural impediments to economic integration and racism stand out as problems requiring sustained attention among policymakers.

The failure to properly recognize the credentials and skills of immigrants has increased the disparity in income levels between native-born and immigrant populations.¹⁵ Between 1980 and 2000, the percentage of immigrant populations living below Statistics Canada's low-income rate rose from 24 per cent to nearly 36 per cent, while the low-income rate in the non-immigrant population fell from 17 per cent to 14 per cent.¹⁶ This is particularly problematic, given that Canada has, over the same period, increased the percentage of economic-class immigrants from 37 per cent to 54 per cent.¹⁷ While some progress has been made in meeting this challenge, more needs to be done to develop means of recognizing and rewarding immigrants' talents. The federal and provincial governments might focus on working with professional licensing bodies to coordinate programs for weighing immigrants' foreign credentials and providing foreign trained professionals with more opportunities for attaining Canadian experience.¹⁸

The recent focus on values has also taken attention away from ongoing problems of racial discrimination. Research has demonstrated significant variation in the economic performance of immigrants distinguished by race. While "white" immigrant populations experience a degree of inequality, visible minority groups' household income is a full 23.2 per cent lower than local averages.¹⁹ Jeffrey Reitz and Rupa Banerjee's analysis of data from the Ethnic Diversity Survey found that a high percentage of both recent and long-established racial minority immigrants reported experiencing discrimination in Canada (33.6 per cent and 35.5 per cent respectively).²⁰ Reitz and Banerjee also found that 42 per cent of visible minorities in Canada believed that prejudice regarding their race affected their employment opportunities.²¹ They surmise that

experiences of discrimination feed a “sense of exclusion” that hinders second-generation racial minorities’ integration and sense of belonging to Canada.

Making Canadian citizenship more difficult to attain may slow the political incorporation of immigrants while doing little to foster social cohesion or meet the needs of immigrants. Indeed, arguments against dual citizenship and in favour of measures that would compel immigrants to make their allegiance to Canada more explicit run the risk of defining membership and belonging too narrowly, such that it works to exclude newcomers.²² Fostering liberal-democratic value orientations and allegiance among immigrants might be better served by doing more to improve newcomers’ labour market opportunities and effectively combating racial discrimination, while also reaffirming Canada’s longstanding and hitherto successful multicultural ethos.

¹ “News Release: Minister Kenney announces new citizenship law”, April 17, 2009, *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2009/2009-04-17.asp>.

² *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizenship/rules.asp>.

³ *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/faq/citizenship/cit-rules-faq04.asp>.

⁴ “Speaking notes for the Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism “Good Citizenship: The Duty to Integrate” at Huron University College’s Canadian Leaders Speakers’ Series”, March 18, 2009. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2009/2009-03-18.asp>.

⁵ See, for example, “Immigrants must speak our languages,” *National Post*, March 24, 2009; “Canada pays the price of immigration on the cheap,” *National Post*, January 27, 2009; “Strengthening citizenship,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 17, 2009.

⁶ Rudyard Griffiths, *Who We Are: A Citizen’s Manifesto* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009), p. 158.

⁷ For a discussion of European integration policy trends see Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, “Illiberal Means to Liberal Ends? Understanding Recent Immigrant Integration Policies in Europe.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (forthcoming).

⁸ Christian Joppke, “Beyond National Models: Civic Integration of Immigrants in Western Europe”, *West European Politics*, VOL. 30, No. 1 (2007), pp. 1-22.

⁹ “Speaking notes for the Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism “Good Citizenship: The Duty to Integrate” at Huron University College’s Canadian Leaders Speakers’ Series”, March 18, 2009. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2009/2009-03-18.asp>.

¹⁰ Ailsa Henderson, “Ideal Citizens? Immigrant Voting Patterns in Canadian Elections.” *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* (Summer 2005), pp. 57-60;

¹¹ Karen Bird, “Guess Who’s Running for Office. Visible Minority representation in the 2004 Election,” *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadien* (Summer 2005), pp. 80-83.

¹² For a discussion on how integration policies (including naturalization policy) influence immigrants’ political participation see Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

¹³ See Mebs Kanji and Antoine Bilodeau, “Value Diversity and Support for Electoral Reform in Canada,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, VOL. 37, No. 4 (October 2006), p. 7.

¹⁴ For an argument against the importance of shared values for social cohesion see Wayne Norman, “The Ideology of Shared Values: A Myopic Vision of Unity in the Multi-Nation State,” in *Is Quebec Nationalism Just? Perspectives from Anglophone Canada*, ed. Joseph H. Carens (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), pp. 137-159.

¹⁵ Griffiths, *Who We Are*, p. 83.

¹⁶ Garnett Picot and Feng Hou, “The Rise in Low-Income Rates among Immigrants in Canada”, Analytical Studies Branch research paper series, Business and Labour Market Analysis Division, Statistics Canada. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2003198-eng.pdf>, p.13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁸ Jeffrey Reitz, "Tapping Immigrants' Skills: New Directions for Canadian Immigration Policy in the Knowledge Economy," *IRPP Choices*, VOL. 11, No. 1 (February 2005), pp. 10-11.

¹⁹ Jeffrey G. Reitz and Rupa Banerjee, "Racial Inequality, Social Cohesion, and Policy Issues in Canada," in *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, edited by Keith Banting, Thomas J. Courchene, and F. Leslie Seidle (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2007), p.492.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 499.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 526-527.

²² Christian Joppke refers to some European states' integration policies as manifestations of "repressive liberalism." See "Beyond National Models: Civic Integration Policies in Western Europe," *Western European Politics*, VOL. 30, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 1-22. Also see Triadafilopoulos, "Illiberal Means to Liberal Ends."