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L'IMPACT DES CONFLITS (GLOBAUX) SUR LA LITTÉRATURE ET LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNES

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MIGRANT SPIRIT CONTESTED: COMPETING VISIONS OF CANADA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE 2015 FEDERAL ELECTION

Abstract

"Migrant spirit" – the pursuit of a better life and the willingness of a new home to provide opportunities for migrants – is important to Canada's national narrative. However, its precise meaning is not universally shared – it is contested, and it is subject to political struggles to define it. The 2015 Canadian federal election demonstrated how the precise meaning of migrant spirit is debated and contested. Two clear visions were on display, with the Liberal Party's generous vision of migrant spirit proving victorious. While the Liberal Party remains popular, in part due to this vision, it remains that its vision is again being challenged, showing how migrant spirit is continuously politically challenged and defined.

Keywords: National identity – Canada, migration – Canada, brand Canada, politics – Canada, Stephen Harper, Justin Trudeau

Résumé

L'« esprit migrant » – la poursuite d'une vie meilleure et la volonté d'habiter un nouveau pays en tant que possibilités pour les migrants – est important pour le récit national du Canada. Cependant, sa signification précise n'est pas universellement partagée – elle est contestée, et elle est soumise à des luttes politiques qui visent à définir ce concept. Les élections fédérales canadiennes de 2015 ont démontré comment la signification précise de l'esprit migrant est débattue et contestée. Deux visions claires ont été alors exposées dont l'une, celle du Parti libéral qui est plus généreuse, s'est avérée victorieuse. Alors que le Parti libéral est toujours populaire, en partie en raison de cette vision, il reste que sa vision est de nouveau mise en question, ce qui montre comment l'esprit migrant est continuellement politiquement contesté et (re)défini.

Mots-clés : identité nationale – Canada, migration – Canada, marque Canada, politique – Canada, Stephen Harper, Justin Trudeau

Introduction

The 2015 Syrian refugee crisis disrupted national politics across the European Union. Responses varied from the generous (Germany and Sweden) to the harsh (Hungary and Denmark) as the European Union struggled to develop a coherent response to address the significant humanitarian crisis in a climate of growing security concerns. It was not expected that a refugee crisis taking place thousands of kilometres away would have much bearing on the 2015 Canadian federal election, as foreign policy was not expected to play a large role in the election (Smith). The election was expected to be a referendum on the nearly 10 years in power of the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. However, the focus of the election unexpectedly moved away from Conservative-defined themes of prime ministerial leadership on the economy, security and terrorism. One month into the campaign, in early September 2015, pictures of 3-year old Syrian refugee Alan Kurdi lying deceased on a beach in Turkey went viral. Kurdi's family had been trying to come to Canada as a place of refuge; thus, the Harper government's commitment to a fair refugee policy and its response to the 2015 European refugee crisis suddenly dominated the election. While the Harper government maintained that this incident reinforced the need for a cautious approach to refugees, both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party argued that this incident reflected the Harper government's undermining of traditional Canadian values of generosity and a welcoming attitude towards migrants and refugees, which might be identified as "migrant spirit." Responses to the refugee crisis during and after the 2015 federal election reveal much about the Canadian national identity. Migration is central to how Canadians see themselves, and the 2015 crisis forced a fundamental re-examination of how Canadians belong and what their governments should do with respect to immigration and refugee policies in a climate of fears over terrorism. Thus, far from just being an election to decide who would govern Canada, the election became an opportunity for parties to articulate different visions of Canada and the migrant spirit.

Migrant Spirit and the Canadian National Identity

An Australian of Greek origin, writing of his adopted home, said: "My story is not unique. It's typical of the migrant's spirit for pursuing a better life. What is unique is the country of Australia and its spirit for giving someone 'a fair go.' Australia embraced me as one of its own when I arrived and today I am proud to be one of its citizens" (Manolopoulos). "Migrant spirit" embodies the migrant's pursuit of a better life; however, it simultaneously reflects the willingness of the new home to provide opportunities for the migrant to

achieve a better life and to become a full-fledged citizen. While Manolopoulos claims that Australia is unique in this regard, the benefits of migration for both the migrant and their new homeland are central to many national narratives, including Canada's. Proponents of Canadian immigration, refugee and multiculturalism policies argue that this spirit informs and defines contemporary Canada, pointing to a long history of negotiating diversity, even though it was not always easy.

The "Canadian diversity model" (Jenson and Papillon), based on linguistic duality, multiculturalism, and the recognition of Aboriginal rights, provides a framework for thinking about a Canadian migrant spirit rooted in diversity, even though there has been a Canadian tendency to ignore the Aboriginal role in this partnership (Saul). This diversity is not an end in itself; rather, it is part of a broader set of core Canadian values, and in this sense diversity strengthens the Canadian identity (MacKinnon). Subsequent waves of immigration over time linked diversity to the migrant spirit. The deracialization of immigration policy and the introduction of multiculturalism policy in the early 1970s contributed to a growing diversity in the racial and ethnic makeup of Canadian society. Canada is thus a "society of difference" that "accepts and wishes to integrate people from all over the world" (Clarkson). According to Parkin and Mendelsohn, "acceptance of diversity is the norm in the new Canada" (3).

This helps explain how multiculturalism and immigration policies have become core components of the Canadian identity. Kymlicka's "Liberal Multicultural Hypothesis" suggests that "states can adopt multiculturalism policies to fairly recognize the legitimate interests of their minorities in their identity and culture without eroding core liberal-democratic values" (Kymlicka 258). There is broad-based support for immigration, due to perceived economic benefits and pride in multiculturalism, even though the support may be nuanced (Reitz). Public opinion with respect to pride in diversity has increased, particularly as foreign recognition of Canadian efforts to promote diversity was recognized, such as when the *Economist* magazine labelled Canada "cool" on its September 23, 2003 cover, in part due to its embrace of diversity.

Diversity has become a key element of Canada's international brand in order to achieve economic and political goals (Nimijean, *Articulating*; Nimijean, *Politics*). Former Liberal cabinet minister Pierre Pettigrew (*Politics*) argued that diversity informed Canada's "international personality" and was a useful tool for exporting Canadian values abroad to defuse tension in the world's trouble spots. Former Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien (*Canadian Way*) argued that the "Canadian Way," a set of values that defined Canada, included "Canada's international voice [that] draws on its distinct advantage as a multicultural society where people have roots in virtually every country in

the world." After 9/11, Chrétien (*Diversity*) argued that diversity was a tool in fighting terrorism. At Expo 2005, Canada's exhibit was called "the wisdom of diversity." Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has continued in this vein, arguing in London in November 2015 and at the Davos World Economic Forum in January 2016 that "diversity is Canada's strength."

While one cannot claim that discrimination has left Canadian society, particularly given the ongoing legacy of colonialism, there have been sustained efforts to change discriminatory laws and practices. The constant assessing of multiculturalism policy shows the importance of cultural and social diversity for the Canadian social discourse (Padolsky), though critics argue that the promotion of diversity abroad has reinforced a neoliberal agenda (Abu Laban and Gabriel). Indeed, national identities, as they change, are not universally embraced. This reflects important socioeconomic and political changes in society that have continually marked Canada's evolution (Nelles), influenced by an ongoing struggle for inclusion by previously marginalized elements of Canadian society. This implies disruption as well as transformation for the positive. For example, the embrace of multiculturalism and diversity is not universally shared by Canadians, and it sometimes gets questioned politically. Kymlicka notes that Canadians often speak of multiculturalism in terms of "crisis" and "failure" (265). Despite the optimistic embrace of diversity, multiculturalism and immigration, Canadian support is nuanced – "strong, but conditional" (Soroka and Roberton, iv), including along political lines (Reitz; Grenier, *Canadians*).

Finally, national identities are subject to political efforts to define them. As this brief survey shows, there has tended to be a Liberal Party-defined sense of the Canadian identity. This is intrinsic to domestic brand politics, in which competing visions of national identity become key battlegrounds in partisan electoral competition (Nimijean, *Domestic*). This posed a particular challenge for Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (2006-2015), who sought to redefine Canada as a Conservative country and thus embarked on a symbolic restructuring of Canada (Nieguth and Raney). Appealing to diverse ethnic communities and recent immigrants, spearheaded by cabinet minister Jason Kenney, became part of the Conservative government's political strategy for redefining Canada. Importantly, the appeal to recent arrivals and ethnic minorities was rooted not in a migrant spirit narrative *per se* but in a political argument designed to grow the Conservative vote. For example, in the 2015 election, Prime Minister Harper argued that Chinese Canadians and Conservatives shared values of belief in hard work, education, family and faith (Levitz). Thus, while migrant spirit is important to Canada's national narrative, its precise meaning is not universally shared – it is contested, and it is subject to political struggles to define it.

The Conservative Reframing of Migrant Spirit

One of Stephen Harper's political goals was to transform Canada into a Conservative country. To do so, he had to convince Canadians that he was not a threat to their values, and that he and his party in fact embodied them. This required transforming the broad narratives of the Canadian story, including redefining the meaning of migrant spirit. First, in order to gain power, the Conservative Party had to visibly embrace migrant spirit to attract voters and counter claims that its supporters were intolerant, rural, or not open to diversity. In earlier elections, some candidates and supporters of the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance (which preceded the new Conservative Party created in 2003) made comments that were offensive to a sense of migrant spirit and diversity. For example, in 1996, Reform Party MP Bob Ringma said he would move homosexual or ethnic minority workers to "the back of the store" if they offended bigoted customers (O'Neil) while in 2000, Betty Granger, a Canadian Alliance candidate, warned of an "Asian invasion" that was keeping "our own Canadian students" out of some B.C. universities (CBC News). Second, once in power, the Conservatives would need to engage in a symbolic restructuring of the Canadian state (Nieguth and Raney) and a reframing of the migrant spirit narrative. While the new Conservative Party declared that it was supportive of diversity and multiculturalism, it sought to associate its interpretation of migrant spirit with its broader agenda: economic conservatism, security, personal safety, patriotism, and Canadian sovereignty, as outlined in his successful 2006 campaign theme of "Stand Up for Canada."

If the 2006 minority victory was to lead to an eventual majority government, Harper needed to expand his base by moving the political centre more to the right. Harper began speaking of migrant spirit and the Canadian identity, the essence of which was captured in his comments on the first anniversary of his election: "East and West, French and English, immigrant and native born, we are all proud champions of these founding values, all champions of the Canadian way. Conservative values and Canadian values, I think we've demonstrated in the past year that these are one and the same" (cited in Mayeda). In 2015, he stated: "We are proud of Canada's diversity and inclusiveness. The promotion of these values has helped to build our great country where pluralism thrives" (2015).

However, beyond these broad narratives, the true meaning of migrant spirit for the Conservatives can be seen in associated policy initiatives in which migrant spirit was subsumed to the effort to transform Canada into a Conservative nation. For example, in seeking to reform the immigration and refugee system, the Conservatives emphasised economic opportunity for legal immigrants while sending signals to those who did not apply legally (which

seemingly included refugees) that Canada did not want them. This included legislation such as the 2011 Bill C-49, the *Preventing Human Smugglers from Abusing Canada's Immigration System Act,* the 2012 Bill C-31, *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act,* which sought to eliminate backlogs of immigration applicants, and the 2014 Bill C-24, *Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act,* which meant that Canadian dual citizens born abroad could have their citizenship revoked under certain conditions.

Such legislation was accompanied by other initiatives that encouraged legal immigration and emphasized the security of Canada via a crackdown on human trafficking and queue jumpers. This included the 2012 reduction of health care benefits for refugees in order to deter refugees from coming to Canada (since restored by the Liberal government), implementing visa requirements for important source countries of refugees such as Hungary, Romania and Mexico, and even posting billboard ads in Hungary stating that "Those people who make a claim without sound reasons will be processed faster and removed faster" (Creskey). The Conservatives also sought to capitalize politically on an initiative to oblige Muslim women to remove the niqab during citizenship ceremonies. In 2015, Harper stated: "Why would Canadians, contrary to our own values, embrace a practice at that time that is not transparent, that is not open and, frankly, is rooted in a culture that is anti-women?" (cited in Chase). This statement shows how the Conservatives subsumed the rhetorical embrace of migrant spirit to their broader political agenda. This statement shows a clear sense of "us" versus "them," in that Muslim women are presented as outside Canadian values, as opposed to people who are part of the Canadian community that shapes them.

In the end, "the Conservative government has been most skilled in immigrant outreach, while playing to the 'old stock' Tory base, using the language of economic success and national security" (Cardozo). In this case, the Conservatives attempted to redefine Canada's migrant spirit through various initiatives consistent with Conservative political goals, not as a reflection of how Canadians see themselves; this reveals the complex nature of migrant spirit in the Canadian identity. While it is something that is genuinely felt by many Canadians, it is also subject to political efforts to define and redefine it for political purposes. This became evident in the 2015 federal election.

The 2015 Federal Election

The 2015 election was expected to be quite competitive, even though the Conservatives trailed the NDP in many pre-election polls. The split between the centre and centre-left vote – while the Conservatives occupied the centre-right and right by themselves – meant that a Conservative minority

government was still a realistic possibility. It was in the Conservative Party's interest to define Harper strongly in terms of issues that might move Canadians while portraying his major opponents as weak and ineffective, in other words promoting "Brand Harper" (Rankin). The Conservative emphasis on fear and security built upon the narrative that promoted Harper as a defender of Canadian sovereignty. In so doing, it was hoped that the power of affect and rhetoric would lead enough Canadians to support his party even though Harper was personally quite unpopular.

However, Conservative fear-mongering in the pre-election period was perhaps a recognition that their base was collapsing (den Tandt). Such prospects no doubt motivated the continuation of the message of fear. In July 2015, Harper expressed hope that Canadians would choose "security over risk". He complained that

> These guys just don't get it. […] We're living in a dangerous world. We have a responsibility to act, to lead, to protect. […] When the most despicable people in the world brag about their mass murders, when they threaten to carry out further attacks against Canadians, we will not back down, we will not weaken our law enforcement agencies, we will not pull our troops out of the fight (cited in Kennedy, *Harper*).

This theme informed the August launch of the Conservative campaign, which emphasized proven leadership, a safer Canada, and a stronger economy (Furey). Harper's emphasis on foreign affairs was a surprise, as *Embassy*, Canada's foreign policy newspaper, in July noted that foreign policy issues would likely not be important "barring a major international crisis before October" (Smith). Given that Harper became Prime Minister with almost no experience in global affairs, it shows how important foreign policy and visions of Canada have become in the era of domestic brand politics, for there is a connection between global projections of Canada and domestic politics (Nimijean, *Politics*; Howell). This no doubt contributed to Harper's decision to accept a debate on foreign policy.

Conservative advertising labelled Liberal leader Justin Trudeau as "just not ready," and sought to diminish his stature by referring to him by his first name. The NDP was attacked for its socialism and its alleged weakness in dealing with terrorism. Harper's approach was clear: to frame the election in terms of the leader best able to promote a strong Canada that would act internationally to get the "bad guys" and act domestically to protect vulnerable Canadians (Kennedy, *Harper*). Indeed, early in the campaign, Harper bluntly and perhaps callously criticised the opposition's position on ISIS and Syria, stating, "If your policy is humanitarian assistance without military support, all you're doing is dropping aid on dead people" (cited in Canadian Press).

It is a truism to say that campaigns matter, and television pundits often talk about the ballot box question defining elections. In this case, the eventual results – with the Liberals going from third in the pre-election polls to majority government winner and the NDP going from first to third – show that the campaign did matter. On September 2, we had the unexpected crisis that *Embassy* alluded to. The campaign suddenly moved away from Conservative – defined themes of security and the economy because of the introduction of refugee policy as an election issue, due to the publication of pictures of a deceased 3-year old refugee in Turkey, whose family had been trying to move to Canada.

Harper's initially resisted to do more for refugees – he said that "Canada is the largest resettler of refugees per capita in the world by far" – even though Canada was actually ranked 41st (Schwartz). Harper used the crisis to restate his security message. When asked about Canada's response to the refugee crisis, he rather cavalierly replied, "What's enough? What's enough? […] "It's not just enough to turn around and say, 'Oh let's admit more refugees.' We can admit thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands more refugees and we are still going to see those kinds of images." (cited in Kennedy, *Middle* East). He said, "We could drive ourselves crazy with grief" (cited in Fitz-Morris). The polls had an immediate impact, with the Conservatives dropping over the weekend. The Harper Conservatives argued that the Kurdi incident reinforced the need for strong security, continuing action against ISIS, and a cautious approach to refugees. While the Conservatives pledged to take in more refugees, they emphasised that the safety of Canadians preceded the needs of refugees (Triadafilopoulos, Marwah, and White). However, Justin Trudeau's Liberals argued that the Harper response undermined traditional Canadian values of generosity and a welcoming attitude towards migrants and refugees. Polls revealed that Canadians were split; the Conservatives were essentially reduced to appealing to their base (Fitz-Morris), while the Liberals and NDP were fighting for those Canadians who wanted Canada to do more for refugees (MacDonald).

The Kurdi incident thus led to an extended debate not only over Canada's response to the 2015 European refugee crisis but also over Canada's self-image. The photograph of Kurdi had an impact because there was a singular victim as opposed to collective numbers (our senses get dulled), and we had a Canadian connection to the family – they were trying to get to Canada, making this international incident relevant in Canada (Fleming). Moreover, Canadians can be keenly aware of global attention and are sensitive to criticism, so global media attention not only painted Canada in a light contrary to its perceived global image, it again shone the spotlight on how Harper had been trying to recast that image. This shifted the ballot box question from "who could lead Canada in uncertain and insecure economic and political times?" to "who best embodies Canadian values?" As pollster Frank Graves

(2015) stated, "this event and its effects was probably the point that demarcated the shift from an important election about the economy to an historic election about Canadian values."

Moreover, this was important, for it altered the stakes when the major party leaders participated in a debate on foreign policy later in September. The Conservatives hoped the debate would show off Harper's strengths. Instead, it confirmed the Trudeau turnaround. Trudeau had already managed to appeal to progressives, in turn hurting the NDP, by offering a more interventionist, deficit-laden economic platform, according to pollster Greg Lyle. This was in stark contrast to the NDP's very conservative, balanced budget approach (Vongdouangchanh). At the debate, Trudeau argued that the Harper agenda did not reflect traditional Canadian values of helping refugees and acting constructively in the world. Harper tried to attack Trudeau by claiming that Trudeau wanted terrorists to keep their citizenship; however, Trudeau's response about the inherent nature of Canadian citizenship, that a Canadian was a Canadian was a Canadian, struck a chord with Canadians, especially in light of the Kurdi incident. Ever more voters had become interested in how Canadians were acting in the world and how the country and their government lived up to their values in light of a major humanitarian crisis.

This continued Trudeau's attempt to show that the Liberal Party could be strong on security issues while defending liberty. Central to this tack was an emphasis on inclusion, rather than the exclusionary vision of Mr. Harper: that Canada is a country of diversity and inclusion, and that the positives of Canadian diversity came out of acknowledging and learning from darker moments in history, such as the head tax, or "none is too many" immigration that tried to keep Jews out of Canada, as he outlined in a March 2015 speech at McGill University. Thus, Trudeau was able to defend Canadian citizenship while arguing that the Conservative attack on the right of women to wear the headscarf during citizenship ceremonies was fear mongering and dog-whistle politics.

The Liberal surge led to more dramatic campaigning from the Conservatives. The Harper government extended concerns about the wearing of the niqab by Muslim women in public citizenship ceremonies to the federal workplace. Whereas the Conservatives framed this as a positive outlook about an inclusive, open Canadian identity that rejected misogyny, the Liberals argued that Harper was stoking division by not so subtly targeting Muslims. Trudeau again used the patriotic defence of wearing the niqab – "A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian" – not only as a defence of multiculturalism but as an articulation of a radically different view of the Canadian identity, and one that was widely becoming more embraced by Canadians who were turned off by the tone of the Conservative campaign.

In this sense, a debate about migrant spirit entered the campaign, as voters called for actions that reflected their values. Whereas the Liberals and NDP

spoke of the Charter of Rights and a pro-refugee and immigration vision of Canada rooted in multiculturalism, the Conservatives lost focus, moving away from debates on the economy and security (which they believed were Harper strengths) to the culture wars. This culminated in a disastrous policy announcement on a snitch line for reporting barbaric cultural practices, encouraging Canadians to report on their neighbours while ignoring that there existed a Criminal Code which forbade some of the practices they were concerned about. Collectively, the Conservatives could no longer claim to be a party embracing migrant spirit.

That Trudeau went from third to first tells us about the nature of domestic brand politics, in which the emotional connection of values between voters and leaders matters (Nimijean, *Domestic*). Trudeau's optimism at a time of crisis versus the fearful and often condescending tone of Harper was key. Branding involves emotion, and brand politics is about building emotional connections with voters; the election showed how this plays out. The Trudeau victory combined a desire for more progressive government with a tone on refugees that many supported, turning the election into a debate on values (Graves). Graves argues that "Harper may have had the high ground on the specific public opinion around the niqab and citizenship ceremonies, but he was emphatically in the inferior position when the debate widened to a vision contest about which values would define Canada in the future."

In effect, the campaign undid much of the work the Harper Conservatives did to alter historic perceptions of intolerance by embracing migrant spirit. Marland notes that

> the Conservative Party was tone deaf to public sympathy for the plight of Syrian refugees, and the party's gambit to provoke controversy about women wearing niqabs bordered on racism. These issues congealed to reignite the politically incorrect image of its legacy parties, Reform and Canadian Alliance. An image of intolerance caused a brand rethink among the many Canadians who demand greater compassion (121).

Conclusion

The Conservative strategy in the 2015 federal election shows that migrant spirit is far from universal in Canada. The political challenge the party faced – and faces going forward – is how to grow beyond its base – a base that is uncomfortable with the idea of migrant spirit – with more Canadians who believe in the ideal. The Conservatives employed the rhetoric of migrant spirit, but attempted to subsume it to other political goals favoured by its base. Mary Stuckey's concept of "celebratory othering" helps explain the bifurcated Conservative approach. Speaking of American politics, she writes: "In this

contemporary era, when overt exclusion is itself politically problematic, presidents often rely on rhetoric that ostensibly includes everyone while still maintaining hierarchies of belonging among citizens" (6). This rhetoric may seem inclusive, "but does so on terms that maintain existing stratifications and exclusions. It differs from real inclusion in its stress on inclusion not as accepting difference, but on disciplining it into the terms preferred by the dominant culture" (6). As Stuckey notes, an "us" requires a "them," in effect defining some groups as outside the nation (9). In the Canadian case, a "them" had been clearly identified to voters by the Conservatives and they raised the question not only of whether or not they fit in, but on what terms they are allowed to try and fit in. Given this tone, estimates that the Liberals received the vote of 65% of Muslims, with the Conservatives only getting 2%, are not surprising (Grenier, *Liberals*).

For a majority of Canadians, this vision of Canada was not appealing. They preferred instead the inclusive vision of the Trudeau Liberals. Since winning power, migrant spirit has been central to Prime Minister Trudeau's branding of Canada globally. In late November 2015 in London, he proclaimed that "Diversity is Canada's strength," linking an increasingly diverse Canadian population to migration, producing a Canada that is "open, accepting, progressive and prosperous" (Trudeau). Migrant spirit was reinforced when Trudeau made a surprise appearance at Toronto's Pearson Airport in December 2015 to welcome the first plane load of Syrian refugees arriving in Canada, proclaiming "you are home … welcome home."

The Liberal rhetoric on migrant spirit has been buttressed by several important initiatives, including changing the name of the Immigration department from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, expanding the family reunification program, increasing immigration targets, restoring refugee health care benefits, and spearheading a global refugee plan. At the United Nations in September 2016, Trudeau stated: "We're Canadian and we're here to help," noting that Canada welcomed 31,000 Syrian refugees "not as burdens, but as neighbours and friends" (cited in Kupfer).

Trudeau has received much praise for his positions and remains high in the polls a year after the election, in part because his government is not following the trend of many other countries with attitudes and initiatives that are tough on migration and refugees. One of the effects of the embrace of multiculturalism, for some, is that Canada has avoided the emergence of parties of the far-right based on xenophobia, as in some European countries, due to selective immigration, integration policies, and repression of dissent against these policies (Ambrose and Mudde, 2015). The defeat of the Conservatives in 2015 must be understood in this context.

However, it remains that 30% of Canadians were comfortable with the Harper vision, and aspects of his program, such as the banning of the niqab at citizenship ceremonies, were popular with a majority of Canadians. Thus, migrant spirit may dominate the Canadian identity but it is not universally shared. In this regard, the 2015 election revealed long standing tensions within the migrant spirit narrative. Canadians are divided on the welcoming of refugees. Polls in September 2016 revealed a desire of Canadians to do more for refugees, but they revealed partisan splits – Conservative supporters expressed a tougher attitude towards refugees and their claims, leading one polling analyst to suggest that parties are playing to their base in how they communicate positions (Grenier, *Canadians*). Immigration Minister John McCallum also claimed that most Canadians have been asking him to increase immigration levels, yet polling conducted by his department revealed that most Canadians did not even know what current levels were: 59% said the levels were right, while 25% said Canada took in too many immigrants, and only 8% said the levels were too low (Curry). A poll of Ontarians showed half thought Canada took in too many immigrants, a phenomenon linked to Islamophobia (Keung).

There is another crack in the migrant spirit narrative. Kamal Al-Solayee argues that the Canadian media have focused on "feel good" stories; Canadians "had hijacked the refugees' narrative, sidelining what they were escaping in favour of where they had landed" (13). In other words, he argues that the refugee story of 2015 became about Canadians and a "return to the kinder, gentler nation that had gone missing" in the Harper years (13).

There therefore remains a need to critically analyze what Canada is and is not doing. While Harper was criticized for exaggerating Canada's refugee performance and Trudeau was congratulated for setting immediate targets of 25,000 refugees for two years, on a per capita basis Canada has done little compared to some other countries. According to global affairs journalist Matthew Fisher (December 27, 2015), Canada would have had to dramatically increase the number of refugees accepted in 2015 to match Sweden (Canada would need to accept 670,000 refugees), Germany (450,000 refugees) or Finland (210,000 refugees). Not surprisingly, as historian Stephanie Bangarth has reported: "Fast forward to today and a United Nations report reveals that Canada is at the bottom of a top-15 list of industrialized receiving countries, with 13,500 claims reported in 2014. […] We weren't always so unwelcoming, but nor have we offered an open door since the end of World War II" (Bangarth). Even with such comparatively modest levels of refugees, there was a remarkable lack of support for privately-sponsored refugees (Hepburn). Moreover, Canadians did think about how well-prepared we were to support integration (Ditchburn). As she notes, not enough attention was

paid to resources and plans to ensure that the integration of refugees into Canadian society went smoothly.

Because of the ongoing importance of immigration for Canada, migrant spirit will continue to inform the national identity, though as we have seen it is subject to political dynamics. Despite challenges, to date the Trudeau government has successfully communicated the importance of an inclusive migrant spirit as part of the Canadian national identity. However, it will need to ensure that its actions support this vision if Canada is to assume leadership on the refugee file (Milner). This is important, given that there is a significant minority of Canadians who are not comfortable with migrant spirit. Conservative leadership candidate Kelley Leitch is tapping into this sentiment with a proposal that immigrants and refugees be screened for "anti-Canadian values". This reminds us that while Canadians do have a generosity of spirit when it comes to diversity issues, Canadians also express considerable concern over them. A poll conducted shortly after this idea was launched found that 67% of Canadians would support such an initiative, though there is a partisan difference – 87% of C Conservatives supported the idea, while a still substantial 57% of Liberals and 59% of NDP supported also supported the idea (Campion-Smith). Finally, a CBC – Angus Reid survey of Canadian values revealed that Canadians prefer that immigration enhance Canadian economic interests and not focus on the well-being of immigrants, and that minorities should "do more to fit in" rather than having a multiculturalism policy that encourages new Canadians to keep their language and culture (Reid).

Thus, while Trudeau promotes Brand Canada as a model for a world, defending globalism and inclusive diversity even though much of the world is experiencing waves of hyper nationalism, xenophobia, and a backlash against refugees and migration, we must remember that Canada is not immune from such forces. Harper's ploy in 2015 was not simply reflective of a desperate strategy of a losing campaign; he not only embodied but in fact blew out into the open the longstanding discomfort many Canadians have with the idea of migrant spirit. This is a longer-term tension in the Canadian political culture that rose to the surface under the glare of an election campaign.

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