

Randall Hansen

Numbers are not themselves the issue. There are important differences between a situation in which 20% of a country's ethnic minority population come from one country and one in which that population comes from many. Canada approaches the latter situation, with immigrants from around the globe (though China and India together dominate). There are essentially two views on how to respond. The first is to try to accommodate as much as possible the diverse views, interests, and demands of new immigrants through exceptions built into public policy.

The second is try to hold a common set of standards that apply to all members of the society, new and old, with exemptions being seen as an exception rather than a rule. There are different views on the justness of these approaches, but in practical terms the more diverse your immigrant flows the more the second option makes sense. It is a relatively simple matter to make accommodations, including constitutional ones, when a minority is made up of one or two groups. Indeed, Canada has done so historically in the case of French Canadians and First Nations. When people arrive, however, from all corners of the globe, then the only manageable policy is one that creates a common framework for everyone. Rather regrettably, current policy and rhetoric in Canada is going in the opposite direction.