RACISM AND THE NORTH AMERICAN MEDIA FOLLOWING 11 SEPTEMBER: THE CANADIAN SETTING

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IN THE LIVE COVERAGE OF EVENTS in New York and Washington on the morning of 11 September 2001 Canadian media molded the immensely powerful imagery of the tragedy into a concise discourse for Canadian media consumers. Immediately following the World Trade Center’s collapse, Canadian television broadcasts and newspaper reportage represented the sentiments of many Canadians by conveying an outpouring of emotional support for Canada’s American neighbors – as well as the Canadian victims – in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington. Within the first few hours, in an effort to provide explanation and context for the enormously emotional images transmitted into Canadian homes, trends began to emerge from the coverage as news producers and editors selected what they saw as “the story.”

This article will examine Canadian mainstream media over the period of 11 September 2001 through 1 June 2002. Its goal is not definitively to quantify media coverage but rather to point out some major themes and tactics used by the Canadian media in its coverage of events in the United States and the Middle East, and in its analysis of Islam, both political and non-political, following the terrorist attacks.

Attention will be paid to the Canadian media’s portrayal of events in Palestine and Iraq, and of issues such as “terrorism” and the politics of the “Islamic world”. Primary materials will be taken from the two national daily newspapers, the Globe and Mail and the National Post as well as from other major daily newspapers from across Canada.

COVERAGE PRIOR TO 9-11: CANADIAN MEDIA DEPICTIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST

On 11 August 2001, under a large photograph depicting the bloodshot eyes and menacing gaze of a young Arab man wearing a red kafiya over his

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face, in an article entitled "Paranoid Imaginings: Hopes for peace infected by disease of conspiracy," the National Post's Alexander Rose examined what "drives the hate" of the Palestinian/Islamic uprising against Israel. Using materials supplied by the Middle East Media and Research Institute (MEMRI), which was identified as an "independent, non-profit organization" based out of Washington D.C., and the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), Rose proffered the National Post article as a "glimpse [at] what passes for normal, civilized, balanced, rational discourse" by the "cream of Muslim intelligentsia." Evaluating the MEMRI translations of the Arabic press and selected speeches by politicians and clergy, Rose found three major categories of discourse: anti-Semitic, conspiracy-centered, and holocaust denying. Critical focus was also brought to bear on Palestinian schoolbooks for their portrayal of Jewish people and a lack of recognition of the state of Israel. Rose concluded his findings in a resounding critique of the Arab Middle East:

... despite all the golden promises of their leaders ...

Arab countries are poor, oppressed, nervous, pitiful places that can only stare enviously at Israel, a country which enjoys a standard of living approaching that of Canada. Unlike its neighbors, Israel is a thriving noisy democracy with a high-tech sector greater in absolute terms than any other country apart from the United States. Fifty years ago, that land was a desert. It has never lost a war.

Rose put forward a popular orientalist history of the "fall" of Arab and Muslim power from the Middle Ages through to the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. He also asserted that an Arab/Islamic quest for a conspiracy theory to explain the lack of development, poverty and the rise of dictatorial regimes in the Middle East is evidence that the lack of such hallmarks of Western societal development is the fault of the Arabs themselves, and that it represents an intellectual and cultural affliction independent of any external forces.

The underlying analysis driving this reportage is a reactionary and ill-informed vision of the Arab and Islamic worlds. Public accountability has been edged out of the process as the Canadian media is increasingly immune to public review processes, industry or government ombudsmen, and civil society organizations. This has distorted the coverage of complex events such as the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the conflict in Afghanistan, the struggle between Palestinians and Israelis, and threats of invasion by the U.S. government against Iraq. The events of 11 September were depicted through reductive and racist notions of 'truth' 'fact' and 'reality.' The media in Canada, as reflected in the particularly rabid quote above, do not neutrally report facts and stories on the Middle East, but rather reconstruct reality based on the professional and personal ideologies, corporate interests, and cultural and organizational norms and values. Journalists, editors and producers contribute, consciously or not, to the marginalization and denigration of Arab and Muslim
people, and in the process undermine the political legitimacy of Arab people’s human rights including the right to self-determination.

Following the end of the Cold War Western societies triumphantly espoused the dawn of a new age, proclaimed a ‘new world order’ and rapidly expanded existing economic and political programs in what came to be identified as a rapidly globalizing world. Benjamin Barber’s *Jihad vs. McWorld* (1992) and Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993) put forward a monolithic discourse modifying popularized Cold War notions of the West, and its newly minted adversary, the traditional and collectivist ‘other’ with special emphasis on the Islamic world. Whatever the theoretical merit of such reductive theories, they do reflect the paradigm of Western policy towards the Middle East for much of the last three centuries. While largely discredited in academic circles, at scholarly conferences and within publications, politicians and political commentators in the mainstream media have utilized and popularized these terms to frame the discussion of political motivations and actions in a classically orientalist fashion following 11 September. Analysis of policy alternatives regarding the Middle East, Islamic revivalism, and terrorism articulated in the Canadian media, offering counsel for either the Canadian or American governments, and elucidation for Canadians, has been filtered through the lenses provided by such esteemed pillars of Anglo-American intelligentsia as Michael Ignatieff (Harvard), John Ralston Saul, Samuel Huntington (Harvard), Bernard Lewis (Princeton), and Fuad Ajami (Johns Hopkins University). The *National Post* in particular has also made use of American-based spokesmen, lobbyists and members of think tanks such as Daniel Pipes and Frank McCaffrey.

This narrow perspective, predominantly conservative and American in origin, has rendered to Canadians an immensely homogenized Islamic “Arab world” that is characterized by its poverty, dictatorial regimes, draconian human rights record, economic backwardness and social malaise. No mention of the legacy of colonialism is broached, and no analysis of the overt involvement of American and Soviet machinations during the Cold War is incorporated. The absence of such factors leaves the distinct impression that Islamic Arab society, as such, is solely responsible for the current state-of-affairs in the region. That such a succinct estimation could summarize the diversity of geographically heterogeneous societies from Morocco to Afghanistan, and from the Sudan to central Asia defies credible scrutiny. The corollary premises made to distinguish the West, harbor the enshrined hallmarks of advanced civilization. A strong commitment to democracy, human rights, a transparent legal system, liberal capitalist economies, ethical standards of business, and public discourse, are proclaimed as the enlightened and magnanimous societal legacies of the Western tradition. The Canadian media’s promotion of the robust sentimentality, and chest-beating glorification of the facets of the Enlightenment (with additional meritorious pilfering from non-Western sources), is used to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them.’ References to that which is most esteemed within the discourse of European and American societies is used as a discursive tool to dehumanize the subject, and thereby allow for the denigration and use of
massive violence against the 'other.' Racist notions flourish, and discussion promoting the recourse to force-of-arms is accepted as a viable policy alternative in the face of intransigent societies, and peoples opposed to the dominant societal ethos. Bernard Lewis in particular has advocated a "get tough" policy with the Arab world. The mainstream adoption of such a framework in the discussion of political action is emblematic of the darkest legacies of Europe's imperialist past.\textsuperscript{12}

Mark Steyn in a\textit{ National Post} cover story on 9 October 2001 advocated the colonization of Afghanistan, as well as much of the Islamic world, and for the return of the "white man's burden."\textsuperscript{13} The implication, that American policies, colonization and military occupation within Arab and Muslim societies was a benign influence, and that further tutoring by the benevolent and advanced West would advance more civilized Arab and Islamic states, is paramount in Steyn's commentary. He further argued that 19th and 20th century European and American policies of indirect rule (as opposed to direct colonization like that in India), and the ongoing support of client governments, "did a great disservice to the populations of those countries." This disservice, he believes, could be rectified by the imposition of direct colonial rule in Arab and Islamic states today. To those who proposed a sophisticated examination of European and U.S. actions in the Middle East, Steyn countered that the "alleged mountain of evidence of Yankee culpability is, in fact, evidence only of the Great Satan's deplorable faintheartedness."\textsuperscript{14} As with Barber, Huntington, and Lewis, the dichotomy is asserted, and the condition presented to Canadian readers is one of unavoidable conflict:

The most unstable parts of the world today are on the perimeter between Islam and the infidel – places such as the Sudan, where vast numbers of Christians have been slaughtered – and given the vast illegal immigration of Muslims into western Europe and elsewhere that perimeter is expanding. Afghanistan needs not just food parcels, but British courts and Canadian police and Indian civil servants and US town clerks and Australian newspapers. So does much of the rest of the region. Given the billions of dollars of damage done to the world economy by September 11th, massive engagement in the region will be cheaper than the alternative.

America has prided itself on being the first non-imperial superpower, but the viability of that strategy was demolished on September 11th. For its own security, it needs to do what it did to Japan and Germany after the war:\textit{ civilize them}. It needs to take up (in Kipling's words), "the white man's burden," a phrase that will have to be modified in the age of Colin Powell and Condi Rice, but whose spirit is generous and admirable.\textsuperscript{15}
Steyn's condescending concession to the racial sensitivities of African-Americans serving in the Bush White House notwithstanding, the notion that the peoples of the Islamic and Arab societies are in need of "civilizing," and his scheme to attack Islamic teachings and societal achievements through a rampant process of westernization, exemplifies orientalist notions of the powerful dictating to the powerless.

Edward Said succinctly defined his thesis of orientalism and the importance of its use by mainstream media spokesmen to reinforce racial stereotypes in a 2002 *Harper's* article arguing that:

... the original reason for European attempts to deal with Islam as if it were one giant entity was polemical – that is, Islam was considered a threat to Christian Europe and had to be fixed ideologically, the way Dante fixes Muhammad in one of the lower circles of hell. Later, as the European empires developed over time, knowledge of Islam was associated with control, with power, with the need to understand the 'mind' and ultimate nature of a rebellious and somehow resistant culture as a way of dealing administratively with an alien being at the heart of the expanding empires, especially those of Britain and France.

During the Cold War, as the United States vied with the Soviet Union for dominance, Islam quickly became a national-security concern in America, though until the Iranian revolution (and even after it, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) the United States followed a path of encouraging and actually supporting Islamic political groups, which by definition were also anti-Communist and tended to be useful in opposing radical nationalist movements supported by the Soviets. After the Cold War ended and the United States became the "world's only superpower," it soon became evident that in the search for new world-scale, outside enemies, Islam was a prime candidate, thus quickly reviving all the old religiously based clichés about violent, antimodernist, and monolithic Islam. These clichés were useful to Israel and its political and academic supporters in the United States, particularly because of the emergence of Islamic resistance movements to Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian territories and Lebanon. Suddenly a rush of what appeared to be respectably expert material spouted up in the periodical press, most of it purporting to link "Islam" as a whole to such absurdly reductive passions as rage, antimodernism, anti-Americanism, antirationalism, violence, and terror.16
Said’s *Orientalism* has provided an unparalleled tool for the analysis of global cultural and political interactions, specifically those which exist between Europe and the formerly colonized territories of the Africa and Asia. Presented in the form of a discourse, the inherent nucleus of Said’s argument is that to know something is to have power over it. More so, power relationships turn this relationship around, and allow the powerful to establish the terms and parameters by which they “know” the world.

For the purpose of understanding Western interactions with the Islamic or Arab “other” – a nebulous entity made up of the dozens of ethnicities, languages, cultures and religions found in North Africa, the Middle East, Central and Southern Asia – that knowledge, and the power it buttress,” become significant. The large number of sophisticated social, economic and political challenges faced by Middle Eastern societies is not depicted in media renditions of the region. However, the discourse presented in Western mainstream news media, as well as that in movies and other popular entertainment’s rendering of Islamic and Arab peoples all factors into Canadians understanding. That Islamic and Arab people face many of the same challenges as Canadians, strive for similar goals, and share a respect for peaceable lives with the potential for social and economic betterment, should be an idea a distinctly multicultural Canadian society not only shares but endorses. That Canadians have been provided a singularly reductive view of over one billion fellow human beings can only represent a gross failing on the part of the Canadian media.

A positive corrective appeared in the form of a commentary by David Hirst in the *Globe and Mail* on 9 October 2001. Entitled “Bin Laden appeals to Arab frustration, not religious values,” Hirst persuasively depicted bin Laden as not the voice of “Islam,” but rather as the leader of a disaffected political organization, willing to use violence to pursue a self-appointed agenda for reform within the Islamic societies of the Arab Middle East. Hirst clearly outlined how for bin Laden:

> ... this is a clash of civilizations, “the decisive war between the faith and the global impiety.” But, though his address was couched in the imagery of uncompromising Islamism, he did not belabor his doctrines and beliefs. Those beliefs have only a limited appeal to the Arab people. In fact – as Mr. bin Laden knows – a great many of them pine for those ideals of democracy and freedom that the US stands for.

What Arab and Muslim people really object to is that, thanks to the repressive and corrupt regimes that Washington has supported, they have been deprived of [democratic freedoms]. They also object to the way in which, in their eyes, the US tramples on the self-determination of peoples, especially when those people are Palestinian.\(^{17}\)

In spite of the heinous attacks on innocent Americans, Hirst points out that bin Laden’s appeal speaks to a populist sentiment curtailed by U.S.-
sponsored repressive regimes. That "in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, Mr. bin Laden commands a sneaking sympathy that extends beyond his own, ultra-orthodox Islamist constituency. What he says represents what many people there want to say and can't." Hirst's effort was followed by that of Thomas Homer-Dixon, entitled "Why Root Causes Are Important." Homer-Dixon called for the "need to be able to make crucial distinctions ... between culpability and innocence, combatant and non-combatant, and the legitimate and illegitimate uses of force," within the public discourse following 11 September. He went on to berate fellow commentators that "declare that any discussion of root causes legitimizes terrorism by making excuses for it," dismissing such notions, and contending that a distinction could, and must, be made between explanation and responsibility for the attacks. He further charged his interlocutors with avoiding such examinations for fear of where they might lead, the inference being that a true exposition of Muslim and Arab political sentiments and grievances would affect North American public opinion, and effectively alter governmental policies in the democratic decision-making process. He urged readers to look beyond the explanations prevalent in the mainstream media, asserting that issues, such as "the structure and functioning of the planet's economy, politics, and society," commonly examined when other regions of the globe were discussed were ignored by the mainstream media when the Middle East was examined. He proffered that those who committed the acts of terror were not simply, "depraved, mad, or the product of a particularly wicked sub-culture of radical Islam," and that more sophisticated factors were predominant.

In the Middle East and South Asia, they include a demographic explosion that has produced a huge bulge of urbanized, unemployed young men -- the most dangerous social group of all, according to many social scientists. They also include environmental stresses -- especially shortages of cropland and fresh water -- that have crippled farming in the countryside and forced immense numbers of people into squalid urban slums, where they are easy fodder for fanatics. The impact of these factors is compounded by chronic conflict (including the Israeli/Palestinian and Afghan conflicts) that have shattered economies and created vast refugee camps; by the region's corrupt, incompetent, and undemocratic governments; and by an international political and economic system that's [sic] more concerned about Realpolitik, oil supply, and the interests of global finance than about the well-being of the region's human beings.

The receptivity of young men to terror's radical message is enormously increased by this legacy of conflict, dislocation, and -- yes -- poverty in the region. From the refugee camps in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province to
the squalid streets of Gaza, we have ignored—for far too long
—festerings wounds of discontent.22

Mathew Ingram, while not sympathetic to the motivations of the
attackers or the societies from which they came, penned a *Globe and Mail*
article highlighting the role of U.S. oil policy as an inducement to the
reactionary elements of the Muslim and Arab states of the Middle East.23
Ingram noted that bin Laden was "only the latest in a series of Middle Eastern
figures who have become public enemy number one as a result of U.S. oil
policy." Ingram quoted John Sigler, Professor of political science at Carleton
University, who stated that U.S. justifications for the deployment of military
forces in Saudi Arabia, such as the threat posed by Iraq following the Gulf War,
were "largely a fiction."24

The reductive view provided by Canadian media of the Muslim faith
and the people who practice it is similarly defective. Islam and events in Arab
states are generally only portrayed or examined in mainstream Canadian media
when they affect Canadians, or arise as stories examining staggering events of
(often political) violence. The sensationalist coverage made in the public
discourse within Canada equates Islam with terrorism, Palestinians with
gunmen, and profession of the Islamic faith with fundamentalism.25 The
"expert" analysis provided by North American news media frequently depicts
Muslims and Arabs as a monolithic community, by hastily retreating to opinions
based upon the study of the Quran, and the various schools of legal
interpretation arising from Islamic legal and philosophical scholarship, and bedu
tribal society. Such a diagnosis of how the people living in Muslim and Arab
societies are politically informed, the assertion that their motivations are solely
from teachings of Quranic origin, and that socio-religious factors predispose
Muslims to the indiscriminate use of political violence dominate media
coverage. That socio-economic forces, other than fundamentalist renderings of
Islam or 10th century Arab tribalism could affect Muslim or Arab political
action is ignored.26 The French scholar Maxime Rodinson identified such
referencing of Islamic theology in Western academia, when used to interpret any
action taken by Muslims or Arabs, as theologocentrism.27

Like any other religion, Islam clearly holds a central place in the lives
of those who choose to adhere to its precepts. This is most certainly true in
Middle Eastern culture broadly, and in the political discourse in Arab society in
particular. However, it is as misleading to identify any Arab state or political
movement as being representative of Islam and its teachings, as it would be to
reduce Christianity to a single Protestant church, or Judaism to the
interpretations of any single Rabbi. By doing so the "expert" media
commentary renders any possible understanding of Islam gleaned from the
Canadian media, indecipherable and impaired. The discourse promoting a
monolithic Islam in conflict with a monolithic West exists in both the West and
the Middle East in the teachings of many Islamic activists and right wing (often-
Christian orientated) opinion leaders in North America. Statements repeatedly
referring to the Christian crusaders who occupied the land of the holy places in
Arabia, the loss of Muslim Andalusia (Moorish Spain) to Christendom, and the depraved and evil actions of the West to dispossess the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples of their freedom, litter the speeches and statements of Osama bin Laden and other Islamic fundamentalists. Thus, the reduction and identification of the policies and past acts of the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom, or of Western Christendom generally, reflects theo­logio­ism successfully transformed into the reactionary political vision of many Islamic political actors who oppose corrupt and ineffectual Arab states. Put simply, the interpretive vitriol of Islamic activists can better be understood in terms of their political and economic roots. Similarly, the motivations of Christian fundamentalists in America are also frequently cultivated from the derivation of social, economic, and political circumstances particular to U.S. political culture. Indeed, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, in characterizing events such as the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, and again with 11 September, proceeded to characterize events in terms of a “good vs. evil” and “Christendom under siege,” highly reductive language. That the vitriol contained within the calls to action, by religious fundamentalists in many societies, has spawned violent action should be seen as a tactical decision for political gain, rather than evidence of any proclivity for violence inherent within any particular religion.

Nonetheless, such reductive notions are repeatedly reinforced in the media, both in Canada and the United States, as “experts” on Islam are given pride of place in mainstream investigations of events as varied as the Gulf War in 1991, the World Trade Center bombings in 1993, and suicide bombings in Palestine and Israel. American calls for a cleansing of Islam from the violent interpretation provided by oppositional Islamist movements throughout the international Muslim community, bluntly appear as attacks on the broader cultural traditions and societal mores that make up Middle Eastern society. Regimes in states as diverse as Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, the Philippines and Afghanistan are presently challenged by inspired and elaborately equipped Islamist opposition groups. Arab regimes, and the people of the Middle East, are encouraged to remove the constraints, as interpreted by Western leaders and commentators that Islam has conferred upon their societies. However, Canadian and American political leaders, intellectuals, and the English-speaking media do not similarly stress the religious orientation or numerous references to the Christian faith by Canadian, American, or British political and opinion leaders. Such language and imagery are not seen as bearing on the political decisions emanating from Ottawa, Washington, and London. Political violence by the IRA, pro-life activists who bomb abortion clinics or assassinate medical professionals are not seen as being archetypal or even representative of the Christian faith. Groups as diverse as the Branch Davidians, the Unification Church, the People’s Temple or any other aberrant Christian theological groups are usually dismissed and not given the legitimacy of having their views espoused and analyzed by experts in the media. Such an examination, in reality would only legitimize such groups’ beliefs as being within the cannon of Western Christendom. That Christian phraseology and references are common
in Canadian and American political discourse is not seen as relevant, while religious references by Arab political leaders are highlighted within translations by experts within mainstream media. The theologocentrism evident in Canadian media has emerged from a long history of similar views in Western Europe and the United States that have contextualized Islam as a threat to its civilization.

WAR AS THE SOLUTION: JUSTICE OR VENGEANCE?

The Canadian media response to 11 September was, like that in the United States, sensational and emotional with persistent calls for the use of military force to bring about justice. Such calls, especially in lieu of the absence of an enemy state, or opposing military force, were nothing short of highly repetitive warmongering wrapped within a clamoring desire for vengeance. The Globe and Mail carried a prodigious headline on 12 September 2001, characterizing the previous day’s tragedy as “A Day of Infamy.” This unabashed use of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s words that followed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 identified the terrorist acts as being commensurate with a traditional act of war. The media drum-beating saw the adoption of bellicose and jingoistic banners across television screens and in newspaper headlines across North America. “Attack on America,” “America Fights Back,” “America’s New War,” as well as the use of U.S. military operational codenames such as “Operation Infinite Justice,” and “Operation Enduring Freedom,” were reminiscent of media coverage of the 1991 Gulf War and “Operation Desert Storm.”

Increasingly concerns have been voiced regarding media reliance on the military, and the popularization of military life and mentality identified as “militiamen.” Media in North America, and their international colleagues, have had their freedom to cover conflicts involving the United States military incrementally curtailed in the post-Vietnam era. Initially limited to the reliance on military accreditation for access to conflict zones, media now depend on government and military briefings, inside contacts, and professional press kits in order to construct the basic information on which their coverage of events is based. This reliance on government and military sources is made more inhibitive due to the increasing technological expertise required to depict and discern the efficacy of military actions.30 With the onset of the Bush administration’s “war on terror” critics have identified a desire by the U.S. government and the administration to reach audiences, both within the United States and internationally, with a positive portrayal of U.S. government policies and the use of military force. While U.S. news programming adopted a patriotic viewpoint from the moment of the attacks, with TV newscasts framed in electronic bunting and newscasters adding American flag pins to their lapels, the administration and Pentagon nonetheless remained wary of media criticisms of the war effort. Through vehicles of popular culture, predominantly movies and television programs, the Pentagon has increasingly supported and embraced stories and plots centered on military life and engagements. Dubbed the military-entertainment complex the entertainment media saw the cooperation
between the industry and the military as a new twist on reality TV. The focus was on sending reality TV to war, which of course required a military escort, one the Pentagon was more than happy to provide if it was given some discretion over production. Generally the military was allowed to screen episodes to ensure they did not give away operational or intelligence secrets, and some programming acquiesced in giving them final say as to a program going to air. Examples include movies such as Blackhawk Down and The Sum of All Fears, which are to be joined by television broadcasts including ABC’s Profiles from the Front Line, that will tell the personal stories of soldiers in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and beyond, VH1’s Military Diaries which has provided more than 60 soldiers with cameras who will record their days away from the U.S. and talk about how music helps them cope, and CBS’s AFP: American Fighter Pilot, which follows three F-15 pilots through training and then on operations around the globe. In such dramatic presentations the Pentagon trades access to military equipment and expertise – added realism – in return for editorial inputs to plotlines that positively endorse military engagements. This positive portrayal of the military further curtails dissent by making criticism appear not only unpopular, but unpatriotic. Furthermore, the gushing presentation of popular young movie stars portraying U.S. forces in heroic combat instills support for militarism. This phenomenon has been coined as “militiamen” and clearly the military commitment is representative of their belief that such efforts will increase public support.

The headlines and analysis within Canadian media coverage increasingly asserted the bellicose line of the U.S. administration. Culpability for the murders in New York was broadened rapidly as Southam’s Lorne Gunter wrote “... retaliatory measures should be brutal against those directly involved, as well as against those, like, for example, the Afghan government if bin Laden is responsible ....” Scant mention was made of the affect of bombing on the people of Afghanistan as media coverage increasingly attempted to outdo competitors in an effort to appear increasingly belligerent against the perpetrators of the attacks. Such coverage was apparent across the media’s ideological spectrum. Marcus Gee of the Globe and Mail wrote that the U.S. wrath would “shake the world” and that readers should “expect an all-out war on terrorism that will almost certainly include some kind of US military strike. Expect a far more assertive United States, far more willing to throw its weight around and far less likely to listen to the doubts of its allies on the United Nations.” A Toronto Star editorial on 12 September characterized the attacks as “...an unparalleled act of barbarism that Americans took as an act of war ....”

Investigative reports and exposés appraising Islamic radicals built on past reportage portraying Arabs as terrorists, as well as examining the resolve and invincibility of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in their war against the Soviet Union. The new enemy in Afghanistan was made out to be a fierce fighting force, just as Saddam Hussein’s “third largest army in the world” was depicted as a credible adversary prior to the Gulf War, and Iraq’s “elite” Republican Guard has been ever since 1991. Stephen Handelman wrote in the Toronto Star on 12 September that “[the] US administration will have to
mobilize effectively for war against an enemy that has proved himself as well-organized and as efficient as any this country has seen before."

The assumption of the Canadian media was that the United States would respond with overwhelming military force. George W. Bush's pronouncement that "Every nation in every region, now has a decision to make ... either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" divided the world into choosing between pro-U.S. and anti-U.S. camps.36 The media put, even longstanding allies such as Canada, on the spot in the face of increased U.S. unilateralism.37 Faced with the expected reality that the U.S. would act unilaterally, regardless of the positions adopted or objections of other members of the international community, Canadian media opinion strongly endorsed Canadian support and participation in the impending war. The Ottawa Citizen's Graham Greene, opined "... the United States needs to know that its allies will stand with it, including militarily, if its retaliatory actions provoke a wider conflict."38

Responding to the media swell, Canadian Defense Minister Art Eggleton stated, "I think [Canada is] going to play a major role, a frontline role" in any military strike against terrorism. However, media responses categorically lamented the reduction of the Canadian military to a "helpless bystander" through "decades of government negligence." 39 Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, when conferring with the U.S. administration following the attacks, endorsed the inclusion of Canadian forces in a combat role in Afghanistan, a commitment which led to the first deployment of Canadian forces in combat since the Korean War. Canadian forces were to work alongside U.S. forces in hunting down remnants of Al-Qaeda and the former ruling Taliban militia, rather than in their traditional peacekeeping role. However, Canadian commitments in the military campaign were overshadowed by pressure from the United States to tighten their shared borders, increase military spending, and integrate itself further into a continental military defense by joining a Pentagon proposed "continental command."40 Such speculation raised concerns of diminishing Canadian sovereignty. Former Foreign Affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy argued "The more we tie ourselves to U.S. military decision-making, the more we will inevitably compromise the ability of the Canadian government to pursue approaches that reflect our distinctive views of the world and Canada's role in it."41

The Canadian media essentially parroted the U.S. administration in attributing the event to a faceless and shadowy "threat." While the guilt or innocence of Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda organization he led was seemingly unquestionable. This was largely as a result of the sheer volume of media scrutiny condemning bin Laden and Al-Qaeda portraying him as the only possible culprit, while obscuring any other possible suspects. In its reportage, the media either ignored or dispensed with international law, along with the presumption of innocence until proven guilty in a court of law.42 In so doing it failed to serve its traditional role within democratic societies of questioning the potential abuse of power within government. Further, this unquestioning support closed opportunities for the formulation of any potential Canadian
response or critique of the potential broadening of the conflict to include a U.S. attack against Iraq. When questioned about Canadian participation in such an effort, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien stated that the determination of any Canadian participation in any attack against Iraq would be made by Canada alone. When Chrétien told reporters during a trade mission in Berlin "We decide what we are doing with our troops," reports immediately surfaced that Condoleezza Rice, President Bush’s national security adviser, called Claude Laverdure, Chrétien’s foreign affairs and defense adviser for a clarification of the Canadian position.44

Canadian media, in effect, found itself under the influence of media from the United States, and largely was left without the capacity to respond to increasingly bellicose U.S. media calls that ran counter to traditional Canadian political values. For example, when The Washington Times decided it was "Time To Use The Nuclear Option," and U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, spoke of “ending states who sponsor terrorism,” the Canadian media was mute. Confined within a self-imposed “us vs. them” mindset, Canada’s print and television media failed to respond to increasing U.S. militancy, who increasingly broadened the conflict in its pursuit of the perpetrators. James Winter in his book MediaThink has argued that the media’s failure to question government policies “may mean simply overlooking some things, or suffering from apparent historical amnesia, or adhering to what George Orwell called the “prevailing orthodoxy.”45 When, contrary to the Geneva Conventions, American policy-makers and media advocated pursuing civilian targets, Canadian media adopted the U.S. characterization of the confrontation in civilizational terms, and failed to voice disapproval of the expected abuse of human rights in far off lands.46

The expansion of such commentary was a clear consequence of the oversimplification and reductive characterization of the “threat” posed by Al-Qaeda. The attack in New York was portrayed not as an attack on buildings but as assaults on the civilized world itself.47 The U.S. was portrayed not as another country, but as the representative of enlightenment values such as freedom and democracy, as the representative of civilization itself. The Windsor Star editorialized:

The real targets of the hijackers and their flying bombs were freedom, democracy, and capitalism .... It is time to draw a line in the sand. On one side lies democracy, individual freedom, and the capitalism that makes the two most essential qualities of life possible. On the other side lies terrorism.48

The Toronto Star added, “The assault on America is a threat to every civilized nation;”49 and The Ottawa Citizen proclaimed, “this was not just an attack on American targets or U.S. citizens. It was a well-planned and deliberate attack on the very essence of all truly democratic countries.”50 Thus, within days of the attacks, it was already conventional wisdom within the Canadian
media that everything had changed. This broadening of the threat posed by the perpetrators, to include in its purview the entire Western world, including the United States, Canada and Europe, as well as the ideals of the enlightenment which inform western civilization, raised the attacks from terrorist incidents, to a global conflict and then to a clash of civilizations. The result of such spurious argumentation has been the promotion of the policies advocated by the U.S. administration and a distinction between “us” and “them”. It has also led to increased discrimination against minority groups within Canadian society, and to a dehumanization of the victims of the conflict’s military engagements in Afghanistan and beyond.

Evident by its absence within the media’s analysis was any formulation explaining the motivations of the terrorists themselves, or an examination of why anyone in the world would have such antipathy towards the government of the United States. The Toronto Star pronounced that, “It was done without warning, not in response to American aggression but as an act of aggression in itself.” While previous terrorist incidents had been identified and prosecuted as criminal acts, for which authorities deemed the appropriate response was to be legal rather than militaristic, the new “war on terror” was to be prosecuted as a military campaign. The 11 September event was depicted as an unprovoked attack, which had brought about the war that was to follow. Thus, while the act was identified as a provocative call to arms and labeled a war by the media and the Bush administration alike, the response to it would not be identified as such. Further, by not defining the war on terror in legal terms, the terrorists themselves were denied any legal rights under international or domestic law.

That there was any discontent with U.S. foreign policy transgressions was greeted with hostile and condescending dismissals. Arguments that the attacks represented a backlash against U.S. aggression or economic exploitation were also dismissed out-of-hand as the delusional anti-American rants of leftists and oppositional voices of the developing world. For example, Margaret Wente of the Globe and Mail, wrote:

Those who are responsible are most likely men from remote desert lands. Men from ancient tribal cultures built on blood and revenge. Men whose unshakable beliefs and implacable hatreds go back many centuries farther than the United States and its young ideas of democracy, pluralism, and freedom. … Men capable … of giving up their lives for the greater glory of Allah … Men. … with the implacable determination of fanatics.

The Globe and Mail editorialized, “This is a show of power and strength. It is a show of cold-hearted brutality perpetrated by fanatics who have discarded all pretense of humanity or morality.” No-matter what their “foreign political cause, their campaign has now lost all international support and legitimacy.”

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The Canadian media, justifiably outraged by the crime against humanity carried out by the 11 September terrorists, dismissed any argument or acknowledgement of the grievances expressed by groups throughout the non-Western world. Critics of U.S. policies were dismissed as terrorist sympathizers. Jealousy was espoused as the primary motive of those who would criticize the United States. The grievances they expressed were portrayed as, at best, excuses for their hatred of the United States and all that it stood for. The accompanying reductionist view of what the West generally, and the United States in particular, represented undermined dissent and opposing views. Freedom, democracy, liberal individualism, market-based economic growth and advanced technology were opposed by tribal fanatics who adhered to an exotic religion that required elementary explanation for Western media consumers. This reversion to theologocentrism and orientalist versions of Islam and Muslim peoples obscured any possible rational examination of legitimate grievances, and therefore of an understanding of non-Western, non-American outlooks of the contemporary global political environment. In dismissing the grievances of the non-Western world as part-and-parcel of the egregious crimes of the terrorists, the media denigrated and dismissed the legitimate grievances expressed by many in the non-Western world. Furthermore, by reducing the genesis of the terrorist acts to a fictitious religious derivation, all Muslims would thereafter be suspect. Thus, grievances were not seen as the product of an international political environment, including a unique historical experience, where there are profound divisions between rich and poor, and where wealth and power are concentrated resulting in an immense power imbalance.

THE IMPACT ON IMMIGRANTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

In response to the attacks in New York and Washington, much of the focus of Canadian media coverage quickly turned from the attacks themselves to an examination of the alleged perpetrators, and by extension the actions and beliefs of immigrants and visible minorities within Canadian society. While the racist notions inherent within the denigration of Canada’s immigration policies were supported by calls in the media to target those originating from Muslim and Arab countries for security purposes, long-standing commitments to civil liberties enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms were ignored. National Post columnist Jonathan Kay singled out Muslim and Arab Canadians:

We should not pretend that an effective fight against terrorism [in Canada] can be waged in a truly color-blind fashion. The fact is, those who plot the annihilation of our civilization are of one religion and, almost without exception, one race. Yet admitting this is a problem for Mr. Chrétien ... Multiculturalism is a relativistic creed that assumes all immigrant cultures are equally tolerant, civilized and enlightened once you scratch the surface...
The attack on Canadian immigration policy was couched within fears of the alien, the fanatical outsider, the Muslim newcomer who was unaccustomed to the freedoms and tolerance of Western civilization. The *National Post* in particular, continually charged immigrants of the Muslim faith with treasonous acts. The *National Post*’s George Jonas played on the growing fears of Canadians that the violence in New York and Washington could visit them in Canada, carried out by people living within their own community "...We have to fear our neighbors down the street ... a degree of ethnic or religious profiling is unavoidable ... Though few of our neighbors are terrorists, some are sympathizers. They provide the culture in which fifth columns grow ..." 62 The stereotype was not altogether new, as similar castigation of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War saw them interned in camps, and past criticisms of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) for its intimidation and harassment of Canadian Muslims during the 1991 Gulf War saw them characterized as objects of suspicion in Canada’s media. 63

The radical Islamist, who only came to Canada to use its porous borders in an effort to conduct violent attacks against the United States, or support those who wished to do so, emerged as a common synopsis. On 15 October 2001 an editorial in the *National Post* argued, “a small but substantial number of Canadian Muslims and Arabs are willing to assist terrorist operations.” 64 On 31 October 2001 a *National Post* editorial announced that “… Muslims decided that religion overrode ties of citizenship ... so many Muslims use religion to define friend and foe.” 65 Canadians were assured by the *National Post* that the abandonment of traditional Canadian social mores of tolerance and the rule of law were acceptable in the persecution of the war on terror. The *Post* argued “it is hard to get worked up about the occasional slur directed against North American Muslims ... Indeed there is something offensive about the tear-drenched press releases issued by North American Muslim organizations ...” 66

Such reportage directed Canadian fears and anger regarding the attacks in New York and Washington against the entire Muslim and Arab community. The opening caveat of “the Muslim community is not to blame” was generally followed by a merciless reductionism that characterized all Muslim and Arab Canadians as within the enemy camp. Calls were rampant for the federal government to tighten up on immigration policy, and to deport without delay those deemed a threat. Stewart Bell of the *National Post* said, “Through negligence and indifference, the Canadian government has permitted virtually every major terrorist organization to operate within its borders. ... Canada’s vulnerability to infiltration by terrorists is deeply entrenched. Its refugee laws are probably the most lax in the Western world.” 67 This characterization denigrated all immigrants, and long-standing Canadian commitments to refugees.

Editorially, the *National Post* went even further, stating “Canada has been a porous staging area and conduit for terrorist conspiracies in the past. The Canadian government should not wait until U.S. authorities complete their investigation. They need to reform our immigration, refugee and visitor entry procedures now.” The *National Post* was not alone in its xenophobic pursuit of
the alien terrorist. *The Globe and Mail* editorialized that, in spite of the federal government’s overhaul of Canada’s immigration rules in 2001, they “should review the issue again with particular focus on the new war on terrorism.” As the legislation resulting from the 2001 review was still before the Canadian Senate, pressure was exerted to compact the planned five weeks of debate on the new legislation into four days. Initial attention was given to the possibility that the terrorists had crossed into the United States from a Canadian border crossing, an argument that — without any evidentiary basis — gave credence to those calling for harsher measures and increased security in Canada. In a *National Post* column, George Jonas raised the specter of “... the threat of militant Islam, where fifth columns of theofascist storm troopers have infiltrated Western democracies ...”

Within the context of criticism of government policy, the media singled out Arab and Muslim Canadians as being different. The lack of context, and the racist notions informing the reportage supplied those wishing to abet retribution with ample latitude. Attacks on innocent Muslims following 11 September saw mosques vandalized and shot at, young student harassed by classmates in school, and individuals accosted in public. Several incidents were reported, in Oakville, Ontario where five school children with Arabic-sounding names were assaulted. However, the violence, misdirected against innocent Canadian Muslims within the context of the reductive anti-Muslim and anti-Arab representations of their community in the Canadian media, was also extended to other immigrant groups. Southam newspapers ran a wire service story which stated “Those who look like Muslims — but aren’t — say they are suffering from angry fellow Americans.”

While it was also incumbent on the government to gauge Canadian preparedness, should an event akin to that of 11 September occur on Canadian soil, it was not necessary to focus such measures on domestic sources of political dissent and more conspicuously on the rights of Canadian immigrant communities, especially those of visible minorities. This increased focus on security and Canada’s role as a partner in North American defense was increasingly focused on, in the interests of the United States, without any publicly recognized source of a threat against Canadians. The expansion of security and police powers, and the effect upon civil liberties was a story, largely uncovered in the hyperbole and charged atmosphere following 11 September, which left Muslim and Arab Canadians, and those speaking out against government policy, open to public censure.

Canada passed new draconian anti-terrorism legislation that defined terrorism so broadly as to threaten the legitimate organization of protests against government policy, private corporate power, and globalization as embodied in the demonstrations against the World Bank and IMF popularized in Seattle, Prague, Genoa and Quebec City. The legislation (Bill C-36) was broadly designed, dealing with issues as diverse as immigration, charitable donations, privacy, trial fairness and arbitrary preventive arrest. While the government was forced to withdraw and redraft the legislation following the successful mobilization of Canadian civil society, the vilification and demonization of
those who dissent, and the criminalization of dissent, challenged Canadian civil liberties to a degree not witnessed since the War Measures Act was imposed in 1970 during the FLQ crisis.\textsuperscript{73}

THE THOBANI CASE: INTOLERANCE FOR DISSENT

One of the most striking illustrations of the media’s repudiation of those expressing views contrary to the dominant discourse occurred through the vilification and denigration of Sunera Thobani. Thobani called for peace and compassion for all victims of politically motivated violence when speaking at an Ottawa conference on violence against women.\textsuperscript{74} She expressed opposition to colonialism, imperialism, U.S. foreign policy, and the war which the U.S. was preparing to launch against Afghanistan and beyond – identified as the “war on terror.” Speaking in her capacity as a professor at the University of British Columbia; Thobani stated that the United States was “the most dangerous and most powerful global force unleashing horrific levels of violence,” and that US foreign policy was “soaked in blood.” Referring to the enormous pain and suffering caused by the 11 September attacks, she asked, “do we feel any pain for the victims of US aggression?”

The Canadian media attacked her position by vilifying her personally for her feminist views (Thobani is former president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada [NAC] as well as for being an immigrant.) The media further condemned her for questioning the policies of the United States government following 11 September, finding such questions tactless, and her ideas “hateful and manipulative.” Thobani was abused editorially as “vicious” and “hate-filled,” and her receptive audience as “collected wing-nuts.”

Politicians made public their derision. Gordon Campbell, premier of the Canadian province of British Columbia, characterized Thobani’s remarks as “hateful, destructive and very disturbing,” and the rightist Alliance Party leader Stockwell Day said it was “unacceptable” for Thobani “to be saying the things that she did ... at taxpayers’ expense” as the conference had received government funding. The Globe’s Margaret Wente suggested that Thobani was “stupid and morally bankrupt” and blithely argued that the freedom enjoyed by Thobani to deliver her speech at the conference negated her assertion that women were oppressed. Wente went on to voice a common refrain that if Thobani, or those who share her views, are so loathing of the United States foreign policy, “why don’t they live under the totalitarian despotism of their choice.”\textsuperscript{75} Ross Mclemann of the Winnipeg Sun went so far as to call Thobani a “hysterical spittle-spewing ... feminist, equivalent to the Taliban.”\textsuperscript{76} Christie Blatchford, in the National Post argued that the opinions expressed by Thobani reflected the thinking of “those who actually run the country” ... the “ruling elite.”\textsuperscript{77} The speech was even investigated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) following an anonymous complaint for potential violation of section 319 of the Canada Criminal code – inciting hatred against an identifiable group.\textsuperscript{78} The criminal investigation was dropped, but its initiation
sent a warning to others who could potentially speak out against the dominant orthodoxy in the war on terror.\textsuperscript{79}

In reporting the Thobani story the media played to racial and anti-immigrant sentiments. Reporting that Thobani was an immigrant from Tanzania, made it clear that she came to Canada from "somewhere else" that was far away from Canada. The assumption is that immigrants are lucky, should be grateful for Canadian hospitality, and are not true Canadians.\textsuperscript{80} While many in the media postulated that their criticisms were based on the insensitivity and timing of Thobani's speech, the inclusion and focus on her immigration to Canada and position as a non-white voice making strong public commentary, her feminist political convictions, including a deep concern for those dying at the hands of political violence the world over and not just those who were murdered on 11 September, created controversy rather than bringing attention to the issues.\textsuperscript{81}

THE EVILS OF TERRORISM AND THE CONNECTION WITH ISRAEL

North American media not only played to racial and anti-minority sentiments, but also portrayed a threat to Canadian society and well-being out of all proportion with events following 11 September. Canadians were led to believe further attacks were imminent, would be of increasing intensity, and that they would be targeted as Westerners. Moreover, reportage consistently equated the emotional fears and sense of loss and vulnerability felt by many Canadians following 11 September with those of the people of Israel. The sense of foreboding and vulnerability facing Israeli civilians was highlighted, especially in the \textit{National Post}, as commentators and stories emotively illustrated the effects of the \textit{intifada}, and especially the horrific devastation of suicide bombings, on the Israeli populace. Israeli fatalities and injured were often named, and the locations and activities they were carrying out at the time of the attacks lent not only sympathy but also an intimate awareness, connecting readers with Israelis who were attacked while shopping, eating pizza, dancing in a nightclub, riding a bus or attending a family meal. This intimacy obliged Canadians to identify with the slain.

Innocents slain through suicide bombings are clearly recognized as victims under any understanding of the Western cannon of ethics. Indeed, the targeting and murder of civilian non-combatants is not accepted in any legal, moral or ethical code the world over. However, Palestinians, who were living under military rule, were being killed at horrific levels through clashes with the IDF, and more so due to the routine incursions and permanent occupation of refugee camps and towns. Innocent Palestinian victims were not afforded the same intimate depictions as their Israeli neighbors. Within the Canadian media, mention of the misery and sufferings of the Palestinian people were perfunctory at best in comparison. Palestinians, many living in squalid conditions in refugee camps, have been forced to endure an endless occupation now entering its thirty-fifth year. The daily encumbrance and humiliation of military checkpoints, arrest without charge, inability to move freely from one Palestinian town or area
to another, curfews, and periodic household searches have devastated an already anemic Palestinian economy, and had untold consequences on the social fabric of an entire society.82 Palestinians, Iraqis and victims of U.S. bombings in Afghanistan, have remained largely ignored in media coverage, and concerns raised regarding their well-being are usually dismissed. Media coverage in Canada, suspiciously and with singular devotion, has focused, not on the human toll of increasing levels of hostility, but rather focused on the use of terror by Arab and Islamic political organizations. The predicament endured by civilians faced with aerial bombardment, the concomitant devastation of societal infrastructure, economic ruin, prospects of migration and a future as a refugee, as well as the pernicious and spiraling increased use of violence by other political, religious and ethnic groups within Afghani, Iraqi, or Palestinian society in the face of such trenchant social dislocation, is not examined.

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**Figure 1**
Deaths in Palestine/Israel Following Outbreak of the Intifada.

| Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli security forces – 981 | Israeli civilians killed by Palestinian civilians – 122 |
| Of them: Minors under age 18 – 219 | Of them: Minors under age 18 – 17 |
| Palestinians security forces personnel killed by Israeli security forces – 246 | Israeli security forces personnel killed by Palestinian civilians – 100 |
| Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli civilians – 19 | Israeli security forces personnel killed by Palestinian security forces – 8 |
| Five foreign citizens were killed by Palestinian civilians, two of them members of the International Presence in Hebron; | Five foreign citizens were killed by Israeli security forces; |

Figures cover the period from 29 September 2000 to 7 June 2002 and are provided by The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories [www.btselem.org]. In addition the Palestine Red Crescent Society [www.palestinercs.org/] has estimated that 19,365 Palestinians have been injured since the outbreak of the intifada on 29 September 2000 (Figures inclusive to 7 June 2002).

The coverage of Israel, its policies in the Occupied Territories and its military operations abroad, have been a sensitive matter since the founding of the Jewish state.83 The events of 11 September provided an opportunity for the Israeli government of Ariel Sharon to portray the Palestinian intifada as the equal of the attacks on New York and Washington. With the United States now aggressively pursuing Islamic militants across the globe, using military means to address an egregious attack on civilian targets in New York, Israel set out to portray itself as facing a similar adversary, thereby justifying similar
retaliation.\textsuperscript{84} Media coverage in Canada was ebullient in its attempts to depict Israel in such a fashion.\textsuperscript{85} Israeli victims were sketched in a fashion stimulating empathy while Palestinian victims remained largely unmentioned. The \textit{National Post} and the rest of the Southam newspapers have maintained their editorial policy of not criticizing Israel, while the \textit{Globe and Mail} has provided coverage that endeavored to provide balance through an approach that produced articles depicting “both sides” in practically equivalent column inches. This more balanced approach however failed to provide an over-riding analysis and led to criticisms from pro-Israeli commentators of the “moral equivalency” between terrorists and Israelis,\textsuperscript{86} and from defenders of Palestinians, of the \textit{Globe and Mail}'s egregiously failing to depict the humanitarian devastation meted out on Palestinian society.

When Israeli actions garnered criticism from civil society and states in the international community, the Canadian media deflected the admonitions with coverage, either attacking the merits of Israeli interlocutors, or through presentation of the rationale that such criticisms were unwarranted during such a perilous time.\textsuperscript{87} When Israel reoccupied West Bank towns a barrage of criticism from the international community was met with strong defense of Israel. Christie Blatchford argued in the \textit{National Post} that the “lesson” of 11 September was being ignored by “the rest of the civilized world” as the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1402 (30 March 2002) calling for Israel to withdraw from the West Bank.\textsuperscript{88} She stated that 11 September brought:

\begin{quote}
... instantaneous recognition that terrorism knew no boundaries and could come to any shores; that it required a hard, fast response (and one came from everywhere that mattered except Canada ...); an immediate kinship with Israelis and the stuff of their daily lives.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Blatchford, in addressing critiques of U.S. foreign policy asserted that “whatever the previous foreign policy wrongs by the United States, they did not warrant or justify the slaughter of innocent civilians.\textsuperscript{90}

However, the slaughter of innocent civilians was precisely what was then occurring in Palestine and Israel in March and April 2002. While the toll of suicide bombers was given ample coverage, the open fighting between Israeli military forces and Palestinians defending their homes was virtually ignored. The argument advanced was that innocent Palestinians who are killed, maimed and injured are (albeit sadly) tolerable sacrifices in the war on terror. That Israeli victims were to be mourned and avenged however was a common refrain. During this period, when the international community called for restraint on the part of both Palestinians and Israelis, highlighting a respect for innocent victims, no-matter their ethnicity, religion or citizenship, the Canadian media vociferously called on the Canadian government to support further Israeli actions.\textsuperscript{91}

Even the reductive analysis common in past reportage of Palestinian activists was increasingly abandoned for \textit{ad hominem} attacks on Palestinians as
a people. Daniel Pipes writing in the National Post quoted University of London Professor Efraim Karsh, distinguishing the Palestinian people as legitimate targets:

One can argue that the Iraqi and Afghan populations are not parties to the aggression of Saddam Hussein and the Taliban, and so are not America's enemies, but that's plainly wrong when it comes to the Palestinians versus Israel. Every piece of evidence suggests and every opinion poll confirms that the Palestinian assault on Israel is a wildly popular undertaking...

... The implication is clear: If Israel is to protect itself, it must achieve a comprehensive military victory over the Palestinians ... ending the Palestinian assault will be achieved not through some negotiated breakthrough but by Palestinians (and Arabic-speakers more generally) concluding that their effort to destroy the Jewish state will fail ...  

The disregard for any resultant casualties in such an offensive appear tolerable to the greater cause of Israeli security. Palestinians were consistently portrayed as the aggressors; linked with terrorism rather than as a people living under military occupation pursuing their legitimate right of national liberation and self-determination.

The criticism of Arab and Islamic peoples and governments continued unabated with a Southam News editorial assessing the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Malaysia on 2 April 2002, and blaming the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership for the outbreak of the intifada and the ensuing bloodshed. It called for the use of force against the PA to coerce Palestinians to understand that they could "never hope to have a country so long as they embrace the apocalyptic creed under which suicide bombers - and Palestinians who cheer them on - explode themselves."  

Mark Steyn, in a National Post article entitled "Appeasing Arab hate puts the lie to 'Never Again'", attacked the Canadian government's position that Israel's response to a suicide bombing that took place on the Jewish Passover, 27 March 2002 should be measured. Steyn portrayed what he described as the "similarities then and now", the then being the period of the Jewish Holocaust at the hands of the Nazis. Condemnations and muted concern from the Canadian and various European governments questioning the Israeli military retaliation in the Occupied Territories, were painted as being inspired purely by anti-Semitism.

In such a milieu, where any criticism of Israeli policy or action is equated with anti-Semitism, there can be no dialogue, no appraisal of an appropriate response, and no voicing of concern with the innocent victims on either side as increasing bellicosity forces the reader to select a "side." Jonathan Kay went further still, arguing in a National Post commentary that:
To have a dialogue, interlocutors need some baseline quantity of shared values. It is not clear that Arabs and Westerners can satisfy that baseline any longer. ... The fact that we are now in a "clash of civilizations" with the Islamic world is old news. ... Now, however, the main front in the debate over terrorism has shifted to Israel — whose destruction is so fervently wished for among Arabs that the plain words of the Prophet himself are mutilated daily in order to remove any hindrance to slaughter. 96

This prescription, allowing no critical analyses of Israeli action, undermined all Canadian notions of multiculturalism, tolerance, and turned a blind eye to Canadian support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people.

CONCLUSION

The Canadian media response to the events of 11 September was sensational, emotional, and repetitive. Through clamoring for vengeance, wrapped within hyperbole and rhetoric, little in the way of alternatives was provided to the policy responses advanced by both the Canadian and U.S. governments. The Canadian media persistently supported the U.S. resort to war in Afghanistan, presented the hostilities as a justified response in the face of the terrorist attacks, and advanced dubious notions of a future threat. The threat was portrayed in an extensive series of exposés and analyses of the evils of terrorism, which suspiciously, and with singular devotion focused on the use of terror by Arab and Islamic political organizations, while disregarding the use of violence by other political, religious and ethnic groups.

This chauvinistic patriotism exhibited towards the United States did not adequately allow for the expression of the full range and diversity of opinion and viewpoints that exist in Canadian society. The media accepted the immediate charges of the Canadian and U.S. governments against Al-Qaeda, and portrayed those identified as guilty without exacting a modicum of scrutiny. Acceptable standards of jurisprudence standardized in the Canadian criminal justice system, sanctified within Canadian traditions of innocence until proven guilty, recognized as pillars of a free and democratic society, were ignored. Concurrently, the humanitarian consequences of the punishment meted out in Afghanistan, as a clear consequence discernable from the decision to bomb, invade, and promote insurrection within a poor and war-torn country, was left largely unexplored. Those in authority in Washington and Ottawa were not held to meet any transparent burden of proof to support a war effort, to identify those responsible, or for the draconian alterations of Canadian law that would stifle dissent and limit domestic political opposition. The media consistently portrayed war as the solution to the crisis, and regularly confused justice and vengeance.
The media perspective evidenced such uniformity that it was difficult to discern one media organization from another. The *National Post*, clearly the leader of those seeking an aggressive response, carried barely a single critical word objecting to U.S. policy responses, except for calls for a swifter and more robust execution of government policy against ethnic minorities, immigrants, and those who expressed dissent within North American society. Literally hundreds of issues were filled with likeminded columnists, editorials and news stories championing the cause of retribution and war against an ill-defined adversary. The *Globe and Mail*, historically the host of mainstream criticism of the government, expanded socio-political coverage and an open debate with regard to Canada’s response and relationship with the actions of the United States but was robustly supportive of “America’s New War.” The absence of any critical examination of the U.S. policy response to the attacks, for both its domestic and international consequences, failed to provide Canadians with a range of policy options or understandings of the events in the aftermath of 11 September. The absence of any critical examination of the implications and reaction against past U.S. foreign policy, as well as its responses to the attacks, must be identified as the major failure of the Canadian media following 11 September. The ability of Canadian society to tolerate voices of dissent, and a willingness to challenge media-endorsed orthodoxies that reflect the beliefs of the majority of Canada’s establishment, are the litmus test of a robust civil society as demonstrated within a democratic institution such as the media.

The uniformity of commentary exhibited a jingoistic, chauvinistic, and patriotic rejection of historical context in examining the attacks themselves, Islamic and Arab societies, and Western (and more specifically American) political and economic interests and involvement within the Islamic world generally and the Middle East in particular. However, this negative and pejorative terminology reflected a larger problem within the Canadian media. Racism, in the form of anti-Islamic xenophobia, and irrational suspicion of immigrants, prevailed at a time when diverse perspectives were most required. The Canadian media’s lack of diversity in the opinions and voices present within its coverage, and over-representation of voices espousing the views of private concerns and traditional ideological centers of power, ignores the historical, political, cultural, and institutional contexts within which racism has existed in Canada. The immense volume of coverage devoted towards self-examination and self-incrimination, couched as oppositional criticism, was launched against Canadian immigration practices and policy, its military spending and preparedness, its border control, police and intelligence agencies, and its national energy and security policies, particularly in light of US security concerns.

The blend of the xenophobic fears of the “other”, and that of terrorism, provided media consumers in Canada with a clear path to the conclusion that Islam was a faith in which acts of unspeakable violence were acceptable and that terrorism was endemic to Muslim and Arab culture. This framed Arab and Muslim societies and individuals as somehow fundamentally different from the average Canadian. By refusing to represent the diversity of Islam as a faith,
the obfuscation of its tenets, and through their lack of coverage of the articulated ideas of Muslims the world over endorsing peace and supportive of human rights, the media conducted reductive exercises of the highest order. However, none of these facets of mainstream Canadian news media coverage were novel or unusual. An examination of issues most often presented within the ill-defined category of “Middle Eastern news,” the methodology and diversity of the discourse adopted, and more broadly the reliance on racist notions within Western media and society generally and Canadian media and society specifically has been extensively documented elsewhere.98

What did change post-11 September was the level of intensity, and the sheer volume of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-dissent materials and opinions contained within the mainstream media. That the “Islamic world” was now collectively engaged in a war against Western interests and values was an assumption woven throughout the coverage. This was manifest as political groupings as diverse as Al-Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hizbollah, the Palestine National Authority and the governments of Iraq, Iran, Syria, the Sudan and even Egypt and Saudi Arabia – which as longstanding U.S. strategic allies had previously been immune from criticism – were presented as being equally capable of terrorism against the West. Collectively, they were congealed into a single constituency and presented as a “threat” to Western states and the enlightenment ideals and intellectual fabric upon which Western society ostensibly rests. Such a gross and wide-ranging reductionist assertion was reminiscent of Western views of ‘the world of Islam’ in the Middle Ages, rather than the diverse and cosmopolitan society known to a rapidly globalizing international community.

This conveyance by the media ignored any historical context in examining the underlying political discontent against the West manifest throughout the Islamic world. In effect, the media rejected any critical examination of U.S. policy in response to 11 September and this must, in short, be identified as the major failure of the Canadian media following 11 September. Canadian news media emulated their American counterparts, and uniformly failed to perform their traditional watchdog function over the Canadian government in analyzing and presenting alternatives to the selection of government policy. Professional, independent, campus and community media all share the highest ideals of protecting media independence from censorship by political, government or private interests. This independence has long been held to be a pillar of Western democracy as the public airwaves and press are deliberately saturated with questions regarding policy choices and government action (or inaction), as well as challenges to authority, in an effort to provide a voice to the diverse viewpoints of a cosmopolitan multicultural society. Journalists have long promoted this idealized representation of their profession, in spite of its contradictory nature with the international business climate of media conglomerates. Acting in the public interest, in an effort to provide a full exploration of possible policy alternatives, is the ideal of a free press. The public interest aspect of a private industry is plainly only served if the media provide a wide range of opinion and analysis to the consuming public. Thus, in
order to meet the standards prescribed for a democratic society, and ensure the public interest, the coverage following 11 September lacked the level of diversity, inclusion and openness to alternative voices required.

Canadians have been provided a singularly reductive view of over one billion fellow human beings, a failure that represents a gross miscarriage of the role of the Canadian media accurately to portray international peoples and events required within a democratic society. In doing so Canadian media has ignored the reality that territorial ambitions, ethnic differences, and political machinations drive conflicts, as much in the Middle East as they do elsewhere. The media has thereby depicted the Islamic people and the states of the Middle East in a manner not consistent with standards applied to other regions, topics, and peoples. Islamic revival is a real entity, and ranges from intellectual debates exploring Enlightenment philosophy, to the fashioning of practical strategies for development within Muslim societies, to the militant rejection of all Western influences. Interestingly, challenges to secular liberal values at world forums such as the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which witnessed a convergence of values between the Vatican, Islamic revivalists and U.S.-based Christian fundamentalists, failed to be presented as an Islamic threat to Western values of secular government.99 The many different varieties of this revival, and the commitment advocated for political and social change, have resulted in a great many different responses, from both governments and civil societies. From West Africa to East Asia, Islamic societies have proven themselves vibrant and craving of the opportunity for economic and social development.

This was wholly ignored in the Canadian media’s focus on the parade of investigative reports, backgrounder news items and “expert” analyses of the conflict in Afghanistan, of Iraq and Palestine, and most poignantly of the discontent expressed within the Muslim world. Canadian media coverage should portray Islam, Muslims, and Arab societies within their distinct social contexts. By reductively portraying these diverse societies into the caricature of “Islamic fundamentalism,” and by frequently repeating the orientalist insistence that Islam is a threat to global stability, they have, more deeply popularized the mythology surrounding the threat of the “other” in the minds of Canadians.100

ENDNOTES

1. The research design and implementation as well as the conclusions drawn here are the sole responsibility of the senior author.
3. Sources identified included Al-Istiqal the Palestinian Islamic Jihad weekly; Al-Akhbar the Egyptian government daily; Akher Sa’ah the Egyptian
government weekly; *Al-Wafd* the Egyptian opposition daily; *Al-Hayat* *Al-Jadida* the Palestinian Authority daily, and the *Syrian Times* the Syrian official English language periodical. Notably absent were the English language weekly's from Egypt, *The Middle East Times*, and *Al-Ahram Weekly*, as well as mainstream Arabic periodicals such as *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), *Al-Jamhuriyah* (Cairo), *Al-Akhbar* (Cairo), *Al-Arabiya* (Cairo), *Al-Ahali* (Cairo), *Al-Ray* (Jordan), *al-Dustor* (Amman), *al-Kuds al-Arabi* (London and Jerusalem), *Al-Kuds* (Jerusalem), *Al-Hayat* (London and Beirut), *Al-Safir* (Beirut), *Al-Nahar* (Beirut), *Al-Amal* (Beirut), *Al-Thawra* (Baghdad), *Al-Jamhuriyah* (Baghdad), *Babil* (Baghdad), *Al-Thawra* (Damascus), *Tishreen* (Damascus), *Al-Khalij* (Dubai, United Arab Emirates), *Al-Bayan* (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates), *Akadh* (Saudi Arabia), *Al-Riyadh* (Saudi Arabia), *Al-Ray Al-Am* (Kuwait), *Al-Qabas* (Kuwait) and *Al-Watan* (Qatar).

4. Presumably translations from a third party source are employed because Rose, or other staff writers at the National Post, are unable to read the Arabic language press themselves.


9. Barber examined the tension between traditional or 'tribal' societies and secular modern societies and the latter's adoption of globalization, which he argued clashed at every point around the globe with the tribal societies. Both were presented as a threat to democracy and liberal secular institutions.

10. See: Christopher Vasilopoulos, "Clash of Civilizations: Prophecy or Contradiction in Terms?" in this ASQ issue.

11. Saul is the husband of the Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, and a public intellectual who as an essayist and novelist has penned *The Unconscious Civilization*, which won the 1996 Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction and the Gordon Montador Award for the Best Canadian
Non-Fiction Book on social issues (1996). It was the concluding book of a philosophical trilogy, the first two volumes being Voltaire's Bastards - The Dictatorship of Reason in the West and The Doubter's Companion - A Dictionary of Aggressive Common Sense. He drew his conclusions about this trilogy with On Equilibrium in 2001.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid. Emphasis added by author.


18. Ibid.


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.


24. Ibid.


28. Following the 19 April 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, media speculation was rampant that the attack had been carried out by Islamic or Middle Eastern terrorists. The attack, in which 168 people were killed, was then the worst terrorist incident in U.S.
history. The most blatant anti-Muslim commentary came from CBS News' Steve Emerson, who argued that the fact that so many people were killed in the Oklahoma City bombing was evidence that Arabs were responsible: "This was done with the intent to inflict as many casualties as possible. That is a Middle Eastern trait." (CBS News, 4/19/95) See: "The 'Experts' Speak: Some of the most cited anti-terrorism sources — and their 'credentials,'" *Extra!* (Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting). (July/August 1995) [http://www.fair.org/extra/9507/terror-experts.html].

29. On 13 September 2001 right-wing televangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson appeared on Robertson's TV show The 700 Club, where Falwell blamed "the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists and the gays and lesbians ... the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way" and groups "who have tried to secularize America" for what occurred in New York. Robertson replied, "I totally concur." The program is carried by the Fox Family Channel, which is owned by the Walt Disney Company. Robertson then took the liberty of pointing his finger at all Muslims by doing a series of news reports called "The Jihad Trail," which were critical of Islam as a violence-oriented faith. "... Maybe 100 million to 150 million Muslims who are fundamentalists ... take the words of Mohammed that are in the Koran that basically say kill Jews and Christians .. [to] launch a jihad against those who don't believe in Allah and submit to Islam." See: Dan Kennedy and Harvey Silverglate. "How the terrorist crisis threatens our personal liberties: As we wrap ourselves in the flag, let's not forget to cling tightly to the Bill of Rights." *The Phoenix.com: Boston's Alternative Source* (27 September -4 October 2001); see also: Sara Diamond, "The Threat Of The Christian Right," *ZMagazine* (July/August 1995). [http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/july95diamond.htm].


31. Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are reported to have personally signed off on Profiles.

32. AFP, produced by Top Gun creators Tony and Ridley Scott, had already completed production on its first season before 11 September, but the pilots were reinterviewed following their war experience in Afghanistan.

in Afghanistan.” Media Matters (PBS) [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/mediamatters/302/journalists.html].

34. A strong argument against this trend was voiced by Michael Ignatieff in a National Post commentary in which he attacked the degree of vengeance then being expressed by commentators and political leaders in North America especially in lieu of the fact that “that when democracies declare war, liberties at home frequently suffer.” Michael Ignatieff, “US rage a risk to liberty: History shows that ill-planned retaliation encourages terrorism,” National Post, 18 September 2001.


44. Ibid.


46. Columnist Ann Coulter wrote in The New York Daily News, for example, that: “This is no time to be precious about locating the exact individuals directly involved in this particular terrorist attack. ...We should
invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity. We weren’t punctilious about locating and punishing only Hitler and his top officers. We carpet-bombed German cities; we killed civilians. That’s war. And this is war.”


53. The vitriol and condemnation crossed ideological lines as well as conservative academic Chalmers Johnson was attacked by many who in media references had surmised that his 2000 book *Blowback*, was a simplistic indictment of U.S. foreign policy and used by ‘apologists’ to explain the terrorists. In fact Chalmers argued that U.S. interventionist foreign policy and military overextension would lead to unintended and unpredictable consequences. See: Chalmers A. Johnson. *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, Incorporated, 2000).


56. Ibid.
57. A strong counterargument was penned by Linda McQuaig in the *National Post* as she examined the role of poverty and need for economic growth to combat the discontent and upheaval that led to terror. She argued that the focus of the U.S. government response should not ignore the inequalities resulting from globalization and international economic policies favorable to U.S. business interests, and called on her fellow commentators to accurately portray long-standing and legitimate grievances with U.S. policy. See Linda McQuaig, "Atrocities continue cycle of vengeance: All-consuming war is exactly what the terrorists want," *National Post*, 24 September 2001.


59. Others who choose to use violence to advance their political objectives do not suffer a similar analysis or the dismissal of their respective causes. Christian fundamentalists who assassinate doctors who perform abortions, or who use explosives to bomb abortion clinics, Irish Catholics who use terror against British occupation, Timothy McVeigh's attack in Oklahoma City against the U.S. Federal building all are not reduced to their "Christian" heritage in an effort to explain motivation, nor is the search for self-determination by the Irish people or the anti-free choice position of those against a woman's right to control her own body dismissed as a result of such vulgar terrorist assaults on their fellow citizens.


72. Gary Kinsman, Dieter Buse and Mercedes Steedman examined Canadian national security in their book Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies. They found that "national security" rests on notions of the interests of the "nation", "which is delimited by capitalist, racist, patriarchal, and heterosexist relations." They examined how the Canadian security and police apparatus monitored high school students, gays and lesbians, trade unionists, left-wing political groups, feminists, consumer's associations, Black activists, First Nations people, and Quebec sovereignists in an effort to keep Canadians "safe". In doing so the authors highlighted threats to Canadian democracy that still persist following the end of the Cold War. Such activities continue unabated, with police 'surveillance' and 'intelligence gathering' publicly acknowledged as a necessary precaution to 'protect' Canadians from demonstrators at the 1997 APEC summit at Vancouver, the April 2000 meeting of the FTAA in Quebec City, and the June 2002 meeting of the G8 in Alberta's Kananaskis region. This criminalization of dissent and public protest within a democratic society has gone virtually unexamined within the mainstream Canadian media, especially worrisome as the powers of domestic law enforcement and intelligence agencies have been vastly expanded in reaction to the events of 11 September. See: Kinsman, G., Buse, D.K., and Steedman, M. (eds.). Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines Press, 2000).
74. A transcript of UBC professor Sunera Thobani's speech at the Conference, "Women's Resistance: From Victimization to Criminalization." (Ottawa: 1 October 2001) is available online at: [http://www.casac.ca/enghome.htm].
75. See for example Pete McMartin, "Free speech in a pristine vacuum," Vancouver Sun, 3 October 2001.

78. The group identified was “Americans.”

79. It should be noted that Thobani’s employer, the University of British Columbia, publicly defended her right to express her views, no matter how unpopular they may be. See: “Feminist’s charge on US policy draws political fire,” Globe and Mail, 2 October 2001.

80. These are the conclusions drawn in an excellent expose of the portrayal of women in the Canadian media by Natalie Couter and Catherine Murray. Watching the Watchers: Gender Justice and Co-regulation in the New Media Marketplace (Vancouver, BC, Canada: Simon Fraser University Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology, School of Communication, April 2001). They point out that Professor Thobani’s observations about Canada in an article she wrote in the Canadian Journal of Women and the Law the year before 11 September were confirmed by her own treatment following 11 September. “Whereas the racialization of immigration constructs immigrants of colour as posing a threat to the nation’s social, cultural, and linguistic order, the gendering of immigration comes to define the women of colour in particular as burden on the nation’s resources. ... The racialization of immigrants on the basis of their cultural, social, and linguistic characteristics would mean that all people of colour — regardless of their actual legal status, their birthplace, or the length of their residency in Canada — would come to be ideologically constructed as immigrants/outsiders.” See: Sunera Thobani, “Nationalizing Canadians: Bordering Immigrant Women in the Late Twentieth Century,” Canadian Journal of Women and the Law, Vol.12, No. 2 (2000).


82. Tareq Y. Ismael, Arafat’s Palestine National Authority. Durham Middle East Paper No. 71 University of Durham Institute For Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies (June 2002).


87. For consideration of the appropriateness of criticism of Israel see: Rex Murphy, “Some of Israel’s critics are more equal than others,” Globe and Mail, 27 April 2002; and Naomi Klein, “Old hates fuelled by fear,” Globe and Mail, 24 April 2002.

88. Christie Blatchford, “There’s Only One War on Terror: The terrorism in Israel is essentially the same as it was in New York,” National Post, 1 April 2002.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. See: Gerald M. Steinberg, “Canada must be Israel’s friend: the Jewish state has an ally in the United States, but it needs more,” National Post, 1 April 2002;


94. Mark Steyn, “Appeasing Arab hate puts the lie to ‘Never Again’,” National Post, 4 April 2002.


100. See: John L. Esposito. The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality? 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Mehdi Semati, “Terrorists,